

Sunday, September 13, 2020—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 118 The Matthew's Bible: The Complete Work of William Tyndale

Introduction

- The last time this class met in person was on Sunday, March 8 when we finished up our discussion of William Tyndale in Lesson 112.
- Then after a month-long break, I taught Lesson 113, the first Lesson on Miles Coverdale remotely on Sunday, April 19. Then on Sunday, May 17 in Lesson 117 we wrapped up our discussion of Coverdale by Assessing the Contents of the First Complete English Bible. All told, we devoted five Lessons to a consideration of Miles Coverdale and the first complete Bible printed in English.
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing Its Impetus ([Lesson 113](#))
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing Its Source ([Lesson 114](#))
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing Coverdale's Ability as a Translator ([Lesson 115](#))
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing Coverdale as a Reviser of Tyndale ([Lesson 116](#))
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing the Contents of the First Complete English Bible ([Lesson 117](#))
- This morning in Lesson 118 we are going to pick up where we left off last spring and begin looking at the next English Bible to be printed, the 1537 Matthew's Bible.

Who Was John Rogers?

- John Rogers was born somewhere around the turn of the 16th century. Historians differ on exactly when this prominent figure in the history of the English Bible was born. Donald L. Brake, author of *A Visual History of the English Bible*, offers the following time and place for Rogers' birth, "The turn of the sixteenth century witnessed the birth of John Rogers (ca. 1505-55) near Birmingham, England." (Brake, 125) J.I. Mombert is more vague in stating that Rogers was "born about 1500." (Mombert, 176)
- While little is known about Rogers' birth and early childhood much more is discernable about his formal education and adult life. "Educated at Cambridge, he received his BA in 1525." (Brake, 125) That same year Rogers received "an invitation to Christ Church, Oxford, then known as "Cardinal College."" (Mombert, 176)
- As usual, Dr. David Daniell author of *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* offers the most thorough treatment of the subject:

- “Having taken his BA at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in 1526, Rogers became rector of a London Parish. In the latter part of 1534 he moved to Antwerp to become chaplain to the merchants and others who lived there together. He was moving in Reforming circles, and in 1536 or 1537 he married a Flemish woman who was a kinswoman of Jacob van Meteren. The latter had been the sponsor behind the printing of Miles Coverdale’s English Bible of 1535. . . Rogers stayed for six years in Antwerp. He then left for Wittenberg, where he matriculated on 25 November 1540. He came into close contact with Lutheran scholars, particularly Philip Melanchthon. He then became one of four superintendents of the Lutheran church in the Dietmarsh region far in the north-west of Germany. Backed by Melanchthon, he accepted the challenge of becoming part of Meldorf in that region. . . Rodgers remained in Meldorf for four and a half years, until the spring of 1548. . . In January 1547 Edward VI came to the English throne, and Rodgers set about returning home. He left Meldorf, to the evident grief of his people, probably in the spring of 1548. By August he was living in London in the house of the Reforming merchant and publisher Edward Whitchurch. He translated a number of books by Melanchthon, including *Weight of the Interim*, that “interim” referring to the emperor’s edict of 15 May 1548 bidding Protestants to conform to Catholic practices. He was given a number of successive London livings, of increasing influence, and, admired by Ridely, was appointed lecturer in divinity in St. Paul’s Cathedral. . . In April 1552, his wife and those children born in Germany were naturalized as English.” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 191-192)
- From this we can conclude that Rodgers was a member of the Protestant movement and therefore objected to many of the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Laboring with Philipp Melanchthon in Germany, Luther’s right hand man, meant that Rodgers ran in the leading circles of the Protestant movement both on the continent and in his homeland of England. When Queen Mary, also known as Bloody Mary, succeeded Edward to the English throne in 1553 she saw to it that Rodgers was the first Protestant to be executed, thus inaugurating her bloody campaign against English Protestants as she sought to place England back under the authority of the Pope.

The Matthew’s Bible: The Complete Work of Willian Tyndale

- Recall from [Lesson 105](#) that William Tyndale was arrested in Antwerp, Belgium on May 21, 1535. This puts Tyndale and Rogers together in Antwerp and living in the English House at the time of Tyndale’s apprehension. It is, therefore, beyond historical doubt that the two men knew each other.
 - “Tyndale was strangled and burned on 6 October 1536. In the sixteen months after his arrest and removal from Antwerp to Brussels, it is not known what had happened to his manuscript translations of Joshua to 2 Chronicles. The papers would be bulky. Somehow on Tyndale’s arrest they survived Pierre Dufief’s (illegal raid) on the English House to seize all his property. He was the man who made sure that they were printed, in

what became the most influential of all the early printed English Bibles, “Matthew’s Bible.”” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 190)

- “In 1535 and 1536, Rogers, friend of Tyndale, was an ideal person to take the translator’s work further. He [Rogers] was a graduate with an undoubted flair for languages. . . he could hardly go to Antwerp not knowing the name of Tyndale.” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 192-193)
- Therefore, the Matthew’s Bible is of major historical significance because in it we find the complete work of William Tyndale, i.e., all the portions of the Bible that he translated before he died. Regarding this matter Professor Daniell states the following:
 - “To this steadfast and courageous reformed pastor and preacher the English-speaking Christian world owes a debt of particular gratitude. Working with, apparently, the printer Matthew Crom in Antwerp, John Rogers put together in 1537 a handsome thick folio, well printed in clear black letter in double columns. This contained, for the first time as part of a large complete Bible, all Tyndale’s printed Bible translations: that is, the 1534 New Testament and the Pentateuch, the ‘Five Books of Moses’: they were given almost unchanged. For the first time, moreover, there appeared an English translation of the nine historical books ending at 2 Chronicles made from Hebrew. That this was the work of Tyndale is now beyond doubt. Tyndale’s vulnerable manuscript pages had safely arrived in print.” (Daniel, *The Bible in English*, 193)
- In Lesson 108 we looked at the connection between William Tyndale’s translation work on the Old Testament and the Mathew’s Bible. Please bear with me as we look again at the following points from Lesson 108.
- In 1992, Dr. David Daniell edited a modern spelling addition of *Tyndale’s Old Testament* for Yale University Press. This volume included Tyndale’s Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) from 1530, Joshua to II Chronicles from 1537, the book of Jonah, as well as an explanatory Introduction of its contents and layout. Dr. Daniell’s Introduction to *Tyndale’s Old Testament* opens with the following sentiments:
 - “William Tyndale’s Old Testament translations laid the foundation of our English Bible. They have been even more hidden from general view than his work on the New Testament. Half of what appears in this volume has not been generally accessible since 1551.

Tyndale published his first translations from Hebrew into English—the earliest ever from that language into this—in 1530, when he printed his Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. He gave us our bible language: the words and rhythms, for example, of the story of the Creation and the Fall—‘Let there be light and there was light,’ ‘male and female created he them,’ ‘who told thee thou wast naked?’ and much else. Two generations later, in 1611, the scholars and divines who made the Authorized Version

under King James were happy to use what Tyndale had given them, though without acknowledgment. Very many great passages from the Pentateuch come to us from Tyndale, like the blessing from Numbers 6: ‘The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be merciful unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.’ Ringing phrases such as ‘For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire’ or ‘a mighty hand and a stretched out arm’ from Deuteronomy 4; or from Deuteronomy 6, “For the Lord thy God is a jealous God,” as well as ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul and with all thy might’—these and many, many more come to us from his Pentateuch.

Yet that volume was less than half his Old Testament work. Two years after his execution in 1535 [should be 1536] there appeared a thick folio Bible, also printed abroad, which announced itself as both ‘set forth with the King’s most gracious license’ (marking a change in Henry VIII’s policy) and ‘truly and purely translated into English by Thomas Matthew.’ Matthew is a cover name. The Volume was in fact assembled by Tyndale’s close friend John Rogers, who later became the first Protestant martyr in England under the Catholic Queen Mary. In his ‘Matthew’s’ Bible, Rogers reprinted the Pentateuch and all the New Testament directly from Tyndale. The section after the Pentateuch, from Joshua to 2 Chronicles, was also Tyndale’s work. For this section, there is, it has been said, no direct evidence. Yet the strong likelihood, together with an overwhelming accumulation of internal effects, convinces both the general reader and the scholar that this is Tyndale—probably from his manuscripts, entrusted to Rogers at his death.” (Daniell, *Tyndale’s Old Testament*, ix-x)

- Later, in his Introduction, Dr. Daniell presents his evidence for arguing that William Tyndale was the translator for the text of Joshua through II Chronicles as found in the Matthew’s Bible of 1537. For the sake of time and space I have limited my citations of Daniell’s work on this point to what I believe are his most important points.
 - “Matthew’s Bible reprints Tyndale in the Pentateuch and the New Testament. From the end of 2 Chronicles to the end of the Old Testament it prints Coverdale. Who is the translator of Joshua to 2 Chronicles?

The case for this being Tyndale’s work rests on five points. The first three carry such weight as to make the ascription virtually certain.

1. Tyndale’s way with Hebrew can be very much his own, as we have noted above. When he strikes out independently of any immediate influences (Luther, the Septuagint, the Vulgate) he leaves, as it were, a distinctive signature on his treatment of Hebrew words. . . the musical instrument that in Hebrew is תֶּפֶח (*toph*) is consistently translated by Coverdale, in the books from Ezra onwards, as ‘tabret.’ In the Pentateuch Tyndale makes it ‘timbrel’ as this is the word in Judges 11, 1 Samuel 10 and 18, 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13. Examples of such continuity of idiosyncrasy, as we might put it, can be found many times, and accumulate to make a powerful case.

2. The translator of Joshua to 2 Chronicles shows exactly the same desire to make sense, almost at all costs, as Tyndale in the Pentateuch. It has been seen above that such nearly impenetrable Hebrew passages as the accounts of the furniture of the temple almost defeat him. The same can be said of the descriptions of the ritual garments in Leviticus and Numbers. . .

4. There are the same particular formulations in English phrasing in both: ‘men of activity,’ the literal ‘the fat of the land,’ ‘observed dismal days,’ ‘upon high mountains and on high hills and under every green tree’ and very many more.

5. Finally, there is evidence of large ornamental initials in ‘Matthew’s.’ Those in the introductory matter, I.R. and H.R., are taken to stand for John Rogers and Henricus Rex. Before the prophets, R.G. and E.W. are taken to be Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch, the London printers who financed and distributed the volume; and W.T. at the end of the Old Testament, before the Apocrypha, may be intended to suggest the larger presence of William Tyndale in the volume. Edward Hall, in his *Chronicle* of 1548, adds the Old Testament historical books to a list of Tyndale’s translations. Moreover, copies of ‘Matthew’s’ exist in which all the prologues and all the notes have been obliterated, to escape the penalties that were threatened in 1543, when, as Bishop Westcott notes, ‘Parliament proscribed all translations bearing the name of Tyndale, and required that the notes in all other copies should be removed or ‘obliterated.’” (Daniell, *Tyndale’s Old Testament*, xxv-xxvi)

- Therefore, I think it is safe to conclude that Tyndale’s translation accomplishments with respect to the Old Testament include the following before his martyrdom in 1536.
 - 1530 Pentateuch
 - *W.T. to the Reader*
 - *A Prologue Showing the Use of Scripture*
 - The First Book of Moses, called Genesis
 - *A Table Expounding Certain Words*
 - *A Prologue into the Second Book of Moses, called Exodus*
 - *A Table Expounding Certain Words of the Second Book of Moses*
 - The Second Book of Moses, called Exodus
 - *A Prologue into the Third Book of Moses, called Leviticus*
 - The Third Book of Moses, called Leviticus
 - *A Prologue into the Fourth Book of Moses, called Numbers*
 - The Fourth Book of Moses, called Numbers
 - *A Prologue into the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy*
 - The Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy
 - 1537 Matthew’s Bible
 - The Book of Joshua

- The Book of Judges
 - The Book of Ruth
 - The First Book of Samuel
 - The Second Book of Samuel
 - The First Book of the Kings
 - The Second Book of the Kings
 - The Chronicles of the Kings of Juda, The First Book
 - The Chronicles of the Kings of Juda, The Second Book
 - The Prologue to the Prophet Jonah
 - The Story of the Prophet Jonah
 - All told, Tyndale is responsible for penning the rough draft for fifteen of the 39 books or 38 percent of the Old Testament found in the KJB. In addition to producing full English renderings for the fifteen books listed above, it is important to note that Tyndale's 1534 and 1535 New Testament revisions also included English translations for a select number of Old Testament passages not included in the preceding list.
 - The parts of the scripture found in the Matthew's Bible that had not been supplied by Tyndale were taken from Coverdale's 1535 Bible.
 - "For the parts of the Bible that Tyndale did not live to reach (or, just possibly, finish), Rodgers printed Coverdale. So the high poetry from Job to Malachi, half the Old Testament, twenty-two books of poems and prophecy, and thirteen of the fourteen books of the Apocrypha, Rogers gives a version, albeit made by dedicated and learned men, who could sometimes be splendid in his formulation as we saw above, but who knew neither Hebrew nor Greek, Miles Coverdale." (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 193)
 - Recall from our previous studies that at this point everything was political when it came to the English Bible. Neither the King, the head of the newly formed Anglican Church, nor his Bishops would sanction or license a Bible believed to have come from the hand of Tyndale. Likewise, Coverdale missed out on crown sanction over the inclusion of King Henry VIII's estranged second wife in his dedication to the King. Therefore Rodgers, a known associate of Tyndale, published his Bible under the assumed name Thomas Matthew.
 - "Tyndale's name was heretical. Rodger's volume could not be called 'Tyndale Bible.' For no certain reason, the title-page states:

The Bible, which is all the holy Scripture: in which are contained the Old and New Testament truly and purely translated into English by Thomas Matthew.
- The likelihood is that the name was chosen because it combines the names of two disciples." (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 193)

- “Fear of reprisals and persecution led some to take false names. Sometime while living in Antwerp, John Rodgers took the name Thomas Matthew to conceal the fact that his translation work was closely associated with his friend, the hated William Tyndale.” (Brake, 126)

Conclusion

- In the next Lesson we will look at the “license” that King Henry VIII issued for the Matthew’s Bible and assess its impact upon the history of the English Bible.

Works Cited

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