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TYNDALE'S BIBLE TRANSLATION
The Rev Dr Ralph Werrell (The Tyndale Society)

INTRODUCTION

David Daniell wrote, at the beginning of his chapter, "William Tyndale, the English Bible, and the English Language" in *The Bible as Book, the Reformation*, what could be an introduction to my paper:

My subject is the pioneering work of William Tyndale, who in Germany and the Low Countries in the 1520s and 1530s translated into English the New Testament from the Greek twice, and half of the Old Testament from Hebrew, and printed his translations in little pocket books, which were then smuggled into England. He was a scholar and translator of genius; his work went directly into the King James Bible almost one hundred years later in 1611, and is still influential in translations even today. Through that King James Bible, which dominated the English speaking world for 350 years, Tyndale has reached more people than Shakespeare. He gave the English language a plain prose style of the very greatest importance, at a time in the first decades of the sixteenth century when English was of little significance, with no apparent future. Tyndale's Bible translations are of towering, and often neglected, significance. (Daniell, David, "William Tyndale, the English Bible, and the English Language" p.39 in *The Bible as Book ;the Reformation*, ed. Orlaith o'Sullivan. The British Library and Aok Knoll Press, 2000)

Before I go back as far as the early days of Bible translation into English and to William Tyndale I begin with a quotation from Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch who pays a handsome tribute to Tyndale in these words:

'I grant you, to be sure, that the path to the Authorised Version was made straight by previous translators, notably by William Tyndale. I grant you that Tyndale was a man of Genius, and Wyclif before him a man of genius. I grant you that the forty-seven men who produced the Authorised Version worked in the main upon Tyndale's version, taking that for their basis. Nay, if you choose to say that Tyndale was a miracle in himself, I cheerfully grant you that as well. " (Haslehurst, RST, "Tyndale the Translator", *Church Quarterly Review*, Vol 123, 1936, p.65)

Going back to the seventh century we have the Old English gloss in the Lindisfarne Gospels, there is also the translation of Aldred. Bede, before he died, translated the Gospel of John into Anglo-Saxon. Caedmon's poems were biblical and brought the Bible to the Anglo-Saxons in a way they could understand. King Alfred had part of the Bible translated into Old English, and the translation of the first 50

Psalms may be his work, and we can also mention Aelfric and Wulfstan. There are also other manuscripts of translations of parts of the Bible in Old English, but these became of no use as the English language changed from the Anglo-Saxon Old English, that virtually became a foreign language, into Middle English. Parts of the Bible were translated or interpreted into Middle English, perhaps Richard Rolle of Hampole was the most important of these. The Middle English Bible, the Wycliffite Bible, was translated from the Vulgate, and the second version enabled people to read and understand the Word of God. Rita Copeland wrote,

In 1407 and again in 1409, Archbishop Thomas Arundel imposed his Constitutions, which sought to suppress the Lollard heresy by rooting out its causes, and prohibited unlicensed possession of vernacular Bibles and of any writings associated with the heresy, " The Wycliffite Bible, in part or in whole, survives in over 250 manuscripts, the greatest number of copies of any Middle English tract. (Copeland, Rita, "Lollardy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 100-1500*, ed. Larry Scanlon)

Whilst David Lawton, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, wrote,

By 1401, in the Statute De Haeretico Comburendo, the Wycliffite originators of the project are branded subversive. Any chance that their work would avoid the same fate is destroyed by Archbishop Arundel's Constitutions of Oxford in 1407-8, which ban the making and ownership of English Bibles. There follows a century of repression, which is brought to an end by one man, William Tyndale - whose accomplishment is to produce a translation of the entire New Testament from Greek and much of the Old from Hebrew which will form the unacknowledged foundation of all subsequent authorized English translations until the twentieth century. (Lawton, David, "Englising the Bible", in *The Cambridge History of the Medieval Bible*, ed. David Wallace, 1999)

And S.L. Greenslade wrote,

England was fortunate to have in William Tyndale the man who could do what was wanted, a man of sufficient scholarship to work from Hebrew and Greek, with genius to fashion a fitting English idiom and faith and courage to persist whatever it cost. (Greenslade, S.L., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol 3, Cambridge University Press, 1963)

When I was at school we were taught that Modern English comes from William Shakespeare and the Authorised Version of the Bible. Now William Tyndale is called the Father of Modern English, for his translation forms the backbone of the Authorised Bible. Tyndale's New Testament was published 38 years before Shakespeare was born and 85 years before the King James' Bible. Because he relied largely on the short Anglo-Saxon words, Tyndale's translation is as easily readable today as it was when it was published.

Many academics claim that Tyndale had relied on Luther, not just in his translation, but also his Prologue to the New Testament. David Daniell wrote,

Strongly Lutheran is Tyndale's Prologue, which is Luther's Vorrede to his 1522 New Testament translated, altered, cut, and above all added to. Tyndale has expanded Luther's seven pages to fourteen, developing the main points of what the Old Testament and New Testament are, what 'Gospel' and 'Law' mean (following Paul), and what is sin. Tyndale on his own is revealed as a formidable scholar of Paul, and master of New Testament theology. His Prologue ends with five pages not found in Luther's Testament, but powerfully Lutheran in its harsh tone of exposition of our bondage to Satan. (op cit p.43)

It is often considered that Tyndale was, at least up to circa 1530, influenced by Luther, although my research into Tyndale's theology shows that, from his first writing (the 1525 New Testament) there were marked differences between Tyndale's and Luther's theologies. L. J. Trinterud wrote,

Yet, Tyndale used Luther rather than agreed with Luther. The prologue of 1525, his first published expression of his views, laid down a line of interpretation which was not that of Luther, and which his later works developed in an increasingly non-Lutheran direction.

Although he drew attention to the fact that Tyndale followed Luther's non-traditional order of the Books of the New Testament, Trinterud continued,

About one eighth of Tyndale's prologue consists of a good translation of roughly half of Luther's prologue But, even in the lines copied from Luther, and more especially in the seven-eighths of his prologue which was his own composition, Tyndale takes his stand with the line of interpretation which stemmed from biblical humanism, ... and eventually developed into what became known as the Reformed or Calvinistic. (Trinterud, L.J., "A Reappraisal of William Tyndale's Debt to Martin Luther", Church History xxxi, 1962, p.25f)

Paul Laughlin, in his doctoral dissertation, set out to prove Tyndale was until 1530 a follower of Luther, and then his theology changed, but ended up showing that Tyndale's theology did not change between 1525 and his martyrdom in 1536. (Laughlin, P, "The Brightness of Moses's Face", unpub. PhD diss Emory University, 1975)

However, in many ways we can show how Tyndale's 1525 New Testament 'Preface' changed Luther's theology. God the Father is not a 'hidden God- -but we know 'the Father as loving and merciful'. Man's is saved from the power of Satan because of "God the Father's love for us and not for our own faith." Unlike Luther, Tyndale has no 'theology of the Cross', having replaced it by the 'theology of Christ's blood'; it is a continuation of the Old Testament sacrificial theology. Although academics argue that these two theologies are the same, in many places it is impossible to substitute 'the Cross' for 'Christ's blood': quoting from Tyndale's Prologue to Leviticus, we can clearly see the difference, "And Christ is all manner

offering that is offered: He is the ox, the sheep, the goat, the kid, and lamb; He is the ox that is burnt without the host~ and the scape-goat 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.' (Tyndale, William, Prologue to Leviticus, PS-I, p.427) Even where it might be possible to change Tyndale's 'blood of Christ' to 'cross', this ignores Tyndale's doctrine of the blood of Christ in his covenant theology, a covenant between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. There are other changes Tyndale has made to Luther's theology in his 1525 New Testament. In many ways we find Tyndale's 'sola scriptura', and his theology can be traced to the English heresy of Wyclif rather than the Continental Reformers. Michael Hurley wrote,

According to Netter, Wyclif as a theologian appeals to Scripture alone, openly defying and rejecting the Tradition of the Church As grace is not just a condition of dominion but rather its source and cause, so conformity to Scripture is no mere condition but very source and cause, sole source and cause, of the validity and authority of all ecclesiastical acts. (Hurley, Michael, "Scriptura Sola: Wyclif and his critics" pp 278,344, *Traditio* 19, 1960, 275-352)

Henry Wansbrough wrote,

Tyndale's achievement was that the translation which has endured into the twentieth century, and remains the unavoidable basis for any new translation, sprang fullyfledged from him. He was in a unique situation, at the joining of the ways, one coming from the Lollard tradition, that grumbling undercurrent of fourteenth century England, and the other from the burgeoning classical tradition. Each of these is represented by one of Tyndale's great heroes, Wyclif and Erasmus. (Wansborough, Henry, "The Bible in the Renaissance – William Tyndale", p.1)

Tyndale in his Prologue to his 1525 translation of the New Testament, of which we only have up to Matthew chapter 22, wrote, "The cause that moved me to translate, I thought better that other should imagine, than that I should rehearse them." Academics have imagined what moved Tyndale to want to translate the Bible into English. The popular reason is that he had read Erasmus' Paraclesis, and so John King wrote, Tyndale

"acted upon the Lutheran principle of "scripture alone" which insisted upon the primacy of the Bible and heeded the humanist call to return to the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. Tyndale's colloquial diction owes much to Erasmus' appeal in Paraclesis ("Exhortation"), the preface to his Greek New Testament, that humble plowmen and "even the lowliest women" be allowed to read the Bible. Tyndale defined his audience thus: "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost." (King, John N, "Religious Writing", p.106, in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature*,

1500-1600, ed. Artghur F. Kinney, 2000)

Stephen Greeblatt points out that there are some important differences between Erasmus' words and Tyndale's: where Erasmus 'would like', Tyndale has, 'would cause' are perhaps the most forceful. (Greenblat, Stephen, Renaissance Self-fashioning) But I believe Tyndale has given us a much more important clue for his reason to translate the scriptures into English in his own writings.

Twice Tyndale mentions John Trevisa's translation of Higden's Polychronicon; a history of the world. The importance of this for Tyndale's decision to translate the Bible into English lies in Trevisa's Preface.

But first we need to know a little about John Trevisa. John Trevisa was almost certainly a protege of Thomas, Lord Berkeley, he was a boy on one of Lord Berkeley's Cornish estates. Thomas was an educationalist, and if he found a bright boy on one of his estates he would arrange for him to study at Oxford University. John Trevisa found himself at the Queen's College in Oxford at the same time as John Wyclif and some of the others, who became leaders of Lollardy. Trevisa then became Vicar of Berkeley and Chaplain to Thomas, Lord Berkeley. Lord Berkeley ordered Trevisa to translate Higden's Polychronicon into English.

William Tyndale lived in south Gloucestershire, the place with the strongest claim is North Nibley. He would have gone to school in Wotton-under-Edge, a school that had been founded by Lady Berkeley, the widow of Lord Thomas. About a hundred years after Trevisa had made his translation of the Polychronicon, Tyndale tells us that he had read it as a boy, and this could only have been in Berkeley Castle. "Yea, and except my memory fail me, and that I have forgotten what I read when I was a child, thou shalt find in the English chronicle, how that King Adelstone caused the Holy Scripture to be translated into the tongue that then was in England." In The Practice of Prelates we read of the exile, by King Harold, of "Robert archbishop of Canterbury: for what cause, the English Polychronicon specifieth not. (Tyndale, Obedience, PSI p.149; Prelates, PS2, p.294) I think we can learn a lot about William Tyndale as a boy from his writings, where some of his illustrations read as if they related to his boyhood in Gloucestershire. The Polychronicon was a folio manuscript, 850 pages long and about 400 words to a page, in Middle English, which had two letters not in the Early Modern English and so Tyndale would probably not have learnt these at school. From his writings it is obvious that Tyndale had read other translations or writings of Trevisa. Although most of these had been printed by Tyndale's day, one, Dialogus inter Militem et Clericum on the spiritualte and the temporalte whose argument was closely followed by Tyndale could only be read in Berkeley Castle as it was not printed until 1540. Some of Trevisa's writings Tyndale could have read whilst tutor to the Walsh boys at Little Sodbury.

Trevisa wrote a Preface to the Polychronicon consisting of a Dialogue between a Clerk and a

Knight on the importance of translating the Bible into English. The Clerk argued against the need for an English translation. He said, "And commonly English is not so widely understood, used, nor known. And the English translation would only be known by Englishmen," many of whom also knew Latin. But, the Knight countered that argument saying, "Though I can speak, read and understand Latin, there are places in Latin books" where he does not know all the words, and so an English translation would be necessary. He also argued for those who knew English, but did not know Latin or any other language. "And it may not be told in English what the Latin is to mean without translation out of Latin into English. Then it needeth to have an English translation." (Trevisa, Polychronicon, Dialogue, fo. A ii r) The argument goes on for about four pages, with the Knight winning all the points in the argument for an English Bible. I can imagine a boy, like Tyndale, as he read that 'Preface', saying, "I am going to translate the Bible into English when I grow up."

It was illegal to translate the Bible into English unless one had permission from the Bishop. Because the Bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, was a humanist and a friend of Erasmus, Tyndale approached him for the opportunity to make his translation in London. As he was not given permission he realised that it would only be possible to translate the Bible into English if he crossed onto the Continent.

From his reading of the Polychronicon, William Tyndale learnt some important principles for translating. John Trevisa in his 'letter' explaining his translation methods had stated the grammatical changes that had to be made when translating Latin into colloquial English. He wrote that translations must be accurate and colloquial so that it is understandable by the readers. This might mean altering the order of the words, altering the grammar where differences affected the meaning; or even expanding where it will help the readers understand what had been written. Tyndale followed Trevisa and he wrote about the grammatical changes needed when translating the Greek New Testament into English. He also found that some of the New Testament (possibly only St. Matthew's Gospel) showed signs of having been translated out of Hebrew into Greek. "If aught seem changed, or not altogether agreeing with the Greek, let the finder of the fault consider the Hebrew phrase or manner of speech, left in the Greek words." (Tyndale, Prologue Matthew, PS-I, p.468) Tyndale also followed Trevisa in saying, 'If any one can make a better translation they were to do so.'

Trevisa influenced Tyndale in other ways as well. Trevisa wrote, "The Pasque (Passover), that is the Easter of the Jews", and in his New Testament Tyndale translated 'Passover' as "Easter" or "the Easter of the Jews." Although, in his 1530 translation of the Pentateuch, Tyndale had coined the word, 'Passover', for the Jewish feast celebrating their liberation from slavery in Egypt; he still retained, 'Easter' for the Passover in his 1534 New Testament. Taking one example from Luke 22.

Then came the day of sweetbread, when of necessity the Easter lamb must be eaten. And he sent Peter and John saying: Go and prepare for us the Easter lamb, that we may eat. They said to him. Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them. Behold when ye be entered into the

city, there shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water, him follow into the same house that he entereth in, and say unto the good man of the house: The master saith unto thee: where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat my Easter lamb with my disciples?

Not only in the Gospels but also in I Corinthians and Hebrews where the Passover is mentioned, Tyndale translates it, 'Easter'.

Apart from translating the Apocryphal passages read as The Epistle in the Mass, Tyndale never mentions the Apocrypha in any of his writings - I think this is possibly because Trevisa had written in one of his additional comments in the Polychronicon, "The Apocrypha is of none authority."

David Lawton wrote, "Did the Wycliffite version of the Bible, so viciously persecuted, have any influence on Tyndale? The standard answer has been that it did not. This needs to be revised: there are significant, though infrequent, parallels." He continues, "Tyndale denies so emphatically that he had not consulted any earlier English version that it is plausible to infer the opposite." (Lawton, David, Faith, Text and History: the Bible in English, p.61)

But he was unlikely to have had a Wycliffite Bible to hand whilst he was making his translations in either Germany or Belgium, it was far too large for him to have carried with him. I have shown, from his writings, that Tyndale was probably a Wycliffite as a boy, and therefore he probably learnt much of the Bible by heart. This would account for those places Tyndale appears to have used the Wycliffite Bible, and also why they are so few, and also the truth of his remark that he had no English version to consult.

In fact Gerald Hammond has stressed this way in which the memory was used in the past. He quotes from a Czech peasant whose knowledge of scripture and his heretical doctrine drew the authorities to search his house for books, "Someone came to look for them in my house, in the well, everywhere. They didn't find anything: I have it all in my head. No one can take anything from me." In his footnote comment, he wrote, "The Bohemian experience of remembering Scripture through a long period of Church proscription possibly replicates English experience between 1400 and 1520, and gives insights into ways in which Wycliffite biblical texts might have survived in the popular consciousness. (Hammond, Gerald, "What was the Influence of the Medieval English Bible upon the Renaissance Bible?", Bulletin of the John Rylands University of Manchester, Vol 77 No3, 1995, p.90)

Hammond points to the reluctance of linking Tyndale's translation to the earlier Wycliffite Bible.

Such reluctance is symptomatic of one of the great divides in our discipline. In the past critics and scholars tried hard to establish continuities, such as the continuity of English prose or the continuity of poetic and dramatic traditions, but I do not detect much of this kind of thing going on now. It seems as if medieval studies and Renaissance studies are as far apart as they ever have

been." (ibid. p.88)

Much of Hammond's article is about links between the Wycliffite, Tyndale's, and the Authorised Version of the Bible.

Richard Marsden links Tyndale's translations with not only the Wycliffite Bible, but also the idioms found in other Middle English writings. He argues that Tyndale, in his translations, had deliberately introduced these idioms and other turns of phrase into his translation - he does not consider that Tyndale might be using them because they were part of the colloquial English Tyndale had grown up with all his life. Yet, he writes, some biblical phrases

are now embedded in the English language, their biblical origin largely forgotten.

'In the twinkling of an eye', (1 Corinthians 15:52) has a pedigree from the Wycliffite Bible, through Tyndale and the Authorised Version, into many of the more modern versions. [NEB; NASB; NIV]. The word translated 'twinkling' refers to the flight of a javelin through the air, or the rush of the wind; and Paul was thinking of the blinking of an eye. Yet somehow the word 'twinkling' seems so appropriate in this case. (Marsden, Richard, "In the Twinkling of an Eye': The English of Scripture before Tyndale." Leeds Studies in English, S XXXI, 2000, p.145)

We are still left with many words or phrases in modern English that we owe to the Wycliffite Bible, and to Tyndale, that have come to us through the Authorised Version. I do not think it matters how these biblical phrases entered into our common language, the fact shows how much the Bible has entered into and influenced the English language, and that in the past the Bible made us known as 'the people of the Book' .

Today there is a division amongst academics between those who believe Tyndale's translation has largely been absorbed into the Authorised Version; and those who argue that those involved in producing the 1611 Authorised Version did not refer to any edition of Tyndale's translation; but this ignores the fact that Bibles, that had been authorised in this country during Henry VIII's reign and also the Geneva Bible, copied or relied on Tyndale's translation, even though Tyndale's name could not be mentioned.

TYNDALE'S BIBLE

Today it is beginning to be recognised that Shakespeare and the Authorised Version owe much to Tyndale. David Lawton wrote that William Tyndale "is by far the greatest of all English Bible translators, and if anyone man deserves the title of 'only begetter of English prose', it is Tyndale." (op cit p.62) His Bible translations are as readable today as they were when they first came off the printing press, and many common phrases and idioms in today's speech can be traced back to Tyndale - although it was probably through the Authorised Version that they took their place in colloquial English.

The Pentateuch and Old Testament

It is commonly said that Tyndale's Old Testament translation depended largely on Luther's translation. As Gerald Hammond wrote,

What remains in dispute is the degree of independence: how far did he rely on his own resources, and how far was he dependent upon his predecessors, in particular Jerome's Vulgate, Luther's German Bible, the Latin translation of Pagninus, and the earlier translation, the Wyclif Bible?

He goes on to mention many academics who believe Luther's Pentateuch influenced Tyndale's translation: and quotes from Dahlia Karpman, who "quotes ... approvingly from J. Rothwell Slater's *The Sources of Tyndale's Version of the Pentateuch*, which also demonstrates Tyndale's absolute reliance on Luther." (Hammond, Gerald, "William Tyndale's Pentateuch: Its Relation to Luther's German Bible and the Hebrew Original" *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol xxxiii, 1980, p.351-353)

I am going to spend a few minutes considering Dr. Michael Weitzman's article, "On Translating the Old Testament: the Achievement of William Tyndale." (Weitzman, Michael, *Reformation*, Vol I, p.165-180) Weitzman was a Jew and a Hebrew scholar at University College London; and so he was approaching the question from a Hebraic background. He wrote,

That Tyndale never consulted Luther cannot be maintained, as we shall see and indeed as earlier studies have shown. We must ask rather what was Tyndale's normal procedure. Did he usually go straight to the Hebrew, consulting Luther on occasion only, where he felt unsure of the sense? Or did he derive his understanding of the text primarily from Luther, giving no more than a supplementary role to the Hebrew? In the most recent extensive study, Hammond reaches the latter conclusion. He affirms Tyndale's 'primary dependence upon Luther'.

Weitzman goes on to detail Hammond's article,

Hammond amasses evidence to show how Tyndale imitated the Hebrew syntax, to great effect. This very evidence, however, casts doubt on the procedure which Hammond effectively ascribes to him. If Tyndale knew enough Hebrew to be able to impose Hebrew syntax upon Luther's sense, he could have more easily translated the Hebrew directly for himself, at least most of the time Tyndale's knowledge of Hebrew is further confirmed in the passages where he produces a translation that still resonates with the overtones of the original Hebrew.

Weitzman then asks if Tyndale consulted Jewish scholars, and he gives two examples where he believes he did. In Genesis 2:13, one of the rivers flows about a land called Kush. Jewish tradition, the LXX, the Vulgate, Luther and the Authorised Version all have the land called 'Ethiopia'. Tyndale translated it, 'India', Weitzman wrote,

which from a geographical viewpoint is rather easier, if not altogether free from difficulty. How did he justify this? There is in fact a Jewish tradition that the name Kush might refer to India rather

[than] Ethiopia.

He pointed out that it is in Esther 1:1, the land 'Kush' is called 'India'. Weitzman's other example is found in Deuteronomy 6:8, where Tyndale translates the ritual object they were to wear on their foreheads,

They consist of straps attached to black boxes containing parchment scrolls, on which various paragraphs of scripture are written. Now Tyndale renders: 'papers of remembrance'. " But whence the papers? It seems that Tyndale took the trouble at this stage to ask a Jewish contact about the totopot and elicited the detail, not found in any of his usual sources, that they contained scrolls.

Weitzman's conclusion is that Tyndale was capable of translating from the Hebrew, but at the same time he was prepared, in difficult places, to consult other sources to check his translation. After the Tyndale lecture he gave in Oxford, I asked Michael Weitzman about how Tyndale could have learnt his Hebrew, and he replied, 'Tyndale must have had a very good Jewish teacher for he did not just translate he knew the Jewish mind.'

Michael Weitzman died at the age of 51 in 1998; in his Obituary in The Tyndale Society Journal, David Daniell wrote, "His admiration of Tyndale as a translator was very great indeed: and when not just somebody with some Hebrew but a leading Hebrew scholar says emphatically, with his finger on the page, again and again, that Tyndale's understanding of Hebrew was far ahead of his time, and that his translation was little short of genius, then we must take notice. (The Tyndale Society Journal, No 10, July 1998, p.54)

Tyndale's Preface to his 1530 Pentateuch. w.r. to the Reader, is well worth reading.

He mentions why there was not an English Bible, and why the bishops and others objected to Tyndale's translating it. "Oure malicious and wylle hypocrytes which are so stubburne and hard hearted in their weked abhominacions that it is not possible for them to amend any thinge at all ... saye some of them that it is impossible to translate the scripture in to English, some that it is not lawfull for the laye people to haue it in their mother tonge, some, that it wold make them all heretykes And some or rather every one, saye that it wold make them ryse ageynst the kinge." (The Pentateuch, p.2) That was followed by details of his attempt to get permission to translate the Bible from the Bishop of London, and realising that he would not be able to do it in England.

Tyndale followed that by A prologe shewing the vse of the scripture. "Though we read the scripture & bable of it never so moch, yet if we know not the use of it, and wherfore it was geuen, and what is therin to be sought, it profiteth vs nothinge at all." Tyndale then expounds some passages relating to our understanding the scriptures before writing, "So now the scripture is a light and sheweth vs the true waye, both what to do, and what to hope. And a defence from all erreure, and a comferte in aduersyte that we despayre not. And feareth vs in prosperyte that we synne not. (The Pentateuch p.7-14)

In the 1534 edition Tyndale expands considerably the next passage in his 1530 Pro/age. This expansion is well worth reading and noting if we are to get the maximum from our reading of scripture. I would have loved reading it to you, but as time does not allow this I have copied it out in modern spelling as a handout.

Tyndale's English is so clear and vivid that it would appeal to the plough boy, as well as to every reader. "Thus the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea, and the water returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen: so that of all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not one." (Exodus 14.) Even in those places that are not dramatic, the simplicity and clarity makes Tyndale's translation memorable. "For ask, I pray thee, of the days that are past which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether anything hath been like unto this great thing, or whether any such thing hath been heard as it is; that a nation hath heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as thou hast heard, and yet lived?" (Deuteronomy 4.)

Taking just one word in Tyndale's translation from Genesis 3:7: "And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they understood how that they were naked. Then they sewed fig leaves together and made them aprons." The Hebrew word translated 'aprons' is used six times in the Hebrew Old Testament - not all of them in books translated by William Tyndale, In the Authorised Version, apart from this occasion, it is also translated 'armour', once, 'girdle', three times; and 'gird sackcloth', once. Tyndale's translation 'apron' is followed by the King James' Bible and some other modern versions. However, the New English Bible has 'loincloths', but the NIV does not appear to know how to express it by putting, 'coverings'; and the New American Standard Bible has 'loin coverings'. Here, as in many other places, Tyndale appears to have hit on a word that does justice to the meaning of the Hebrew, and that is easily understood by the reader.

The New Testament

William Tyndale translated the New Testament with substantial marginal notes, and this was being printed in 1525. Unfortunately, the Printer, Peter Quentell, in Cologne was also printing for Cochleus, an ardent Roman Catholic, who learnt that an English New Testament was also being printed. Cochleus ensured that printing Tyndale's New Testament would stop, and everything destroyed, and hoped that William Tyndale, and his helper, William Roye, would be arrested. However, Tyndale got wind of this and, together with Roye, managed to escape and take with them the pages that had already been printed - the Preface and St. Matthew's Gospel up to Chapter 22 verse 12. One copy survived, and is frequently known as "The Cologne Fragment."

Tyndale then set about retranslating the New Testament, and this was printed in 1526. For a long time it was thought that only two copies had survived, one at the Baptist College in Bristol, and the other in St. Paul's Cathedral Library. The Baptist College sold their copy to the British Library for

£1m. Then a perfect copy of the 1526 New Testament was discovered in Stuttgart. This had been unrecognised because it belonged to Elector Ottheinrich of the Palatinate, and he had it bound, uniformly as he had all his books, and the binding was dated 1550. It was not until the publicity surrounding the purchase by the British Library that Dr Eberhard Zwink checked the Stuttgart New Testament against Tyndale's 1526 New Testament that it was recognised as a pristine 1526 New Testament. This is the only copy with the Title Page and the words tell us about William Tyndale the man and the theologian as much as about the contents of the book:

The newe Testament As it was written, and caused to be written, by them which herde yt. To whom also oure Saveoure Christ Jesus commaunded that they should preache it vnto al creatures.

Tyndale did not allow his name, as translator, to be inserted for it was not "Tyndale's New Testament" but the Word of God. It was only after George Joye published his translation of the New Testament that Tyndale allowed his name as translator to be added.

Tyndale's New Testament was reprinted in 1534; and two other editions, "dilygently corrected", and "yet once agayne corrected" printed in 1534, reprinted three times in 1535, and three reprints in 1536, and it continued being reprinted until 1553 when Edward VI was succeeded by his sister, the Roman Catholic, Queen Mary. Tyndale's New Testament was also printed in Elizabeth I's reign in 1561.

Tyndale's translation continued to live in Bibles that did not mention his name, Matthew's Bible, and other Bibles authorised in Henry VIII's reign. As David Daniell wrote, Tyndale's work, from 'Matthew's', went into Coverdale's revision in the 1539 Great Bible, and then into the 1560 Geneva Bible and its revisions, reaching the panels of King James' revisers in 1607, and there being very largely taken straight over, so that wherever in the world, for almost four centuries, the King James Bible of 1611 has been, there has been, silently, Tyndale. His influence has been greater than any other writer in English. (op cit p.49)

About twenty-five years ago, and before I had started my research into Tyndale's theology, I had eight adult confirmees with a wide range educationally, from one who had left school with very little to show he had been educated, to one who had a First Class Honours Science degree: I copied out a chapter, chosen at random, from one of Paul's letters, and I did not state which version each page contained - from Tyndale's 1534 New Testament; the Authorised Version; The New English Bible; the New American Standard Bible; the Good News Bible; and the New International Version. I asked them to put the chapters in order of readability and clarity of meaning. I was surprised at the result as I expected greater variations. Every one of them put Tyndale's version first, and the New English Bible last. Apart from those two the others fitted into my expectations. The least educated put The Good News Bible second, the highest educated put the New International Version second. I have never mentioned this

experiment to anyone before.

Years later, David Daniell wrote,

Recent readers of Tyndale's Bible translations comment on how modern they feel. ... In Romans v:2, Paul in Tyndale says, 'we have a way in through faith' (KJV, 'access by faith'), and in Philippians 3:1, 'it is a sure thing' (KJV, 'it is safe'). At 2 Corinthians 2:17, Paul in Tyndale writes of those 'which chop and change with the word of God' (KJV, 'corrupt': ...) and in 2 King's 4:28, instead of the almost standard phrasing of the question of the Sunamite woman to Elisha, 'Do not deceive me', Tyndale finds the true meaning of the Hebrew with 'thou shouldest not bring me in a fool's paradise' (The Bible in Englishp.137)

There are, of course, some places where Tyndale's translation has been improved in the King James' Bible, but the places where Tyndale has drifted from his usual colloquial plain English are relatively few. On the whole Tyndale has left us with a Bible the ploughboy could understand and recite from memory.

Colloquial English would be much poorer without the influence of the Bible upon our language. I do not think it matters whether the phrase originally came from the fourteenth century Wycliffite Bible, Tyndale's translation of the sixteenth century, or the Authorised Version of 1611, often the translators seemed inspired in their choice of words, so that the phrases got absorbed into the English language - but above all because the English became 'the people of the book.'

I finish with a quotation from Christopher Hill;

By the seventeenth century the Bible was accepted as central to all spheres of intellectual life: it was not merely a 'religious' book in our narrow modern sense of the word religion. Church and State in Tudor England were one; the Bible was, or should be, the foundation of all aspects of English culture. On this principle most protestants were agreed. If we do not grasp this we shall fall into the anachronistic trap of speaking of 'a more religious age' than our own. In many senses it was a less religious age than ours Many of those who engaged in the dangerous work of translating the Bible in the early sixteenth century became martyrs Tyndale, John Rogers, Cranmer. Tyndale, whose superb version would be better known if he had survived to become an Edwardian bishop, declared that it was 'impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, except the scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue. (Hill, Christopher, The English Bible and the Seventeenth-century Revolution pp 7,10)