

“THE LIFE & BIBLE OF WILLIAM TYNDALE”

delivered by Prof. David Daniell, Founder of the Tyndale Society,
at the 60th Anniversary of Tyndale House Cambridge
on 16 October 2004

TRANSCRIPTION:

Professor David Daniell, we do welcome you. Thank you so much. And we look forward to your lecture on William Tyndale, the man.

Thank you, Bruce. First of all, can you hear me? Good. It is a tremendous privilege to be here, I can't tell you. I've known of and admired Tyndale House for a very long time and never actually have been here before. And thank you so much for asking me on this special occasion. I hope I don't annoy too many people by referring to *Tyndale*. I'm a north country man myself and he's known as *Tyndale* up there, but I noticed quite a lot of you calling him *Tyndle*, which I fear I can't dooo. [laughter] So, please excuse a certain northern barbarity there.

In this gathering, above all, there is no need for reminders that William Tyndale gave us our English Bible. I shall, however, run through the details of his life, details which may just have slipped the memories of some who are here, before settling down to analyze briefly from his texts just why he was so important, and I shall speak for exactly an hour. So, if you're standing you may want to do the American thing and sit on the floor.

In the wider world. Tyndale has only just begun to come back into view. This is partly, we like to believe, thanks to the work of the Tyndale Society—there are leaflets here on the front; please take one and join—which was founded ten years ago in 1994 on the quincentenary of his birth. The society, entirely run on a shoestring by volunteers, now has 450 members across the world—numbers are rising very rapidly—that organizes lectures, for example, on Monday week there is our Tenth Annual Lambeth Palace Tyndale Lecture and then the following in early November, the Tenth Annual Oxford Tyndale Lecture and so on. And

conferences, our fifth big one in Oxford comes up in September next year when the two key speakers will be, we are promised, the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, and Professor Jaroslav Pelikan from Yale; and in London, Bath, Geneva, San Diego, Toronto Washington DC, and just two weeks ago we had a conference in Virginia.

We publish a twice-yearly journal. This I'm delighted to see that it's number 27. So many societies finish at number three [laughter] and we've now got up to 27! And an annual scholarly journal, *Reformation*, which is very highly regarded, and is absolutely no threat to your wonderful bulletin.

No less a figure than the United States of America on his visit a year ago in his first speech in London referred as he began, to the English Bible being given to his country by William Tyndale. The Tyndale Society was very pleased to have evidence that we have all unknowingly reached one of the White House speech writers. [laughter]

In the Europe of the 1520s and 1530s, Tyndale was a towering theologian and biblical scholar as the Reformation gathered momentum. That his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew was better than Luther's and those around him even German scholars admit, and that is something!

Tyndale gave us a wonderful Bible, a language in daily use still. The famous 1611, the Authorized Version as it's known, though it was never authorized, or in America, the King James Version, or, and believe me I've heard this seriously, the "St. James Version!" [laughter] It's no joke in America. They tell you and people repeat the phrase, "If it was good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for me"—the "St. James Version." The New Testament of the of the King James Version, the Authorized Version, is 83% Tyndale, unchanged.

Now quickly through his life. Tyndale was a Gloucestershire man born in 1494. He came of a good, quite high-ranking family. Gloucestershire was a very wealthy county through sheep. Because of the wool trade, merchants came from all over Europe and Tyndale would grow up

as a boy knowing about languages. Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds welcomed foreign merchants, and also Wales is only a couple of miles away and I am convinced that he spoke Welsh. Communications in Gloucestershire are extremely good, Oxford not a day's walk away by road, the River Severn leading easily down to Bristol and the world. Gloucestershire was also famous—it was called God's County for several reasons, and one of them, I think, was the later reason that the Lollards were particularly strong in Gloucestershire. Langland's wonderful poem, *Piers Plowman*, was written near where Tyndale was born, and there was a great deal of preaching by Lollards in the county, preaching Paul in Romans rather than the Pope in Rome.

Tyndale went to Oxford for ten years, was at Magdalen Hall which was then inside Magdalen College and Magdalen Hall developed into Hertford College. In the course of his ten years, he learned good new humanist Latin and Greek, which was then newly being taught in Oxford and taught very well. The key event in his Oxford experience, apart from his disillusion that theology in Oxford then had nothing to do with the Scriptures but was entirely Aristotle, apart from his horror at that, which he expresses in some of his writing, the great event was in 1516 when Erasmus's *Novum Instrumentum* was printed in Basel, and circulated through Europe very quickly. This was Erasmus's attempt to challenge the Latin translation which became known as the Vulgate—which had been the Church's solid rock for 1,200 years—by making his own translation. Only Erasmus could have achieved that and got away with it without burning. But to show everybody how good he was, and how original he was, and sometimes how naughty he was, he printed the Greek alongside, without any comment on the Greek in the title page. And this fact that the Greek New Testament had been printed in 1516 for the *first time ever*, raced through Europe and became eventually the slightly problematic *Textus Receptus*.

Tyndale was probably here in Cambridge—probably, I don't think so—but Foxe mentions it briefly. There is no record in Cambridge of his attendance, and the famous meetings in the White Horse Inn where he is supposed to have attended—I'm afraid, well I have to say I'm very careful in this gathering—but I think legend has exaggerated them. I'm very sorry. I write in my

biography—and you can see it for yourself if you wish—a distinguished modern historian, that's Geoffrey Dickens, of the Reformation may here represent many who've written glowingly about these gatherings. And I'm quoting Geoffrey Dickens, "The great majority of the men who led the first generation of English Protestants were in residence in Cambridge during the years when the White Horse meetings were in progress. This is true of Tyndale, Joye, Roye, Barnes, Coverdale, Bilney, Latimer, Cranmer, Frith, Lambert, Ridley, Rowland Taylor, Thomas Arthur, Matthew Parker, and many others who preached, wrote, accepted high office or embraced martyrdom in the cause." This is me continuing: The names peeled down the centuries. Unfortunately, the hard evidence is minimal that any of them in Cambridge were ever in the same place at the same time, never mind in the snug of a Tudor pub.

Yet, Cambridge at Tyndale's time was far ahead of Oxford—I have to admit that, I'm afraid, though I'm an Oxford man—in attending to Luther and the new reformed doctrines, and there are some very, very great Cambridge names in Geoffrey Dickens's list but we shouldn't include Tyndale, I think. Erasmus, however, had certainly been here as the second holder of the Lady Margaret chair, teaching Greek. Tyndale would have known that and how widespread and significant was his printed Greek New Testament. If Tyndale came to Cambridge, it should be in the shadow of Erasmus.

What we do know for certain is that after Oxford, Tyndale went back to Gloucestershire. He was ordained priest, and he became tutor to the children of Sir John and Lady Walsh at Little Sodbury Manor, south, someways south, in Gloucestershire of his birthplace.

He sat at their table as a priest and a modern Oxford scholar of good Latin and Greek. He introduced the Walshes to Erasmus's *Enchiridion*. He might even have translated it for them. There is an English translation, though it's not published until after his death, and it's uncertain who did the work. I think it is Tyndale.

And there, Erasmus pleads for Scripture in the vernacular, and Tyndale was, I believe, already aware of his calling to translate the Greek New Testament into English and print it. He was preaching in the area. He distressed the authorities. They reviled him abominably, but they

didn't punish him. That, I think, is important, because they had the ability to punish severely, but there was some respect for him.

A learned clergyman—that I'm afraid is slightly in quotes—at Walsh's table one day said, “We were better without God's law than the pope's,” to which Tyndale famously retorted, “I defy the pope and all his laws. If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of Scripture than thou dost.” And of course, he did just that.

And we have to remember that, in the 1520s, ever since 1408, never mind translating, *reading* any part of Scripture in English was, uniquely in England in Europe, punishable and often by a hideous death. The previous translations to Tyndale were made in the 1380s. Now we know them as “Lollard Bibles”, under the influence but not personally made by John Wycliffe, who was master of Balliol College, Oxford, and a great scholar.

But from 1408 there was the severest depression in our history, which lasted for 150 years, especially in university work and university thinking. I tell the otherwise largely forgotten story nowadays—though I don't know why it's been forgotten—in this big book of mine, *The Bible in English*, which tells the story of the English Bible from the year dot to last Tuesday [laughter]—not quite to last Tuesday—it was published a year ago. There are copies outside.

But we forget, that the punishment for reading Scripture in English was burning alive, and we say, “O, he was burned alive.” We forget too, that that was a death that was deliberately lingering and could last three days(!), because the person had to be seen to be burnt and all his property burnt to rid the world of heresy. We know of a young man in Norwich a few years later who was burned alive for possessing a piece of paper on which was written the Lord's Prayer in English.

Tyndale needed a bishop's permission to translate, and he went to Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, a very sensible choice. Tunstall was a great friend of Erasmus, and indeed had helped Erasmus find Greek manuscripts in northern Europe for his printed edition. Tyndale took with him a narration by Isocrates, which is in very difficult Greek, just to show how good

he was, but Tunstall snubbed him. Tunstall was under the influence of Wolsey, who was planning to be the next pope.

Tyndale recognized, as he wrote later, there was no place in all England for such work. So, he left for Germany in about 1524 and northern Europe was a natural place to go.

Luther's September Testament of 1523—translated from Erasmus's Greek New Testament into very good German, in fact it united Germany, the language of Luther's 1523 New Testament, it was the first bestseller in the world—was setting the mark, and England in any case was two generations behind the rest of Europe in printing, not just in printing Bibles, in printing anything. In 1500, for example, we know in Europe the names of nearly a thousand printers, most of them by name. England at that time in 1500 had *two*, neither of them any good.

By 1525, in Cologne, Tyndale had a complete English New Testament ready for the press, with a long prologue and marginal notes. He started printing in Cologne. But a fanatical enemy of all reform, an enemy of Luther, Johann Dobneck—Cochlaeus—had the print shop raided. Tyndale and his assistant, William Roye, escaped in time taking their manuscript with them, and escaped up the Rhine to the safe Lutheran city of Worms. I can't say Worms. I studied in Germany; I have to say "Vorrhms," but "Vorrhms" doesn't come over very well to an English audience. So, let's say Worms. And there, in 1526, in that little town, he printed the first New Testament in English from the original Greek. They printed 6,000 copies and they were smuggled unbound of course, just the leaves in bales of cloth, down the Rhine and eagerly welcomed on the coast of England and circulated in England.

Now enemies of Tyndale still dispute the significance, not so much the number, but the significance of that event. But printers are not fools! And no small-town printer is going to commit himself to 6,000 copies of a book unless he knows for certain there's a market.

One copy survived, and it has been considered England's greatest printed treasure. The British Library, in 1994, the quincentenary of Tyndale's birth, before the Tyndale Society was formed in fact, bought it from Bristol Baptist College for one and a quarter million pounds in

order to have it on permanent public display, where it still is in the Ritblat Gallery. It was the centre of an exhibition that I curated for the British Library, which was four months in London at the British Library, and then later travelled to America, to the Huntington Library in California, to New York Public Library, and finally I closed it in the Library of Congress.

In my closing event there was taken around His Royal Highness, Prince Phillip, which was an extraordinary experience, because I was told beforehand, I was taken on one side, and I actually went to lunch at the British Embassy. It's not something we normally drop into our conversation, but it was a wonderful lunch with His Royal Highness, and he was very funny and very witty. But before we went in, the ambassador took me on one side and said, "Professor Daniell, I must tell you the royal attention span is not very long. [laughter] Don't think it's you." But in fact, he was marvellous. Either he'd done his homework, or he knew it, because at every case he was asking highly intelligent questions.

Getting later and later, the curious security men behind him were going crawling into their sleeves, and the gallery of press men were there, flashing away, my wife, standing there in the summer frock, and they were all saying, "Who's the guy with the Duke?" and she was saying, trying not to sound like the queen, "Actually, it's my husband." [laughter] Unforgettable experience. But even more important in that experience in Washington was the fact that people came up to me in Washington and said, "We have travelled to see this exhibition in all three places."

There is another copy in St. Paul's Cathedral Library, but it's severely damaged, misses 72 pages, which is rather serious. And then in 1994, a friend of mine, Dr. Eberhard Zwink in the Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart, decided in a very dramatic way that they better redo their catalogue, and they found on a shelf marked... um... heavily bound in calf in 1556, that in fact it was an impeccable mint copy, misbound, of Tyndale's 1526 New Testament, with complete with the title page. Now the British Library copy doesn't have a title page because in the 18th century there's a great fashion for collecting title pages rather as we collect stamps. You slashed the title page out and bound it into a volume. Of course, nobody can now find it. . But the Landesbibliothek copy has a title page, which is as follows: "The New Testament as it was

written and caused to be written by them which heard it, to whom our Savior Christ commanded that they should preach it to all creatures.”¹ Wonderful!

It's a pocket book—the British Library facsimile you'll see outside, and you can buy that—it's a pocket book, as all Tyndale's books were, just to be slipped into the pocket. And its circulation was huge. We do know that. And it was read in churches, and it must have been astounding. We have to take this in for congregations who were used to a priest with his back to them, standing far off at an altar muttering, [Latin speech] and so on. Suddenly, to hear spoken to them straight out down front, "Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you." The revelation, the revolution, the revelation and revolution, must have been astonishing. But Cuthbert Tunstall preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, still under the thumb of Wolsey, a sermon denouncing it, saying he'd found 2,000 errors in it. Of course he had! I mean, Tyndale was translating from the Greek, not the Church's Latin and there are very significant differences. And Tyndale later, Riley wrote, that if he failed to dot an “i” they would accuse him of heresy.

Tyndale heard of the burning of a large pile of these at St. Paul's Cross. A lesser man would have given up. Not at all! He was in Worms, where there was a strong rabbinic school, so he learned Hebrew. Hebrew was not possible to be learned in England. There were trilingual colleges beginning in Europe, teaching Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, just beginning. Cambridge, I'm happy to say, led England in Hebrew, and there were two brothers named Wakefield, both of whom were proficient in Hebrew at Tyndale's time, but neither of them was interested in translating. Their interest was rather antiquarian, as an odd language.

Tyndale moved to Antwerp. Antwerp was a very sensible move. There were many printing cities in northern Europe, but Antwerp was, I described it, as the Silicon Valley of Europe of the time. It was the great centre, and of course commercially, it was wonderful for circulation on ships. A recent calculation, I'm told, has found in 1528 sixty printers in one street alone. It was a great industry in Antwerp.

¹ "The newe Testament as it was written and caused to be written by them which herde yt. To whom also oure Saveoure Christ Jesus commanded that they shulde preache it unto all creatures."

He printed there his first—well, his first long non-biblical book, *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, we call it *The Unjust Steward*, where he works through the whole business of faith versus works, and then *The Obedience of a Christian Man* in 1528, his greatest non-biblical work, which Penguin published in Penguin Classics in 2000. I was delighted to be asked to edit it—very hard work editing it—but I was delighted to. Now, I tried to get Penguin Classics interested in others, in *The Wicked Mammon* in particular, but Pearson, the American owners of Penguin, far from being interested, tried to withdraw this—a Penguin Classic?—and pulp it on the grounds that they're not interested in backlists. Penguin Classics? I mean, they should last for forty years! Anyway, my beautiful editor and me, we fought very hard, and it's still in print and still about, and we're still trying to get *Wicked Mammon* done.

From his Hebrew, he published in 1530 the Five Books of Moses, the first time Hebrew had been translated into English. These were available as little single books, the five Pentateuch books you could have singly or together, and they must have been amazing. They were also received very eagerly and immediately denounced as heresy. But think that in the first chapter, you're finding not “Fiat lux et lux erat,” or even Wycliffe's “Be made light and made it light,” but Tyndale's ringing “Let there be light,” which is where the phrase comes from, and which I see every week somewhere in a newspaper. It must have absolutely astonished readers.

Here a bit of Genesis 3, the beginning of Genesis 3:

But the serpent was subtler than all the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made, and said unto the woman, Ah, sir.²

I love that! Why is the serpent calling Eve ‘sir’? I have more to say about that later, but I mean, at the time, late mediaeval times, you could call a mixed-gender group by the masculine form, but it's not that. Americans tell me he's actually saying, “Ah, sure.” But this is not true either! [laughter]

² But the serpent was sotyller than all the beastes of the felde which the LORDE God had made, and sayd vnto the woman. Ah syr" (Genesis 3:1a)

I think there's a very good reason, which I'll come to later, why he says, "Ah, sir, that God hath said," note the dismissal, "*that God hath said* ye shall not eat of all manner trees in the garden."³ Now the Hebrew here is *gerulus*, and Tyndale is *gerulus*—this is not a sexist remark.

And the woman said unto the serpent, of the fruit of the trees in the garden we may eat, but of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden said God see that you eat not and see that you touch it not lest you die. Then the serpent said to the woman: tush, ye shall not die.⁴

Isn't that wonderful? This great Tudor word, "tush," for superior dismissal. Horatio uses it at the beginning of—no, Marcellus, I think—the beginning of *Hamlet*: "Tush, it shall not appear."

"tush, you shall not die. But God doth know that whensoever ye should eat of it your eyes should be opened and ye should be as God and know both good and evil. And the woman saw and took the fruit and ate."⁵

More of these books have survived, happily. But something else happened. Tunstall, still under the thumb of Wolsey, gave the chancellor Sir Thomas More permission to read Tyndale's heretical books in English, which he needed permission, and asked him to attack Tyndale in English. More was by now a seasoned attacker of Luther in Latin, often obscenely. If you know More's attacks on Luther in Latin, they really are hard going. It is appallingly filthy, this stuff. More's *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, his first major book in English of June 1529, is a long, devious and tricky book fiercely attacking Tyndale. It was clearly to Tyndale's surprise.

³ Ah syr, that God hath sayd "that God hath sayd, ye shall not eate of all maner trees in the garden" (Genesis 3:1b)

⁴ And the woman sayd unto the serpent, of the frute of the trees in the garden we may eate, but of the frute of the tree that is in the myddes of the garden (sayd God) se that ye eate not, and se that ye touch it not: lest ye dye. Then sayd the serpent vnto the woman: tush ye shall not dye: (Genesis 3:2-4)

⁵ "tush ye shall not dye: But God doth knowe, that whensoever ye shulde eate of it, youre eyes shuld be opened and ye shulde be as, God and knowe both good and evell. And the woman sawe... And toke of the frute of it and ate" (Genesis 4b-6)

And really, More's attack throughout this long book amounts to nothing more than More's horror at Tyndale mistranslating four words:

“Ecclesia” as “congregation” instead of church;

“Agape” as “love” instead of charity;

“Presbuteros” not as “priest”—Tyndale had it first as “senior.”

And “metaninoyo,” very significantly, Tyndale correctly translated as “repent” and not as the Vulgate has it, “do penance.”

More does not come out well from his attacks on heretics. Tyndale replied in a short, factual, point-by-point little book called *An Answer to More*, his only response.

But most importantly, in Antwerp, never mind More, Tyndale was working on the revision of his New Testament, and in 1534, he produced his second New Testament with fine prologue and some brief marginal notes, as you will see. This is the modern spelling edition which Yale produced, which is on sale out there. And it is, in fact, this 1534 New Testament which went forward to all other English New Testaments. These brief marginal notes, you will see, are *not*, as is often said, violently anti-Catholic. Far from it! In the prologue, benefit of his Hebrew, even in the New Testament, is observable to Tyndale. He comments that the fact that he has found—readers will find—changes from the 1526 are probably attributable to his new knowledge of Hebrew, and he was the first to discover and develop some suggestion that Hebrew may be underlying some of the New Testament.

Every book except Acts and Revelation has a brief explanatory prologue, and there's a very long prologue to Romans—which I print here—a revision of Luther in his 1523 New Testament, with Tyndale's own moving revisions and additions. And that is the real foundation of the English New Testament. It went forward to become 83% of the Authorized Version. It was the English reformers' Book. Queen Anne Boleyn had a copy, which the British Library has, and I've had it in my hands, and round the four edges is written “Anne Boleyn, Queen” in Latin, but you know, she did the schoolgirl thing of writing her name around the four edges. Quite a number of these survived.

In Antwerp, he wrote other fine books, *Expositions of the Sermon on the Mount* and the *Epistles of John*, but he was working solidly through the Old Testament and finished Joshua to 2 Chronicles. He had previously done Jonah. Did he get to the poetical books and the prophets? It seems not. It seems that we shall never know. It's such sadness that he didn't, because Tyndale's Job or Tyndale's Second Isaiah, Tyndale's Jeremiah, never mind Tyndale's Psalms, would have been absolutely gorgeous. The Psalms embedded in the Pentateuch—or, not the Pentateuch, the Historical Books—we can see, yes, some in the Pentateuch—we can see he would have done very well with Hebrew poetry.

The Historical Books Joshua to 2 Chronicles were published after his death. What is astonishing is that outside the Pentateuch, he moves into such a new range of Hebrew, all sorts of kinds of Hebrew, and he matches this with a new range of English. Nobody—believe me, nobody—was writing with that range of English in the 1530s except Tyndale.

Let me give you two examples. He's conscious of the different colours of Hebrew in the Historical Books, unlike the more restricted Hebrew of the Pentateuch. And he revels in this range. No one—absolutely no one—could achieve the *epic* style that Tyndale gets. For example, in this passage in 1 Kings 18, where King Ahab is challenged by the prophet Helias. Tyndale uses the Greek form from the Septuagint instead of Elijah.

And when Ahab saw Helias, he said unto him, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” And he said, “It is not I that trouble Israel, but thou and thy father's house”—and just a bit later—“and Helias came unto all the people, and said, ‘Why halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be very God, follow him. Or if Baal be he, follow him,’” and the people answered him *not one word*.

Now those three final thumps are magnificent. It's exactly what it needs. The Authorized Version revisers changed it to “not a word,” as do many moderns. And that lightly running anti-piste is quite wrong, da-da-da, for “not one word.” Tyndale there is magnificent.

Or another very small example, in I Kings 10, the chapter in which the queen of Sheba arrives to visit King Solomon. The climax of the account is the regularity of Solomon's imports of wealth. Tyndale translates:

“and as for silver, it was nothing worth in the days of Solomon; for the sea ships which the king had in the sea with the ships of Hiram came every third year, laden with gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks”

Send shivers up my spine that still! It's the apes and peacocks that survive. Surprise! The special exoticism, creatures of movement and colour characterizing wealth indeed. Now the Hebrew at this point, I'm told, in 1 Kings is difficult and can best be expressed, especially as the Septuagint translator looked at it, as “gold, silver, and three funny things.” [laughter]

The first of the funny things is a compound beginning “teeth,” though what kind is not known, and the other two are quite unknown. They're probably exotic living things, possibly semeion, and all three words in the Hebrew are hapax legomena. The ships may yet turn out to have brought gold, silver, possibly ornaments made of some kind of teeth, and perhaps two kinds of furry animals. But a translator simply cannot say that. What he or she has to do is to make the best available guess and hit hard and clearly. The kingdom of God is not going to fail to come if he or she prints apes and peacocks when it should be little bears and baboons. [laughter]

What Tyndale wanted was the pattern of the consonants and vowels in English, where the ‘o’ and ‘e’ of gold and silver chime with the ‘o’ and ‘e’ of ivory. And the ‘y’ and the ‘o’ of ivory then chime with peacocks. And the two p's relate to their vowels in balance: apes and peacocks. And the dactyl of ivory led to the single strokes of apes, and then the falling vowels and firm k's of peacocks make a cadence. Something Tyndale is uniquely good at doing, incidentally.

In the summer of 1535, while he was continuing his Old Testament translation and living safely, as he thought, in the English House in Antwerp, he was tricked into arrest by a horrible Englishman called Henry Phillips, who was paid a lot of money for ensuring Tyndale's arrest and ultimate death. This horrible man had embezzled all his father's money. He was

supposed to be taking his father's estate money to London, and he squandered it all and spent it, and he's desperately needing money, so he arranged to have Tyndale betrayed. Officially charged with being a heretic, Tyndale, arrested, was cast into a cell in Vilvoorde Castle outside Brussels, and he was there for 16 months without light in the evenings, his request for his own warm clothing and books ignored.

What we don't recognize until we think about it was that he wouldn't hear any English in that time. He was the great master of the English language and wouldn't hear any. Indeed, the greatest scholar in Europe, as I believe, was there in darkness for 16 months. He wouldn't even know of the success of his translations, because nobody would come to him and tell him of them. He was interrogated by senior prosecuting scholars from the new Catholic University of Leuven, established for that purpose— and not for the purpose of trying Tyndale—but to remove heresy, and condemned.

Outside the castle, on the morning of 6th of October 1536, having been publicly degraded from the priesthood, Tyndale was tied to a stake and garrotted. His body was burned. That he was not, as heretics had to be, burned alive was in view of his stature as a scholar. His last words were said to be, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes."

Henry VIII was already moving towards encouraging English Bibles, but the moves were a few months too late for Tyndale.

NOW, MY SECOND MAJOR SECTION, which will be shorter, is to look at how we are, at the beginning of the 21st century, at Tyndale's several reputations. First of all, he is, we're delighted to know, being rediscovered as the founding father of the English Bible, the most influential book the world has ever known.

The chaplain to the English House in Antwerp, where he'd been living, John Rogers, assembled all that Tyndale had translated and printed after his death, and the unpublished manuscript of his translation of the next court of the Old Testament, the Historical Books, arranged their publication in Antwerp in 1537, in a complete volume known, for reasons of security, as Thomas Matthew's Bible.

Rogers took the second half of the Old Testament, which Tyndale hadn't reached, from the 1535 Antwerp translation made by Miles Coverdale, which is not from the Hebrew. Matthew's Bible circulated freely in England less than 12 months after Tyndale's execution. It's tragic, that. It was absorbed into new work by Coverdale, the Great Bible, issued 1539 at the direction of the King, and to be placed in every one of the 9,000 parishes in England, with alongside Erasmus's *Paraphrases of the New Testament*.

Here, more significantly, Tyndale's work was the basis of first a New Testament translated and printed in Geneva in 1557, made by exiles from the persecution under Queen Mary Tudor. John Rogers was himself the first of 300 martyrs under Mary. He was burned under horrible circumstances. And then the similarly made Geneva Bible of 1560. The latter was a work—I'll come back to it in a second—of great distinction in the quality of printing, in the comprehensive aids to study in notes, essays, illustrations, and maps, but of all in the now-forgotten achievement of the handful of men who made that volume, especially in translating for the first time into English, and well, the second half of the Old Testament, the difficult part, being all of it poetry.

The Geneva New Testament was revised in Oxford in 1576, and new notes on Revelation were added in 1599, before it was pushed out for political and commercial reasons in the mid-17th century by the new 1611 King James Bible. I tell an otherwise unknown story of the rivalry of printers to get hold of the King James Bible, and the fact that its success was largely a rather vicious commercial one. Geneva was the Bible of the nation, with almost a million copies bought between 1560 and 1640. Again, it has to be stressed that the common condemnation of Geneva Bibles handed down by writers who've never had the copy—that they're full of Calvinism, which was quite unacceptable in Elizabethan/Jacobean England—is both false to those Bibles and misunderstands the age.

Similarly, a parallel observation, often repeated, and again made by those who've never studied those Bibles, about the virulent anti-Catholic marginal notes in all Geneva Bibles, is another myth. It's true that occasional marginal notes, added to the Book of Revelation in some Geneva Bibles from 1599, attack some older popes, pontiffs like Gregory VII, Gregory IX,

and Boniface VIII, who was so hated by Dante that he placed him upside down in the subterranean furnace in hell. But the wholesale hatred of Catholics in Geneva Bible so frequently canvassed is like total immersion in Calvinism, simply not there. And I personally wince when I hear the wonderful Geneva Bible referred to as the “Breeches Bible,” which is a stupid old title. I hope you’ll never use it.

For these poetic and prophetic books, King James's men went again without acknowledgement to the work of that handful of exiled scholars in Geneva 50 years before. Their English Geneva Bible was a very great success, went through 120 fresh editions, and immediately became simply “The Bible” for everyone in England. It's how Tyndale went on to reach a larger world. In 1560, it was instantly used all over the land by the highest and the lowest, and remained in place for nearly a hundred years. We know this from contemporary references. It was Shakespeare's Bible. Even arch-conservative Archbishop Lord, for example, automatically preached from it. And as I said, nearly a million copies were sold before 1640 in a population of around 6 million.

When in the very long preface in 1611—which you may be interested to know, I printed entirely. It's very hard to get hold of this, so I print it entirely at the back of my book. It's very long—King James's translators in their preface, when they quote Scripture, which they do frequently, they don't do it from their own work, but they do it from Geneva. Yet these earlier workers are today quite unknown, even though they translated half the Old Testament for the first time from Hebrew. It annoys me in America when I hear that funny little man King James, his name attached to the great translation. He had virtually nothing to do with it. Again, I tell the story here, almost nothing to do with it! And yet those five or six brilliant scholars in Geneva, who did half the Old Testament, are completely forgotten. Look at in Geneva if you get a copy, the famous Chapter 40 of Isaiah beginning, “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,” and you’ll find that all but one or two words are identical in the Authorized Version. They seem to be lifted out, and yet King James, funny man, has the name.

The success of Geneva was in spite of there being as well as the King James two other rivals, the Bishop's Bible 1568 in which the Hebrew work was poor—that's kind—and the Catholic Rheims New Testament of 1582 followed by the whole Catholic Douay Bible in 1610. And those were both marked by prologues and notes expressing intemperate hostility to the “heretics” which by which words they mean Tyndale and his successors. Neither publication had any significant impact on English life. The frequent statement the King James's revisers relied heavily on the Rheims New Testament is not borne out by study of the matter. That is another myth.

An even partly diligent student can follow Tyndale's Bible work from his first editions between 1526 and 1534, especially 1534, and the Old Testament Historical Books in 1537, and right through all later versions, and even silently in what may at this time correctly call the violently Catholic Rheims New Testament.

Quite interestingly, I'm regularly rebuked in public for saying that Wycliffe and Tyndale especially, were necessary. I'm usually attacked curiously in exactly the same words. I've never discovered why this is, and I'm now quoting a recent letter in the Daily Telegraph. This says that “there had never been any need in England of anything but the Latin Vulgate, the brilliant work of St. Jerome. And the illiterate housewife in the 15th century knew her Bible well through the homilies of the parish priest, and through the Bible scenes from the *Golden Legend* and other popular collections, as well as the paintings and stained glass in churches and the mystery plays.”⁶ I sigh. [laughter]

How did the housewife know Latin for the Vulgate? In any case, it's anything but brilliant. We must remember that Jerome, who was brilliant with Hebrew, never got beyond the Gospels in the New Testament. A troll through sermons of the time catches the very tiniest of biblical scraps still in Latin. How did the housewife afford Caxton's magnificent *Golden Legend*, printed as a collector's item, which has anyway very little indeed of the Bible? What were

⁶ quoted from Ronald Knox's 1955 article “The Trials of a Translator”

those other collections? Church paintings and glass can only show a few events, and it's difficult to make a painting or a play out of the Epistle to the Romans. I sigh again. The truth is that Tyndale and the 16th century printed English Bibles bought in millions, were a revelation to the common people and caused a complete revolution.

Secondly, for lovers of the English language, Tyndale is the genius who in those widely read English Bible translations, gave England in the middle of the 16th century its first disseminated plain style, so that anyone who had anything to say had a simple model to follow. I do go into this in this book quite in detail. Later in the century, no longer did a man or woman need to be part of a refined elite learned in the ancient classics and the literature of France and particularly Italy, as for example Sir Philip Sydney insisted, in order to write well and be read.

Decades before, at the start of that 16th century, while Tyndale was at Oxford, the English language had become a mess. Quite lacking direction, muddling older Saxon and Norman French with Latinist vocabulary and rambling syntax, it was at the bottom of the pond. In about 1505, John Skelton, the poet at the court of King Henry VIII, wrote verses to say so, beginning “our natural tongue is rude, and I can't say anything in it.”

It was unthinkable that the English language could carry any freight of any weight, epic for example, never mind the Bible. It's unthinkable now when we have two billion English speakers in the world, either the first, second or third language. To think that English in when Tyndale started in 1526, was as unknown and insignificant in the continent of Europe as Scottish Gaelic is today in the city of London. Tyndale changed all this. From the mid 1520s, he wrote English in a register just above common speech in short Saxon sentences with largely Saxon vocabulary and manner-like proverbs. And the result was easily memorized as the New Testament Gospels, for example, were intended to be:

Ask and it shall be given you,
Seek and you shall find,

Knock and it shall be opened unto you,
For this my son was dead and is alive again,
Let there be light
the spirit is willing.

And from this injection of plain style into England from 1530, came that growth of language and literature which produced that nest of singing birds between 1590/1610, of which Shakespeare is the heart.

Ten years ago at the quincentenary I, in a broadcast, I dropped the remark, "Without Tyndale, no Shakespeare." This now comes back to me as, 'there's an old saying, without Tyndale, no Shakespeare.' I'm proud to be the maker of an old saying. Not too old, I hope. Let me give you a quick example of Shakespeare's. I'm a Shakespearean by trade and I'm constantly amazed at the sort of clarity, the Tyndalian clarity, of his language. For example, 1 Henry IV, first part of Henry IV, just before the battle of Shrewsbury, the big fat knight, the friend of the Prince Hal, is afraid he's going to be killed the next day. And as a Latin educated knight, he doesn't say to Hal, "The imminence of the approaching hostilities exacerbates my facilities with apprehension." Shakespeare makes him say, "I would to a bedtime how and all well. That's the Tyndale of the parables.

Thirdly, for conservative modern historians, Tyndale, if he's mentioned at all, this is a polite phrase for Catholic historians, is the nasty little man. He's known in some Catholic circles as "Tiny Tyndale", who, a mere heretic, got up the nose of the great saint Thomas More. They refer only to Tyndale's polemic works like his *Practice of Prelates* of 1530 or *Answer to More* of 1531. Such historians may, though not always do, add a footnote to mention that Tyndale translated the Bible, with the suggestion that it was an inconsiderable and rather odd thing to do. What matter to them are his unbridled attacks on mother church. He is lewd even foul-mouthed. When on opening his text, examples of these characteristics fail to appear, they're put in his enemies by his mouth. I'm not making this up. I can give illustrations of how this has been done.

Patience is needed to explain that all Tyndale's non-biblical writing had a far wider canvas than the supposed scoring of nasty points, being no less than New Testament theology. More attacked Tyndale, clearly to Tyndale surprise, forcefully over some years, sometimes obscenely in several books and at very great in his last book *Confutation* unfinished, half a million unreadable words attacking Tyndale. Sir Thomas does not come out well out of the study of the attacks on the reformers as I said. More called Tyndale, among other things, “a hellhound in the kennel of the devil, discharging a filthy flow of blasphemies out of his brutish, beastly mouth”, and worse. Though Tyndale is a large part of More's story, More is a small part of Tyndale's. And his *Answer to More*, Tyndale's *Answer to More* is factual and brief.

I've been I've just come back from America and I saw an American documentary, hour-long documentary, about Tyndale in which a Catholic scholar from Leuven said that Tyndale attacked More, More attacked Tyndale, Tyndale attacked More, More attacked and so on, and this is called polemic. But this is completely untrue. Sitting in that public viewing of the documentary, I shouted “That's not true!” But it's not true: More attacked Tyndale. Tyndale made one reply unfinished. There is no great sort of polemic tennis match. Tyndale's large Bible work has survived beyond anything dreamed of for More's writing. Tyndale through English Bibles has reached more English readers than Shakespeare. And it's Thomas More, however, who remains lodged in the popular mind. And that's probably because he's Paul Scofield anyway... [laughter]... in *A Man for All Seasons*.

A fourth reputation is just beginning. Tyndale was more than a mildly theological thinker. He's at last being understood as theologically as well as linguistically well ahead of his time. And I'm interested that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, in his new book of this year, *English Anglican Identities*, says that Tyndale, he's now convinced that Tyndale was quote “the true theological giant of the English Reformation” unquote. For Tyndale, as several decades later for Calvin and in the 20th century for Carl Bart, the overriding message of the New Testament is the sovereignty of God. Everything is contained in that. It must never, as he wrote, be lost from sight.

Tyndale is far from being, as has usually been served up until now, quite derivative with slivers of Luther and a drizzle of Zwingli. That same American documentary had that same Catholic commentator from Leuven saying, when asked what was Tyndale's theology off screen, he replies on the camera, "Oh, he's just in the shadow of Luther." Again I shouted "Wrong!" It is wrong. He's not!

The work that's been done by Dr. Ralph Werrell, and we have a lecture on November the 4th in Oxford, the 10th Tyndale Oxford Tyndale lecture being given by the chaplain to Hartford College, Dr. Sam Oliver, on Tyndale's theology, which I think is going to tell us a lot of good new stuff. Please do come to that. Tyndale was now being shown as original and new, except of course that he was old, demonstrating the understanding of God as revealed in the whole New Testament. For Tyndale, God is above all sovereign, acting in the individual and in history. He is the one in whom alone is found salvation and flourishing. When he wrote, this was very far from being said even by Luther.

What was sovereign in the 1530s, as it had been for 1,200 years, was the Church and ultimately the Pope. Tyndale showed how much that is a distortion of the New Testament.

I WANT TO FINISH with examples of Tyndale at work. First of all, going back to Genesis and the Serpent, the Hebrew for the serpent. I'm told by ex-Hebrew experts I had the privilege of working alongside while I wrote, while I did the Tyndale Old Testament and other things, Michael Weitzman at UCL, who was one of our greatest Hebrew scholars, who unfortunately died after he was one of the first victims of economic class syndrome. But he assured me that Tyndale—he would sit with me at my desk in UCL with Tyndale and his Hebrew Bible. He didn't need to look at his Hebrew Bible, he knew it by heart and kept saying, with his finger on Tyndale, "This is marvellous. This is wonderful. This is terrific!" And he assured me that Tyndale's understanding of the tricky Hebrew around the serpent was clever.

Hebrew makes the serpent unusually subtle. I think about the Hebrew for the serpent is unusually subtle and Tyndale makes the serpent exploit the Hebrew ambiguity in God's words. I got this from Michael Weitzman. "For the same day thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die." Is that a simple command? Is it a recoverable law? Or a conditional, or a simple future? I

can't here go into the Hebrew, but the Serpent, after the confusion of “Ah sir,” I think that's why he says it, you see, just to confuse Eve, introduces a further confusion. What Eve understood as a command, the serpent turned into a wish or a suggestion to be discussed or bargained over. Tyndale catches this Hebrew confusion by making the serpent use an English conditional modal auxiliary “*should*”:

“Whensoever ye *should* eat of it.”—perhaps you won't, but perhaps you will. Who knows?—“Your eyes *should* be opened”—though, of course, they might not be. It might be a trick by God—“And ye *should* be as God.” Being as God, says the serpent, is no big thing. It's always open to you to choose whether to be that or not.

Tyndale has been alert to the Hebrew mixture of what I call imperfect imperatives is used for different purposes by the serpent, to make a God who merely makes predictions, which are open to discussion, even to curious experiment. The serpent knows that Eve didn't hear God herself. The true subtlety of the fall, in Hebrew and in Tyndale, was the temptation not so much to eat the apple, as to misrepresent God as being open to minor experiment.

King James's men lost it with simple “shalls”, simple futurity, and so do all the shiny modern versions that I've seen. Tyndale was the first to put Hebrew into English, and his serpent is truly subtle—a new word in English, first used by Tyndale there.

My second example tells of a death and shows the skill of Tyndale in both characterization and storytelling. At the end of 2 Samuel 18, as you know, a long sweep of narrative over six chapters about David's beloved son, Absalom, who is misled by a crafty counselor, Ahitophel, and led a rebellion against his father, comes to a climax in the death of Absalom and the breaking of the news to his father in these words:

And the king said to Cush: Is the lad Absalom safe? and Cush answered: The enemies of my lord the King, and all that rise against thee to have thee, be as thy lad is. And the king was moved, and went up to a chamber over the gate, and wept and as he went, thus he said: my son Absalom, my son, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, Absalom, my son, my son.

The force of the double repetition of “Absolom” and “my son” twice is painful enough for a father in sudden and desperately pointed grief. But between the pairs, Tyndale puts that anguished cry of David and makes it entirely in monosyllables, in two triplets and a doublet, so that it runs, “would to God I had died for thee. It's the end. They are the last words of the long story, something surely Shakespearean in its linguistic power.

I want to read three passages from the New Testament and make a brief comment. First from the famous Christmas stories of Luke 2, which as we read them are still very much Tyndale. You remember the shepherds revealed by the angel. Tyndale goes on:

“And it fortun^ed, as soon as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another: let us go even now unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord hath shewed unto us.”⁷

I want you to hear the “a” sounds here. The way that the New Testament is memorable, is made to be memorable, Tyndale locks the next sentence with “a” sounds, with Mary at the centre. I'm going to exaggerate it:

And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe laid in a manger. And when they'd seen it, they published abroad the saying, which was told them of that child. And all that heard it *wondered*—[hold on to that word]—*wondered* at those things which were told them of the shepherds. But Mary kept all those sayings, and *pondered* them in her heart.⁸

The chime between “wondered” and “pondered” is so beautiful. And also Tyndale, as Luke, knows what it is for a young woman to *ponder* something in her heart.

⁷ "And it fortun^ed as sone as the angels were gone away from them into heven the shepherdes sayd one to another: let us goo eve unto Bethleem and se this thyng^e that is hapened which the Lorde hath shewed unto us." (Luke 2:15)

⁸ And they cam with haste and founde Mary and Ioseph and the babe layde in a mager. And when they had sene it they publissed abrode the sayinge which was tolde them of that chylde. And all that hearde it wondred at those thinges which were tolde the of the shepherdes. But Mary kept all thoose sayinges and pondered them in hyr hert. (Luke 2:16-19)

And then from Luke 16, just a few words from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus is the only man, as you know—I don't need to tell you this—he's the only man in the parables who is named. And his name means “God helps.” Nothing to do with leprosy; that's a later addition. And it's interesting that his name means “God helps,” whereas the rich man was beyond help.

Being in hell, in torments, the rich man lifts up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom, and cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water."⁹

Here's little “i” sounds: dip the tip of his finger. So characteristic of Tyndale. Such a tiny touch, but so important. Nobody else has got it since him.

“Dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, or “I am tormented in this flame.”

And finally, to read from Matthew 26, part of the Gethsemane—part of the Passion story—the Gethsemane. I'm going to read 120 words as it amounts to, of which only four are not Saxons apart from proper names:

[But] then went Jesus with them unto a place, which is called Gethsemane, and said unto the disciples: sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to wax sorrowful and to be in an agony. Then said Jesus unto them: my soul is heavy, even unto the death. Tarry ye here: and watch with me. And he went a little apart, and fell flat on his face, and prayed, saying: O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And he came unto the disciples, and found them asleep, and said unto

⁹ beinge in hell in tormetes he lyfte vp his eyes and sawe Abraham a farre of and Lazarus in his bosome and he cryed and sayd: father Abraham have mercy on me and sende Lazarus that he maye dippe the tippe of his fynger in water (Luke 16:23-24)

Peter: what, could ye not watch with me one hour? watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."¹⁰

These qualities of great clarity and accuracy, and always speaking directly to the heart, that Tyndale has given us, matter a great deal, and we have to work hard to hold on to them. Tyndale, in the Passion story when Peter has just realized that he's betrayed his master, Tyndale has, "and Peter went out and *wept bitterly*." You can't put it better. Rhythmically, it's perfect. For the Greek, it's perfect. A modern American translation has, "Peter left and cried hard." Now, that is appalling. Forgive me saying so, but it is. As my wife said, that's what a baby does when it's hungry. But imagine St. Matthew's Passion, for example: Think of the melisma on the evangelist singing, "and Peter w-e-p-t bitterly"—pure Tyndale; Tyndale is translated in the German, of course.

Or even worse, Tyndale at 1 Corinthians 13, talking about love, as you all know, finishes with, "then shall I know even as I am known," which is almost infinite in its understanding of the importance of love. Then shall I know God and a loved one, even as I am known by God and a loved one. A modern American translation, which is extremely popular, has at that point, "it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright." [laughter] This is a translation is called *The Message*. And I saw in a religious bookshop a panel against it saying, "Over 10 million sold." What can one do?

Even beyond those solid, everlasting gifts to Bible in English—accuracy and clarity, and the register above common speech—Tyndale's craftsmanship in making English sentences out of Greek and Hebrew and writing on his own, can amount in his vocabulary, in his sense of rhythm and cadence, to a work of genius. I use the word with care.

¹⁰ Then went Iesus with them into a place which is called Gethsemane and sayde unto the disciples syt ye here whyll I go and praye yonder. And he toke with him Peter and the two sonnes of zebede and began to wexe sorowfull and to be in an agonye. Then sayd Iesus unto them: my soule is hevy even vnto the deeth. Tary ye here and watche with me. And he went a lytell aparte and fell flat on his face and prayed sayinge: O my father yf it be possible let this cuppe passe from me: neverthelesse not as I wyll but as thou wylt. And he came unto the disciples and founde them aslepe and sayde to Peter: what coulde ye not watche with me one houre: watche and praye that ye fall not into temptacion. The spirite is willynge but the flesshe is weake. (Matthew 26:37-41)

I'll finish with this. Writing to readers at the beginning of his *Obedience of the Christian Man*, here at the very beginning, about the hatred of Jesus by the officially religious in the Gospels, he concludes the passage with what amounts to the gospel story in a nutshell, which applies also to giving the English Bible against the fierce opposition of the church. Tyndale writes, "Finally, when they had done all they could, and that they thought sufficient, and when Christ was in the heart of the earth, and so many bills and poleaxes about him to keep him down, and when it was past man's help, then help God. When man could not bring him again, God's truth fetched him again."

Thank you.

[Lengthy applause followed by the chairman thanking Prof. Daniell]

The words "expert" and "expertise," I think you'll agree, are used today lightly and loosely these days. But what we've benefited from this morning has been a display of expertise in the true sense, and for that we are very grateful. Professor Daniell, we have enjoyed a very informative lecture which has been delivered with a great deal of enthusiasm, as is the mark of a great teacher, with a great deal of humour and historical insight, as one would expect from someone who has labored so long over the subject matter. You mentioned earlier on in your lecture the royal attention span. These days we're told that the average student's attention span is no more than 20 minutes. And at that point in a talk, where we should stop and do something else, or get everyone to stand up and move around, and that kind of thing. Well, for me anyway, and I'm sure for most of us here—all of us, I'm sure—you have held our attention and held our interest for the whole hour. And again, we thank you for that.

Again, they say that a mark of a good lecture, and one which has made its point and made its impact, is that there is often a change in attitude that takes place in the hearer. And I think, for myself, I will come away with this: with a greater sense and a greater appreciation for the contribution of Tyndale, both to the development of the English language and, of course, to the spirit of the Gospel and the expansion of the kingdom here in the UK and worldwide.

So, thank you for giving us such a memorable start to what we anticipate to be a memorable day. Thank you again. Thank you.

[Final Applause]