

William Tyndale and His Works

Introduction

William Tyndale is known as the most remarkable figure among the first generation of English Protestants. His contribution to the history of the English Bible deserves to be written in golden letters. But it is the irony that very little is known about this great man. Mr. Robert Demaus writes in his book *William Tyndale-a Biography*, “Considering the profound and universal reverence which Englishmen entertain for their noble vernacular Bible, it is somewhat strange that so little care has been bestowed upon the accurate investigation of the literary history of that great work, and the career of the man whose name must ever be associated with it.”¹ Much of the details of Tyndale’s personal life is now lost beyond recovery. However, modern research has brought to light some valuable information about his career. Till the publication of Anderson’s *Annals of the English Bible*, in the year 1845, nothing more was known than what had been recorded by Foxe in his book *Acts and Monuments*. Foxe’s work on Tyndale is still valued and remains undisputed because he derived his information from those people who had been intimately associated with Tyndale. Although not much is known about Tyndale, modern world has come to recognize him as the true hero of the English Reformation who lived, toiled as an exile and died as a martyr and left behind the most valuable gift for his countrymen - the Bible in their mother tongue so that every body could have access to the Word of God. Indeed, this is the man to whom modern Englishmen owe the largest debt of gratitude.

Family background: There is ambiguity about the exact date of the birth of William Tyndal. Some biographers have assigned it to about the year 1470, which means

¹ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 9.

Tyndale was martyred at the age of nearly seventy years.² But Foxe speaks of his martyrdom while he was in his middle life, which would hardly allow the date of his birth to be carried farther back than 1495. Thus, it may be assumed as highly probable that William Tyndale was born about the year 1495.³ Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire, on the borders of Wales.

Nothing much is known about the members of Tyndale's household. Mr. Francis Fry of Cotham, Bristol, states, “. . . Edward Tyndale and William the martyr were in all probability brothers of the first Richard Tyndale of Melksham Court, to whom we may add a fourth brother, viz. John Tyndale, a merchant of London, who was fined by the Star Chamber in 1530 for assisting William in the circulation of the New Testament.”⁴ However, it is difficult to ascertain the parentage of Tyndale since there is no authoritative statement from any of his contemporaries.

Life at Oxford and Cambridge: Tyndale's early education was not neglected. At an early age he was sent to Magdalen hall, in the University of Oxford.⁵ He was known for his virtuous conduct and learning. He had a very high aptitude for acquisition of languages. Robert Demausa quotes what Buschius, a humanist, said about Tyndale's this ability of learning languages, “An Englishman, who is so skillful in seven tongues, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, French, that whichever he speaks, you would think it is his native tongue.”⁶ At Oxford he not only increased in the knowledge of languages but also other liberal art. He specially devoted himself to the study of the scripture. So much so he was devoted that secretly he used to instruct his friends of

² Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 26.

³ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵ *Writings of Tindal, Frith, and Barnes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian board of Publication, 1842), 2.

⁶ A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 93.

Magdalen College in the knowledge and truth of the Scriptures. He also became acquainted with the writings of Luther and Erasmus. When he read Erasmus' Greek edition of the New Testament he discovered the freedom and joy of the doctrine of justification by faith. He wanted to share this message with his countrymen by putting an English copy of the New Testament into their hands. On account of his abilities Tyndal received an appointment in cardinal Wolsey's newly founded college but being suspected of Lutheranism he was imprisoned.⁷ In 1515 he gained his M.A. from Oxford and then moved to the university of Cambridge for a time. What reason induced Tyndale to leave Oxford for Cambridge must be left entirely to conjecture because Foxe's words: "Spying his time he removed from thence to the University of Cambridge"⁸ are very vague. It has been conjectured that may be in order to escape the suspicion of the authorities of the University, as he was privately involved in reading and instructing the truth of the Scripture to his fellow friends when the authorities were beginning to be alarmed with the heretical opinions that were abroad, Tyndal moved to Cambridge. Tyndale's residence at Cambridge served not only his maturity in the knowledge of Greek and Latin but also, according to Foxe "he further ripened in the knowledge of God's Word."⁹ Probably this was the result of his own careful study of the Scripture and reflection in the light of the Scripture under the divine guidance of God. It is also probable that his mutual interaction with his friend Bilney, who was an active proselyte at Cambridge, contributed to his personal growth of achieving deeper knowledge of the Word of God.

At Sudbury: It is assumed that in the year 1521 he left the University of Cambridge for a humble capacity of tutor to the children of Sir John Walsh, a knight of

⁷ *Writings of Tindal, Frith, and Barnes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian board of Publication, 1842), 1.

⁸ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 52.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

Little Sodbury, in Gloucestershire. A man like Tyndale, who was a scholar, superior to most of his contemporaries, what induced him to leave the university to serve as a simple tutor, is not known. It could not be for his personal gain because his great antagonist, Sir Thomas More, said that Tyndale was well known for a man of right good living, studious, and well learned in Scripture.¹⁰ We can only speculate that perhaps his eager desire to mingle in the real duties of life and his passion to translate the Bible in English for his countrymen, compelled him to turn his back to the leisure of the University.

While serving as tutor Tyndale received good favor from Sir Walsh and sat most commonly at his own table. He got opportunity to meet group of learned people like deans, archdeacons, doctors etc. Most of their talk was of learning, Luther, Erasmus, and opinions in the Scripture. Tyndale confronted with these learned men and when they differed in opinion and judgments, Tyndale showed their ignorance by opening the Scripture. This created a rivalry between the learned men and Tyndale and they secretly bore grudges in their hearts against Tyndale. Foxe records: “Beneficed clergymen and lordly abbots, whose learning had become rusty from disuse, and who hated the teaching of Erasmus and Luther as odious and heretical novelties, must have been sadly disconcerted by the shrewd and determined schoolmaster, fresh from the University, an expert theological controversialist, with his terrible matter of fact, habit of confronting their opinions with the plain and manifest words of Scripture printed in the book.”¹¹

Tyndale, as he confronted with the local priests and the archdeacon of Gloucester he despised their ignorance of the Scripture. He valued the opinions of Erasmus.

Confrontation and opposition from the learned men kept growing. Perhaps in self-defense

Tyndale undertook the translation of Erasmus’s work *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*

¹⁰ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

(Manual of a Christian Soldier) where the author attempts to ridicule the popular misconception of placing the religion in scholastic dogmas and ritual observances. Tyndale's immediate purpose of undertaking the translation work was successfully accomplished. He gave a copy of his translation to his master Sir Walsh and lady who read the book. Sir Walsh and his lady were in favor of Tyndale's opinion now. They no more invited the clergymen into their house to dine. Tyndale's opponents were defeated. By this Tyndale secured for himself peace and respect in the house of his master while he was aware that he had provoked the bitter resentment of the clergy and that he must be prepared to face the consequences of their indignation. Tyndale's opponents' resentment against him continued to mount not only for this reason but also for his preaching. He began to preach in the adjacent villages and also to the crowd that collected around him on the College Green in Bristol. This further outraged his opponents. Foxe writes, "These blind and rude priests, flocking together to the alehouse, for that was their preaching place, raged and railed against him; affirming that his sayings were heresy, adding moreover unto his sayings, of their own heads, more than ever he spake."¹²

His opponents brought their accusation against Tyndale before a new chancellor, Parker, who had recently been elevated to the chief local administration of the diocese. Tyndale was accused of heresy and was summoned before a sitting of the chancellor and the priests of the neighborhood where he was threatened and badly treated. Sir Thomas More said "he sometimes savored so shrewdly of heresy that he was once or twice examined thereof."¹³ But there is no record of any other examination except the one before Parker. Although the outcome was not that serious but Tyndale could sense the risk of speaking the truth from the Scripture and he became convinced that this opposition resulted from

¹² Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 78.

¹³ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 80.

the extreme ignorance of the clergy with whom he came in contact. He knew that because of their lack of knowledge in Latin they failed to understand what the Scripture says. This made him more determined to translate the Bible in English at all cost so that all his countrymen could read the Bible in their own mother tongue and know the truth. He said, “Because I had perceived by experience how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth except the Scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order and meaning of the text.”¹⁴ He began seriously to contemplate the translation of the New Testament into English as the noblest service that he could render to his country. This became his life passion, which cost him dearly. Tyndale resolved to translate the New Testament from the original language—Greek and Hebrew, and not from the Latin Vulgate, as Wickliffe had done. The only edition of Greek Text was that issued by Erasmus at Basle in 1516. Tyndale, therefore, studied constantly the work of Erasmus during his leisure hours. When he disclosed his intention, it was published and the news spread widely all over the neighborhood. The priests became fiercer in their opposition, and charged him of heresy. Although, Tyndale occupied a respectable position in the neighborhood and had the favor of Sir John Walsh and other gentlemen, they were powerless to protect him from any organized proceedings by the authorities of the day. As matters were getting worse Tyndale did not see the possibility of translation work at Sodbury. So, he decided to give up his job, which he held in the family of Sir Walsh and left for London, hoping to find a liberal patron under whose protection his work might be prosecuted.

In London: Tyndale arrived London in the year 1523. Sir John Walsh had furnished him with a letter of introduction to his friend Sir Harry Guildford, controller of

¹⁴ A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 93.

the Royal Household, whose recommendation would be helpful for Tyndale to pursue his work. Tyndale remembered Tunstal, the bishop of the diocese in London, whom Erasmus praises exceedingly for his great learning. Tyndale came to London, expecting to find a sympathizing scholar who would appreciate his learning, and protect him. So, he requested Sir Harry Guildford to speak to the bishop on his behalf. Sir Harry Guildford promised to speak to the bishop and recommended that he should write to the bishop and obtain an appointment with him. Tyndale did as he was advised. But he did not hear from the bishop for some time. While waiting for the appointment he sought employment as a preacher in London. He was engaged to preach in St. Dunstan's in the West. Humphrey Monmouth, a wealthy cloth merchant happened to be among the audience when Tyndale was preaching. Monmouth, who was a generous merchant and who had begun to be a 'Scripture-man' came forward to help Tyndale. But Tyndale was still hoping to be with the bishop of London. At last, long awaited meeting took place but to Tyndale's disappointment, the bishop told him that his house was full and advised him to seek in London. With all disappointments Tyndale turned to his merchant friend, Monmouth, who wanted to help him. During his almost one year stay in London, Tyndal, thus rejected by one who professed to be chief shepherd of Christ's flock, was protected and supported in his undertaking by a citizen and draper, named Humphrey Monmouth, who was afterwards imprisoned for assisting Tyndal.¹⁵ According to Monmouth, Tyndale was a good priest, who studied day and night, ate sodden meat, drank small amount of beer and never wore linen. He paid Tyndale ten pounds sterling to pray for the souls of his father, mother, and all Christians. At Monmouth's table Tyndale met many of the most learned men in London from whom he heard the secret history of the transaction of

¹⁵ *Writings of Tindal, Frith, and Barnes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian board of Publication, 1842), 4.

Henry's reign. During all these time Tyndale had never forgotten the purpose for which he came to this place. Tyndale received no encouragement from Tunstal to proceed in his work. Without obtaining Episcopal approval his translation could neither be printed nor read. In his own word Tyndale wrote, ". . . understood not only that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but, also, that there was no place to do it in all England."¹⁶ Since there was no possibility of translating the New Testament in England, those friends who gathered at Monmouth's table suggested that he should go abroad where there would be no difficulty in translating. Tyndale was frustrated but he heard his wellwishers' advice and resolved to leave the country in order to engage in the work of translation. So, in 1524 he sailed for Hamburg, Germany.¹⁷

Printing of the New Testament: Monmouth provided financial help for Tyndal as he left for Hamburg. During this time the reformation in Germany was in progress. But Tyndale lost no time in taking the necessary steps for the accomplishment of his great work. However, the details of his movement are obscure. According to the petition of Monmouth "Tyndale left London for Hamburg in the month of May, 1524 and within a year he sent for his ten pounds (which some friends in London had given him) to me from Hamburg; and then I sent it to him by one Hans Collenbek."¹⁸ Probably in April, 1525, Tyndale was again in Hamburg; and in the autumn of that year he was in Cologne. But how or where did he spend the intervening months is debatable. Several theories have been brought forward but the evidences from the contemporaries of Tyndale stand out so strong that all other theories or hypothesis can be rejected. Tyndale's contemporaries assert that he did not remain at Hamburg but he went to Wittenberg to see Luther. It is

¹⁶ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 110-111.

¹⁷ Tony Lane, "A Man for all People: Introducing William Tyndale," *Christian History*, vol.VI (1987): 7.

¹⁸ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 115.

assumed that Tyndale must have spent time with Luther, learning from his knowledge and experience, which helped him in his translation work, although there is no evidence for this. However, Sir Thomas in his *Confutation* asserts that Tyndale was with Luther at the time when he was translating the New Testament.¹⁹ Tyndale translated directly from the Greek and Hebrew, with occasional reference to the Latin Vulgate and the German translation of Luther. Meanwhile, Monmouth sent a man called William Roye, to help Tyndale in his work. In 1525 Tyndale left Wittenberg and went to Hamburg to receive the ten pounds, which he had left with Monmouth. It is not sure why Tyndale did not print his translation in Wittenberg but we can only guess that he wanted to avoid the danger of printing at Wittenberg. At that time reformation was going known in Germany and Wittenberg was known as the head quarter of heresy. So, any book England imported from Wittenberg was under strong scrutiny and Tyndale knew that his translation would not be allowed in England. So, he decided to go to Colonge, which was known for famous printers who had extensive business connection in England and had greater facilities to export books cheaply to London. Some other evidences show that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark were issued separately before the completion of the Testament. Since there were no printers in Hamburg, it must be at Wittenberg where the two gospels were printed, no latter than March 1525.²⁰ Whatever the fact may be it is believed that Tyndale and Roye proceeded to Cologne to complete the printing job. According to the only evidence available, the translation was practically finished before they arrived at Cologne. Every precaution was taken to ensure secrecy and the work seemed to progress without any suspicion from others. Three thousand copies were to be printed and the work had already progressed but then they were interrupted. At that time John Cochloeus,

¹⁹ Ibid., 117.

²⁰ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 130.

dean of the church of the Blessed Virgin at Frankfort, was living in exile in Cologne.²¹ He came to know about Tyndale and Roye from the Cologne printers and heard them boasting about England becoming Lutheran. He invited some of the printers into his house to dine and one of them, under the influence of wine, disclosed everything about the printing work of Tyndale and his plan to bring reformation in England. Cochloeus informed Herman Rinck, a senator of Cologne, about the work of Tyndale. The Senator issued an order to suspend all the printing job immediately. Tyndale and Roye, to escape imprisonment or worse consequences, were compelled to sail up the Rhine to Worms, carrying with them the sheets that were printed. Rinck and Cochloeus immediately wrote to warn the king, the cardinal, and the bishop of Rochester, to take utmost precaution to prevent the circulation of Tyndale's translation. In the midst of all disappointments and difficulties Tyndale continued his work at Worms. It was reported by one of Tyndale's German contemporary that six thousand copies of the English Testament were printed at Worms.²² Tyndale also printed at Worms his famous *Prologue to the Epistle to the Romans* in 1526.

New Testament in England: It is not possible to say when Tyndale's New Testament reached England. Based on the words of John Pykas of Colchester, who was examined before Tunstal, the date may be assigned to April or May 1526.²³ But A. G. Dickens writes that "Copies began streaming into England by March 1526: the efforts of Warham, Tunstal and More to check their spread proved almost uniformly fruitless."²⁴ Also when and how the authorities in England became aware of the circulation of the

²¹ Ibid., 136.

²² Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 140.

²³ Ibid., 175.

²⁴ A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 94.

Testament is difficult to say. But certainly it brought a new awareness among the people in England. Foxe writes, “These books of William Tyndale, being compiled, published, and sent over into England, it cannot be spoken what a door of light they opened to the eyes of the whole English nation, which before were many years shut up in darkness.”²⁵ Out of the 6,000 copies printed at Worms, only two have survived. As more and more of English Testaments trickled into England, the bishops there did all they could to eradicate them. It was none other than bishop Tonsal, who was anxious to suppress Tyndal’s Testament. He consulted Augustine Packington, a merchant of London, who traded to Antwerp, how gladly he would buy all the testaments. Packington highly favored Tyndale and knew his need of money for printing. He helped Tonsal to buy all the copies of Testament from Tyndal. In September, 1526, Tonsal was appointed to preach at St. Paul’s Cross where he denounced the work of Tyndal as full of error and dangerous heresies and at the end of his sermon all the testaments were publicly burnt.²⁶ The bishop now thought that all was safe, but soon discovered that he was mistaken. The printers in Holland, finding the books were eagerly sought after, immediately printed another edition, and by the next year, they came over in greater number than before.²⁷ The bishop sent for Packington and questioned him why he did not buy all the Testaments as promised. Packington replied that he bought all the testaments but perceive that they printed more copies. And he told the bishop that in order to stop the printing he will have to buy the whole press, at which the bishop just smiled and the matter ended there. The public burning of the Testament excited much attention; most people concluded that there must be something different in that book from the doctrines of the clergy. The demand for

²⁵ *Writings of Tindal, Frith, and Barnes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian board of Publication, 1842), 6.

²⁶ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 177.

²⁷ *Writings of Tindal, Frith, and Barnes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian board of Publication, 1842), 6.

them increased all the more. All who imported and purchased these books were severely punished. John Raimund, a Dutchman, was punished ‘for causing fifteen hundred to be printed at Antwerp and bringing five hundred of them into England.’ John Tyndal, brother of William Tyndal, also was punished for ‘sending five marks to his brother, and receiving letter from him.’²⁸ In spite of all the restrictions three large editions were sold before 1530. The Testaments of first edition were sold for about three shillings and four pence for each. The books were widely circulated among the lower classes and they willingly paid for a new Testament in English. The authorities were constantly in hunt for Tyndale.

In the year 1527 Tyndale moved to Marburg. Here Tyndale issued from the press of Hans Luft, one of the most famous of his works, *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*. It is a treatise on the doctrine of “Justification by Faith,” in which Tyndale examined all those texts, which were usually cited as incompatible with that doctrine, and shows that when rightly interpreted, they were not inconsistent with it. It also states the real meaning of the doctrine. But *The Wicked Mammon* was singled out by the Archbishop of Canterbury for condemnation as ‘containing many detestable errors and damnable opinions.’ Preachers were instructed to forbid the public from reading of this book. *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* had been written some time before it was printed at Marburg; possibly it was written at Worms. On the same day on which it issued from the press, there also issued Tyndale’s other treatise called *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, which is the largest and most elaborate of all Tyndale’s works. Next to his translation of Holy Scripture, it was the book by which he was best known to his contemporaries, that which exerted the greatest influence upon those who were friendly to the Reformation,

²⁸ Ibid., 7.

and which gave deepest offence to the authorities of the church: it is the book in which the mind of Tyndale is most fully portrayed by himself.²⁹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man* was also severely condemned. Sir Thomas More said about it: “that frantic book of *Obedience* . . . a book able to make a Christian man that would believe it, leave off all Christian virtues, and lose the merit of his Christendom . . . a book wherein the writer railleth at large against all popes, against all kings, against all prelates, against all priests, against all religions, against all the laws, against all saints, against the Sacraments of Christ’s Church , against all virtuous works, against all divine service, and, finally, against all thing that is good . . . a malicious book . . .”³⁰

Tyndale also began to work on the translation of the Old Testament during the year 1528. By the end of 1529 the translation of the Pentateuch was completed. On January 17, 1530, the Pentateuch was printed by Hans Luft at Marburg.³¹ This was Tyndale’s second great contribution toward the work to which he had devoted his life.

Ever since the middle of 1534, Tyndale took up the residence with the English merchants of Antwerp, as the guest of Thomas Polyntz, a relative of Lady Walsh of Little Sodbury. Antwerp was a city in which he was relatively free from both English agents and those of the Roman Empire. His residence with Polyntz not only provided Tyndale with the comforts and the companionship of a home, but also considerably gave him personal safety. It was a privilege granted to the citizen of Antwerp that none could be arrested merely on suspicion, or could be imprisoned for more than three days without trial; and the same privilege was extended to the English merchants resident among them. So, Tyndale did enjoy this protection for a while.

²⁹ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 222.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

³¹ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 272.

Tyndale was the chaplain of the merchant adventurers in Antwerp and also cared for the needy people. Foxe writes about Tyndale, “He was a man very frugal and spare of body, a great student, an earnest laborer in the setting forth of the Scriptures of God. He reserved two days in the week. . . . On Monday he visited all such poor men and women as were fled out of England, by reason of persecution, into Antwerp; . . . he did very liberally comfort and relieve. . . provided for sick and diseased person. . . . On Saturday he walked round about the town, seeking every corner and hole where he suspected any poor person to dwell. . . . And truly his alms were very large. The rest of the days of the week he gave wholly to his book. . . . When Sunday came, then he went to some one merchant’s chamber or other, whither came many other merchants and unto them would he read some one parcel of Scripture. . . . it was a heavenly comfort and joy to the audience to hear him read the Scriptures; likewise, after dinner, he spent an hour in the same manner. He was a man without any spot or blemish . . . or malice, full of mercy and compassion . . .”³²

After his settlement in Antwerp Tyndale continued his work and in 1534, he reissued the Pentateuch, with some slight changes in the book of Genesis. He also devoted his time in revision of the New Testament.

The Betrayal: By 1535, several English men had been or were engaged in hunting for William Tyndale, under order either from King Henry VIII, Sir Thomas More, or Bishop John Stokesley of London. During the early summer of 1535, an English man, called Henry Philip, arrived in Antwerp. He came from a wealthy and notable English family. Philip threw himself into the company of the English merchants and by his charming personality won the confidence of all. It was not long before Tyndale, who was frequently invited to dine with the merchants, met this young man and got acquainted

³² Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 434-35.

with him and within a short time he had a great confidence in him. Tyndale invited him to his lodging place and showed him his books and other secrets of his study. But Poyntz was not in favor of this relationship and he questioned Tyndale about his acquaintance with Philip. Tyndale answered him that Philip was an honest and learned man. Poyntz did not question his judgment. But gradually Philip won the friendship of Poyntz also and collected much information from him. In the same year the Imperial attorney in Brussels had issued a warrant for the arrest of three leaders of English reforms: Tyndale, Joye, and Dr. Barnes. Philips rode straight to the court of Brussels, obtained the services of the Emperor's attorney and with a small party of officers, set out on the road back to Antwerp. He arrived at Poyntz's house on May 21, 1535, while Poyntz was on business tour and invited himself to lunch. He went out for a while, may be to set the officers to arrest Tyndale, and by noon he came back again. He said that he lost his purse and so borrowed forty shillings from Tyndale. Together they went out for dinner. At the going out of Poyntz house there was a long narrow entry, where two people could not walk together. Philip allowed Tyndale to go before him and he followed behind. When Tyndale came to the opening he saw two officers waiting to seize him. Philips pointed with his finger over Tyndale as a sign to inform the officers that this was the man. Tyndale was arrested most probably on May 23 or 24, 1535. The attorney came to Poyntz's house and took away Tyndale's books and other things. Tyndale was brought to the attorney's residence and finally to the Castle of Vilford, where he remained until his death.

The merchants, with all their power at Antwerp, were powerless to help Tyndale. When Thomas Poyntz came to know about Tyndale's arrest, he was furious and he lost no time in sending a strong letter of protest to the government of the Low Countries. Letters of indignant complaint poured into the court at Brussels. Letters also poured into

the court of King Henry. Poyntz even wrote to his brother John, who was the lord of the manor of North Ockenden in Essex, and urged him to make representation in the court. He wrote, “Tyndale’s death will be a great hindrance to the gospel and , to the enemies of it, one of the highest pleasure.”³³ Poyntz failed in his attempt to rescue Tyndale. He was banished from the Low Countries, lost his business, was separated from his wife and family for many years and died in 1562. Commenting on Tyndale’s influence John Foxe writes, “Such was the power of his doctrine and the sincerity of his life that . . . he converted his keeper, the keeper’s daughter, and others of his household.”³⁴

The Trial and Execution: The trial of Tyndale was delayed and did not begin till the commencement of 1536. He was imprisoned for a year and a hundred and thirty five days. Tyndale was condemned to death. He was to be strangled, and his dead body was to be burned. On Friday, October 6, 1536 Tyndale was executed. Before his death he prayed for the king of England. Foxe writes, “He cried at the stake with a fervent zeal and a loud voice, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes!”³⁵

Conclusion

At the expense of his life Tyndale’s distant dream and prayer came true. He sacrificed his life in order to offer his countrymen new lives by enabling them to read the Scripture in their own mother tongue and know the truth. Surely not only England, every child of God in this world, owes him the greatest gratitude ever given to any man for his great contribution.

³³ Brian Edwards, “Tyndale’s Betrayal and Death.” *Christian History*, vol.VI (1987): 14.

³⁴ Mark Galli, “What the English Bible Cost One Man,” *Christian History*, Issue 43 (1994): 14.

³⁵ Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale-a Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), 543.

