

# *A Tribute to William Tyndale*



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# A Tribute to William Tyndale

## *The Most Overlooked Translator and Publisher in the History of the English Bible*

### Introduction

With the invention of the movable type printing press in 1456, Johann Gutenberg printed the first Latin Bible, making scribal hand copying obsolete. Then, in 1516, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536)—with the help of Froben, a printer in Basel, Switzerland—published his groundbreaking Greek-Latin New Testament.\* “This was the first time that the Greek New Testament had been printed. It is no exaggeration to say that it set fire to Europe. Luther (1483-1546) translated it into his famous German version in 1522. In a few years there appeared translations from it into most European vernaculars. They were the true basis for the popular reformation” (David Daniell, *Tyndale’s New Testament*, p. 58). Indeed, Erasmus’ New Testament ignited the fires of the Protestant Reformation, which inspired Martin Luther to nail his 95 theses to the Wittenberg Cathedral door on Halloween Eve, October 31, 1517.

As instrumental as Luther’s papal challenge was in instigating the Protestant Reformation against Roman Catholicism in Europe, the single most important figure in the history of reformation in England was unquestionably William Tyndale—the first man to publish an English version of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, by translating it directly from the original Greek and Hebrew. In fact, as Tyndale biographer Daniell writes, his “translations have been **the best-kept secrets in English Bible history**” (Ibid, p. vii).

From the historical facts of Tyndale’s life, it is evident that God had called and prepared him for this most profound work. Tyndale “was born about 1494 in Gloucestershire, took his B.A. at Oxford in 1512 and his M.A. in 1515, and apparently spent time in Cambridge” (Ibid, p. viii). In addition to Latin and Greek, he was master of six languages, speaking as if any one of them was his native tongue; he could move from one language to another without skipping a beat.

Led by the Holy Spirit of God, Tyndale had an indomitable, burning, holy passion to translate the Word of God into English. He believed *everyone*—from the lowly plowboy to the common man and

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woman; to the king sitting on the throne of England—should have access to the Word of God, that they might come to know God the Father and Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

Though he dutifully sought official permission, both Catholic authorities and King Henry VIII denied Tyndale the right to translate the New Testament from the original Greek into English. “Realising he could not translate the Bible in England, Tyndale accepted the financial help of a London cloth-merchant and sailed for Hamburg in 1524” (Ibid., p. ix). In self-exile for the next 12 years, Tyndale first translated the New Testament into English from Erasmus’ 1516 Greek New Testament. While in Germany in 1526, he published three to six thousand English New Testaments translated from the original Greek. He published a revised version in 1534. Rather than starting with Wycliff’s 1394 English version translated from the Latin Vulgate, which was hand copied by scribes before the invention of the printing press, “Tyndale’s pioneer work was to start afresh; to translate the New Testament from the original Greek, at least twice [1526 and 1534], and a good deal [if not all] of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew” (Ibid., p. xi).

English merchant friends of Tyndale bought these New Testaments and smuggled them into England in bags of flour and bolts of cloth. Beginning in 1530-35, Tyndale’s works started pouring into England at an astounding rate—fanning the flames of the Protestant Reformation. These works included all of his New Testaments; major parts of the Old Testament; essential commentaries, prefaces, and prologues on how to understand the Scriptures; and finally several vital books: *A Pathway Into the Holy Scriptures*; *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*; *The Obedience of the Christian Man*; and *The Practice of Prelates*. Tyndale quickly became the most notorious and hated enemy of the Roman Catholic Church and of most of King Henry VIII’s official court.

In August 1535, Henry Phillips betrayed William Tyndale into the hands of Catholic authorities in Antwerp, where he had been translating and writing in hiding for more than five years. He was arrested and put in Vilvorden Castle Prison until he was executed. Remarkably, during Tyndale’s more than 15 months in prison he continued to translate the Old Testament, which he seemed to have completed with the help of John Rogers and Miles Coverdale. With his newly completed Old Testament complementing his previous New Testament, Tyndale is thus credited with the *first complete* English Bible, known as the *Thomas Matthew Bible*. After the last page of Malachi, ending the Old Testament, and before the beginning of the New Testament Gospel of Matthew, was a special page inscribed with the large letters “W. T.”—

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denoting that this was, in fact, William Tyndale’s Bible.

William Tyndale was martyred on the morning of October 6, 1536. In a final fervent prayer before he was strangled and burned at the stake, Tyndale cried out, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes!” God almost immediately answered his prayer. After King Henry VIII broke away from Rome and the Roman Catholic Church in 1537, he commissioned the *Thomas Matthew Bible* to be placed in all the churches of England and read by all. If someone could not read, the local church was to provide a reader, so that every person could hear the Word of God.

May this tribute to William Tyndale—the most *overlooked* figure in the history of the English Bible—lead you to a greater appreciation of the Holy Scriptures. Moreover, may Tyndale’s courage inspire you to love God the Father and Jesus Christ with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might, and with all your strength—so that you may obtain eternal life through Christ at His return.

\* Erasmus subsequently refined his Greek-Latin New Testament, combining the best Byzantine texts, and printed his fifth and final edition in 1535, one year before his death. It was from this version that Robert Estinne (1503-1559), also known as Stephens, published the famous *Stephens Greek New Testament* of 1550 in Geneva, Switzerland. (The Stephens version is practically identical to Erasmus’ 1535 version.) Later, the Stephens text, along with Beza’s 1598 text and Elzevir’s nearly identical 1624 text, was called the *Textus Receptus*. The Stephens Greek text of 1550 was used to translate the New Testament of the *Geneva English Bible* of 1557. The 1599 *Geneva New Testament Bible* was translated from Beza’s text. (Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd ed., pp. 103-104).

The translators of the 1611 *King James Version* of the Bible used the *Textus Receptus* as the basis for their New Testament. However, beginning with *The Revised English New Testament* in 1881, translators incorporated the faulty and deficient Alexandrian manuscripts. The 20th century saw a proliferation of new translations of the Bible, and nearly all such New Testaments were translated from the inferior Alexandrian Greek texts. Only a few translations were made from the *Textus Receptus*. The two main ones are *The New King James Version* and *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* by George Ricker Berry.

*Editor’s Note: This booklet contains the complete “Tribute to William Tyndale” that was first published in 2004 as part of The New Testament In Its Original Order. Due to a lack of space, it was not*

included in *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version With Commentary* (2008-2011).

## **A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM TYNDALE The “Father” of All English Bibles**

“ ‘The history of our English Bible begins with the work of Tyndale and not with that of Wycliffe,’ says Dr. Westcott in his *History of the English Bible*, p. 316, and it is true that one of the most striking features of the work of Tyndale is its independence” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, vol. 3, p. 898).

The history of the modern English Bible rightly begins with William Tyndale, rather than Wycliffe, because he was the first man to translate both the New Testament from the Byzantine Greek and the Old Testament from the Hebrew text into English. So profound was his work that all subsequent English Bibles stand in the shadow of his translations. Noted Tyndale biographer David Daniell wrote: “William Tyndale (1494-1536) was the first person to translate the Bible into English from its original Greek and Hebrew and the first to print the Bible in English, which he did in exile. Giving the laity access to the word of God outraged the clerical establishment in England: he was condemned, hunted, and eventually murdered. However, his masterly translation formed the basis of all English bibles—including the ‘King James Bible’, many of whose finest passages were taken unchanged, though unacknowledged, from Tyndale’s work” (Daniell, *William Tyndale a Biography*, dust jacket sleeve).

Daniell commented that “Tyndale grew up to be a remarkable linguist, noted in Europe for knowing seven languages as well as English, like a native.” Apparently, at age twelve Tyndale attended Oxford University in 1506. Afterwards he attended Cambridge University from 1517-1520, where he and other fellow students were converted to Christ after studying the Greek New Testament—Erasmus’ 1516 Edition (*ibid.*, pp. 14, 27, 49).

From the evidence of his life and work, there is no doubt that God the Father and Jesus Christ had specially set apart, prepared, called and converted William Tyndale for the task of translating the Holy Scriptures into English. He was led by the Holy Spirit and by a holy passion to translate the Word of God so that common men and women—even the plowboy—could have the Holy Scriptures of God to read

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and study for themselves.

Daniell wrote of a key turning point in Tyndale’s life, revealing his unflinching resoluteness to make the Word of God available in English for the ordinary man: “Until it was available in English as a whole book, the humble layman and woman had even less chance of knowing what the New Testament said: it might have been in Chinese for all the sense the Latin made, though some scattered New Testament phrases circulated in proverbs in English, and a few might have seen parts of the Lollard Bible [Wycliffe’s translation in Old English from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate in 1380]. Tyndale saw that what was needed was a New Testament in English from the Greek. Richard Webb’s narrative concludes, famously: ‘And soon after Master Tyndall happened to be in the company of a learned man, and in communing and disputing with him drove him to that issue that the learned man said, **we were better be without God’s law than the pope’s**: Master Tyndall hearing that, answered him, **I defy the Pope and all his laws**, and said, **if God spare my life ere many years, I will cause a boy that drives the plough, shall know more of the scripture than you do.**’

“The words echo Erasmus in his *Paraclesis*. Tyndale’s problem was finding a high enough authority [in the church] to work under, to exempt him from the fatal charge of heresy under the Constitutions of Oxford [of 1410—which strictly outlawed the Scriptures in English under penalty of death]” (Ibid., pp. 78-79, bold emphasis and bracketed comments added).

Thus, William Tyndale was single-minded and undaunted in his purpose of translating and printing the Bible in English. His calling had many parallels to the apostle Paul’s calling: Just as Jesus Christ had called Saul, who was a top leader in Judaism, out of the spiritual depths and darkness of Judaism to become the apostle Paul, in like manner, Jesus Christ called William Tyndale, who was a priest, out of the darkest spiritual bondage of Roman Catholicism. In the same way that Paul rejected Judaism, preached and wrote the Gospel of Jesus Christ and was martyred by the Roman authorities of his time, William Tyndale rejected Catholicism and was despised by the corrupt, intolerant religious establishment of his time and eventually martyred. As Paul was chased by the Jewish religious authorities from city to city and country to country, likewise while in exile, Tyndale was chased throughout Germany and the Low Countries. He was hated, rejected, and hounded as a common criminal by the Roman Catholic religious and civil authorities. Finally, he was betrayed by Henry Phillips in Antwerp and was arrested, tried and convicted as a heretic. He was strangled to death and burned at the stake in 1536 because he dared to defy the pope and the Roman Catholic Church authorities by translating and printing the first

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English New and Old Testaments from the original language.

So thorough and powerful was Tyndale's knowledge of English that his translation of the Scriptures set the foundation for today's modern English. It was not Shakespeare who established the power and beauty of the English language—it was William Tyndale, who lived two generations before Shakespeare (1564-1616). Shakespeare, by God's grace, built on the foundation that Tyndale had established through His translation of the English Bible.

***Tyndale Sets Out to Translate the New Testament:*** In the summer of 1523, six years after Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the Wittenberg Catholic church door, Tyndale went to London to seek permission from the bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, to translate the Scriptures. Because Lutheranism—which rejected Roman Catholic traditional practices and the authority of the pope—had begun to influence England, Tunstall denied Tyndale permission to translate the New Testament into English (*Ibid.*, p. 83). Therefore, Tyndale exiled himself to Europe, leaving England in April 1524. He first went to Hamburg, Germany, then to Wittenberg where he met Martin Luther, and then on to Cologne in 1525, where he not only translated the Greek New Testament into English but also proceeded to have it printed. However, in the midst of printing the Gospel of Matthew, he had to flee the authorities who were seeking to arrest him (*Ibid.*, pp. 108-109). Tyndale and his helper William Roye escaped and went to Worms, where Tyndale first published his translation of the New Testament in 1526.

Daniell wrote extensively of Tyndale's 1526 New Testament: "The small city of Worms, with its Roman Cathedral and eight-hundred-year-old history of meetings of the Diet, so recently linked with Luther's name, was hospitable to 'the English apostates' who had fled from Cologne. Tyndale, assisted by Roye, successfully completed the printing of the translation of the whole New Testament at the press of Peter Schoeffer, probably in 1526. It was a simple, small, octavo (roughly hymn-book size), without prologue or marginal notes, with simple chapter-breaks, printed in exceptionally clear Bastard type (*Schwabacher*) with small illuminations at the start of each book. It is little else but seven hundred pages of text. Of a print-run said to be either three or six thousand, two copies survive, one imperfect. Neither has a title-page, but we know from Tyndale's remarks in the preface to *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* that he did not put his name to the book, following the counsel of Christ to do 'good deeds secretly and to be content with the conscience of well doing'. The date on a title page might have been late 1525, or more probably 1526. Copies were brought to England and were already being sold openly, for example by



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‘Master Garrett, Curate of All Hallows in Honey Lane London’ by early February 1526.

“It was Tyndale’s revision of this New Testament eight years later in 1534 which not only went forward into later Renaissance Bibles, most notably the Authorized Version [King James Version], but is still dominant, even today. Yet the 1534 Testament, important as it is, is a revision. We must not lose sight of the extraordinary quality of that first printed New Testament in English, as it was welcomed and read in London and southern and eastern England. Here was suddenly the complete New Testament, all twenty-seven books, the four gospels, the Acts, the twenty-one Epistles and Revelation, in very portable form, clearly printed. Here was the original Greek, in English. The bare text itself was complete, and without an iota of allegorising commentary. Everything that had been originally written was here, to be read freely without addition or subtraction. The only constraints were the implicit command to read it, and in reading to relate one text to another, even one book to another, so that the high theology of Paul in the Epistles could be understood in relation to the words and work of Jesus in the Gospels.

“It was the Greek in English, the common *koine* of the first-century Mediterranean in the common spoken language of England. Phrase after phrase after phrase came from English life as lived in the 1520s by English people: ‘A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid ... No man can serve two masters ... Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you ... and the floods came, and the winds blew ... as sheep having no shepherd ... give unto one of these little ones to drink, a cup of cold water only ...’ These phrases, here taken at random from the earlier chapters of Matthew, would have been on the sheets of the abandoned Cologne edition and possibly were therefore already familiar to some readers. But here were no longer scattered fragments, but the whole thing, the precious first-century documents in which the Christian faith was first formulated, in modern English.

“What still strikes a late-twentieth-century reader is how modern it is. There are occasional words that have been lost to common use since 1526, like ‘noosell’ for nurture, or have changed their meaning, like ‘naughty’ for valueless, or ‘haunt’ for remain. But both vocabulary and syntax are not only recognizable today, they still belong to today’s language. This seems to be for two reasons. First, Tyndale goes for clear, everyday, spoken, English. Because it was largely the current language of his day, it remains largely a current language of ours. He is not out to make antiquarian effects, as the Authorized Version did, for partly political reasons. The result is that Tyndale usually feels more modern than the Authorized Version, though that revision was made nearly

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a century later. The second reason is that Tyndale makes a language for the Word of God, which speaks to the heart: ‘And all that heard it wondered, at those things which were told them of the shepherds. But Mary kept all those sayings, and pondered them in her heart.’ (Luke 2) ... Such phrases have gone deep into the consciousness of English-speakers ever since” (Daniell, *William Tyndale a Biography*, pp. 134-135).

### ***Tyndale’s Translations and Writings Smuggled into England:***

Because of a unique secret alliance between Tyndale and his English merchant friends in Europe and London, thousands of Tyndale’s English New Testaments, and later Old Testaments, as well as his other books, were smuggled into England from Germany and Antwerp. They were cleverly hidden in flour sacks and bales of cloth. “Smuggling was efficient,” wrote Daniell. “Attempts at controls, forbidding people to receive books on a long list headed by the works of Tyndale, clearly did not work, for all the evidence points to there being increasing numbers of readers of contraband books year by year—in spite of punishments for people caught. Bales of cloth (the commonest method) would be secretly marked, containing well-hidden flat printed sheets. ‘Barrels or casks, apparently full of wine or oil, might secrete water-tight boxes holding dangerous propaganda. Cargoes of wheat or grain, hides or skins were not always made up exclusively of these items. Flour sacks often held carefully packed contraband books strategically placed in the meal. Chests with false sides or bases, hidden receptacles or secret compartments brought over documents ...’ ” (Ibid., p. 186).

England was literally flooded with Tyndale’s outlawed Bibles. In order to stamp out this heretical book, Roman Catholic authorities, under orders from Bishop Tunstell, burned thousands of his New Testaments and books. However, thousands more were smuggled in and sold on the black market, in spite of the fact that those who owned or read them were subject to torture or death by burning or beheading. History does not tell us how many English men and women were punished, tortured, burned at the stake or beheaded for possessing Tyndale’s outlawed Bible—or for professing Jesus Christ as Savior by faith and rejecting Roman Catholicism. Perhaps, one may glean an understanding of the horrific human carnage during the bloody struggle of the Reformation from John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments of Martyrs*, in three volumes. He chronicled the deaths of many thousands of martyrs of Jesus Christ throughout Europe, including England.

In addition to translating the New Testament and Old Testament, Tyndale wrote other books that explained and expounded upon the Scriptures. These are: *Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, 1527; *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 1528; Preface to the Five Books of Mo-

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ses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, 1530; Prologues: *To the Prophet Jonas*; *The Gospels*: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; Prologues to the following Epistles: Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, the three Epistles of John and Jude.

Tyndale was hoping for repentance and reformation in England. He realized that whenever God sent a prophet to preach repentance and the people did not repent, God’s hand of punishment was soon to follow. If they repented, as the people of Nineveh did when Jonah preached to them, God’s blessing would be upon the nation. In Tyndale’s prologue *To the Prophet Jonas*, one can see his hope that the people of England would also repent: “And so Christ came again after the resurrection in his Spirit, and preached repentance unto them [the Jewish nation] by the mouth of his apostles and disciples, and with miracles of the Holy Ghost. And all that repented not perished shortly after, and the rest [were] carried away captive into all quarters of the world for an example, as you see unto this day.

“And in like manner, since the world began, wheresoever repentance was offered and not received, there God took cruel vengeance immediately: as you see in the flood of Noah, in the overthrowing of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the country about; and as you see of Egypt, of the Amorites, Canaanites, and afterward of the very Israelites; and then at the last, of the Jews, too, and of the Assyrians and Babylonians; and so throughout all the empires of the world.

“Gildas [516-570] preached repentance unto the old Britains that inhabited England. They repented not, and therefore God sent in their enemies upon them on every side, and destroyed them up, and gave the land unto other nations. And great vengeance has been taken in that land for sin since that time.

“Wickliffe [1320-1384] preached repentance unto our fathers not long since. They repented not; for their hearts were indurate [hardened], and their eyes blinded with their own pope-holy righteousness, wherewith they had made their souls gay [light-hearted] against the receiving again of the wicked spirit, that brings seven worse than himself with him, and makes the latter end worse than the beginning: for in open sins there is hope of repentance, but in holy hypocrisy none at all. But what followed? They slew their true and right king, and set up three wrong kings [in] a row, under which all the noble blood was slain up, and half the commons thereto, what in France, and what with their own sword, in fighting among themselves for the crown; and the cities and towns decayed, and the land brought half into a wilderness, in respect of that it was before.

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“And now Christ, to preach repentance, is risen yet once again out of his sepulcher, in which the pope had buried him, and kept him down with his pillars and poleaxes, and all disguisings of hypocrisy, with guile, wiles and falsehood, and with the sword of all princes, which he had blinded with his false merchandise. And as I doubt not of the ensamples that are past, so am I sure that great wrath [against England] will follow, except repentance turn it back again, and cease it” (Parker Society, *Prologue to the Prophet Jonas*, pp. 458-459).

In the end, Tyndale’s works, especially his New Testament and *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, ignited the fires of reformation in England and changed the course of history, for many did repent and turn to God. As a result, after Henry VIII read *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, given to him by his second wife, Anne Boleyn, he saw the Scriptural rationale that enabled him to take action and sever all ties with Rome. In 1534, he renounced the Pope and Rome’s control of the church in England and established himself as head of the Church of England, for he had previously received, in 1521, the title of *Defender of the Faith* from Pope Leo X.

In Langer’s *An Encyclopedia of World History* we find this summary: “1534. ACT OF SUPREMACY, appointing the king and his successors *Protector and only Supreme Head of the Church and Clergy of England*. This may be taken as the decisive beginning of the English Reformation. The break with Rome had political and personal origins; at first there were no real differences in dogma and liturgy. Refusal to take the oath of supremacy was made high treason, under which vote Sir Thomas More was condemned and beheaded (1535)” (p. 370).

The separation from Rome was the first step that eventually led Henry VIII to order the English Bible to be placed in all churches in England, printed under license from the king in 1537. The English Bible was actually Tyndale’s translation of the Old and New Testaments renamed the “Thomas Matthews” Bible. In 1538, also by the king’s authority, the “Great Bible,” published by Miles Coverdale, another one of Tyndale’s associates, was printed and placed in all the churches in England.

***Tyndale’s Old Testament Translation:*** Not only did Tyndale translate the New Testament from Greek into English, but he translated the Old Testament as well. It is evident that he translated one-half of the Old Testament—the Pentateuch, Joshua to II Chronicles and Jonah. These subsequently were published. John Rogers, who assisted Tyndale while he was in prison awaiting execution, put together the rest of the Old Testament books that Tyndale had translated before he was arrested. Concerning Tyndale’s Old Testament and the Thomas Matthew Bible, Daniell wrote: “William Tyndale’s Old Testament

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translations laid the foundation of our English Bible. They have been even more hidden from general view than his work on the New Testament... Tyndale published his first translations from Hebrew into English—the earliest ever from that language into this—in 1530, when he printed his Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. He gave us our Bible language: the words and rhythms, for example, of the story of the Creation and the Fall—‘Let there be light and there was light’, ‘male and female created He them’, ‘who told you that you were naked?’ and much else. **Two generations later, in 1611, the scholars and divines who made the Authorized Version under King James were happy to use what Tyndale had given them, though without acknowledgement.** Very many great passages from the Pentateuch come to us from Tyndale” (Daniell, *Introduction to Tyndale’s Old Testament*, p. ix, bold emphasis added).

In his biography of Tyndale, Daniell wrote of Tyndale’s Pentateuch: “Some time in January 1530 there began to appear in England, smuggled in from Antwerp, copies of a well-made little book, again printed by Hoochstraten of Antwerp ... the title-page of which simply announced *The first book of Moses called Genesis*, and nothing more. The next page began a prologue with the words ‘W.T. To the Reader’; so there could be no doubt about its origins” (Daniell, *William Tyndale a Biography*, p. 283).

“These opening chapters of Genesis are the first translations—not just the first printed, but the first translations—from Hebrew into English. This needs to be emphasized. Not only was the Hebrew language only known in England in 1529 and 1530 by, at the most, a tiny handful of scholars in Oxford and Cambridge, and quite possibly by none; that there was a language called Hebrew at all, or that it had any connection whatsoever with the Bible, would have been news to most of the ordinary population. Religion was in Latin: the Mass was in Latin; all the other services, like baptism, were in Latin; everything the priest did was in Latin; the Psalms in the Mass were in Latin; the Bible-readings in the services, such as they were, were in Latin; the Bible, when visible, was a big Latin volume; some priests, and most laymen ... [understood] only a few words of Latin, if that. The Bible was thought of only by a very few as a whole and complete thing, referring throughout, backwards and forwards, not just to itself from Genesis to Revelation, but also from Creation to the end of history—an entity. Now here in 1530 was Genesis, from the Hebrew, in English, in a form that fitted a pocket” (Ibid., p. 287).

“Tyndale’s Hebrew work did not stop in 1530. He printed a second edition of his Pentateuch in 1534, with some revisions in Genesis. At the back of his 1534 New Testament are fifteen pages

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containing forty Old Testament passages, for use in services in church, and translated not from the Latin of the service-books but from the original Hebrew and from the Greek of the Apocrypha. They again mark the first appearance of portions of scripture, from the prophets, Proverbs and Song of Solomon, in English direct from the Hebrew. Moreover, where the Greek New Testament writers quote from the Old Testament, Tyndale in his 1534 version tends to translate from the original Hebrew rather than through the Greek....A thousand years before Tyndale, the Bible had existed in a fourth-century Latin version known latterly as the Vulgate, very much the property of the Church. In Tyndale's time, to go behind the Latin to the scriptural Greek and Hebrew, and then **furthermore to seek to make those Bible texts available in portable volumes printed in English, so that anyone at all could have a copy and read it, was blasphemous and treasonable, punishable by torture or death or both**—until the King, Henry VIII, altered course for his own reasons, tragically soon after Tyndale's martyrdom in 1536 [sic]" (Daniell, *Introduction to Tyndale's Old Testament*, p. ix, bold emphasis added).

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

"For the Christian, Tyndale insisted, it is essential to be able to study the whole of the Hebrew Law in order to understand what Christ did with it.... Moreover, Tyndale discovered that Hebrew goes wonderfully into English—better than into Latin, and better even than Latin goes into English. All that he did in translating Hebrew rings with that discovery, which is very much his own, and one which only ignorance and prejudice have prevented the English nation from properly praising.

"Tyndale, and Tyndale alone (with his one or two occasional helpers in Antwerp like George Joye, or in Hamburg like Miles Cover-

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dale, whose Hebrew was not more than basic, if that), was engaged in a full-scale work of translating Hebrew into English. His discovery of the happy linguistic marriage of the two languages, though not *quite* as important as Newton’s discovery of universal gravitation, was still of high significance for the history of western Christian theology, language and literature—a high claim, but not difficult to support, though the work on it has largely still to be done: the immense influence of Hebrew forms on the English language has not been properly recognized even now.... All Old Testament English versions descend from Tyndale; even of the books of the Old Testament which he did not reach. Miles Coverdale, who first gave us printed in English the second half of the Old Testament, had worked with Tyndale, and imitated him” (Daniell, *William Tyndale a Biography*, pp. 288-289).

### *Tyndale—Grace, Faith and Law*

Today, Protestant theology is an odd mixture of grace and lawlessness. On the one hand, it claims the grace of God for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life, which is accepted, praised and loudly preached; on the other hand, it insists that Jesus came to abolish the law. The conclusion is that once one has been “saved,” he or she no longer needs to keep the laws and commandments of God except to love God in one’s heart. The result is a counterfeit warm, fuzzy, emotional gospel mostly devoid of any need to obey God’s commands or to understand the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Hence, the hallmark of Protestantism today is a lawless grace that is contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles.

Had all of Tyndale’s writings been retained, published and taught, perhaps the course of Protestantism in England would have been much different, because he did not teach a lawless grace. In the beginning of the Reformation in England, Tyndale was perhaps the most powerful influence through his translations of the Old and New Testaments as well as his other writings. Yet, the clergy of England, for political reasons as well as jealousy, rejected his clear teachings on law and grace. As a result, when the Bible was finally allowed to be printed in English, beginning in 1537, only the Scriptures were printed. All of Tyndale’s other writings that revealed the clear scriptural truth about law and grace were excluded. None of Tyndale’s forwards to the reader, prologues to the Gospels and Epistles, or any of his marginal notes were allowed. Thus, an uninspired clergy, through faulty interpretations of the Scriptures, gradually developed a lawless grace.

Tyndale wrote about human nature, Satan, sin, law, grace, mercy, forgiveness and the love of God. He fully believed in keeping the

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laws and commandments of God “from the bottom ground of the heart.” Furthermore, he taught repentance toward God, justification of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ and salvation by faith, not by works.

In *A Pathway to the Holy Scripture* Tyndale wrote: “The fall of Adam hath made us heirs of the vengeance and wrath of God, and heirs of eternal damnation; and has brought us into captivity and bondage under the devil. And the devil is our lord, and our ruler, our head, our governor, our prince, yea, and our god. And our will is locked and knit faster unto the will of the devil, than could an hundred thousand chains bind a man unto a post. Unto the devil’s will consent we with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our might, power, strength, will and lusts; [so that the law and will of the devil is written as well in our hearts as in our members, and we run headlong after the devil with full zeal, and the whole swing of all the power we have; as a stone cast up into the air cometh down naturally of his own self, with all the violence and swing of his own weight.] With what poison, deadly, and venomous hate hates a man his enemy! With how great malice of mind, inwardly, do we slay and murder! With what violence and rage, yea, and with how fervent lust commit we advourty [adultery], fornication, and such like uncleanness! With what pleasure and delectation, inwardly, serves a glutton his belly! With what diligence deceive we! How busily seek we the things of this world! Whatsoever we do, think, or imagine, is abominable in the sight of God. [For we can refer nothing unto the honor of God; neither is his law, or will, written in our members or in our hearts: neither is there any more power in us to follow the will of God, than in a stone to ascend upward of his own self.] And [beside that,] we are as it were asleep in so deep blindness, that we can neither see nor feel what misery, thralldom, and wretchedness we are in, till Moses come and wake us, and publish the law. When we hear the law truly preached, how that we ought to love and honor God with all our strength and might, from the low bottom of the heart, [because he has created us, and both heaven and earth for our sakes, and made us lord thereof;] and our neighbors (yea, our enemies) as ourselves, inwardly, from the ground of the heart, [because God has made them after the likeness of his own image, and they are his sons as well as we, and Christ has bought them with his blood, and made them heirs of everlasting life as well as us; and how we ought to] do whatsoever God bids, and abstain from whatsoever God forbids, with all love and meekness, with a fervent and a burning lust [desire] from the center of the heart; then begins the conscience to rage against the law, and against God. No sea, be it ever so great a tempest, is so unquiet. For it is not possible for a natural man to consent to the law, that it should be good, or that God



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should be righteous which makes the law; [inasmuch as it is contrary unto his nature, and damns him and all that he can do, and neither shows him where to fetch help, nor preaches any mercy; but only sets man at variance with God, (as witnesses Paul, Rom. iv) and provokes him and stirs him to rail on God, and to blaspheme him as a cruel tyrant. For it is not possible for a man, till he be born [begotten] again [by of the Spirit of God], to think that God is righteous to make him of so poison a nature, either for his own pleasure or for the sin of another man, and to give him a law that is impossible for him to do, or to consent to;] his wit, reason, and will being so fast glued, yea, nailed and chained unto the will of the devil. Neither can any creature loose the bonds, save the blood of Christ [only].

“This is the captivity and bondage, whence Christ delivered us, redeemed and loosed us. His blood, his death, his patience in suffering rebukes and wrongs, his prayers and fastings, his meekness and fulfilling of the uttermost point of the law, appeased the wrath of God; brought the favor of God to us again; obtained that God should love us first, and be our Father, and that a merciful Father, that will consider our infirmities and weakness, and will give us his Spirit again (which was taken away in the fall of Adam) to rule, govern, and strength us, and to break the bonds of Satan, wherein we were so straitly bound. When Christ is thus wise preached, and the promises rehearsed, which are contained in the prophets, in the psalms, and in divers places of the five books of Moses, [which preaching is called the Gospel or glad tidings;] then the hearts of them which are elect and chosen, begin to wax soft and melt at the bounteous mercy of God, and kindness showed of Christ. For when the evangelion [the gospel] is preached, [upon repentance and baptism] the Spirit of God enters into them which God has ordained and appointed unto eternal life; and opened their inward eyes, and works such belief in them. When the woeful consciences feel and taste how sweet a thing the bitter death of Christ is, and how merciful and loving God is, through Christ's purchasing and merits; they begin to love again, and to consent to the law of God, how that it is good and ought so to be, and that God is righteous which made it; and we desire to fulfill the law, even as a sick man desires to be whole, and hunger and thirst after more righteousness, and after more strength, to fulfill the law more perfectly. And in all that they do, or omit and leave undone, they seek God's honor and his will with meekness, ever condemning the imperfectness of their deeds by the law.

“Now Christ stands us in double stead; and us serves, in two ways. First, he is our Redeemer, Deliverer, Reconciler, Mediator, Intercessor, Advocate, Attorney, Solicitor, our Hope, Comfort, Shield, Protection, Defender, Strength, Health, Satisfaction and Salvation. His

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blood, his death, all that he ever did, is ours. And Christ himself, with all that he is or can do, is ours. His blood-shedding, and all that he did, does me as good service as though I myself had done it. And God (as great as he is) is mine, with all that he has, [as a husband is his wife's,] through Christ and his purchasing.

“Secondarily, after that we be overcome with love and kindness, and now seek to do the will of God (which is a Christian man's nature), then have we Christ an example to imitate; as says Christ himself in John, ‘I have given you an example.’ And in another evangelist he says, ‘He that will be great among you, shall be your servant and minister; as the Son of man came to minister, and not to be ministered unto.’ And Paul says, ‘Imitate Christ’ ” (Parker Society, pp. 17-20).

Contrary to Protestant or Catholic theology, Tyndale correctly understood law and grace. He clearly discerned the difference between practicing vain works of human religious traditions and superstitions, as opposed to keeping the commandments and laws of God from the heart. Moreover, he fully comprehended that justification of past sins comes only by deep personal repentance toward God and faith in the blood of Christ for forgiveness, followed by baptism. He understood that eternal life cannot come through any law; rather it is the gift of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In an era of gross superstition and spiritual ignorance, it is astounding that William Tyndale had such a deep and profound spiritual understanding of the Scriptures. It is evident that he was led by the Holy Spirit into the truth of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

***W. T. unto the Reader***—1534 Revised New Testament. The following selected excerpts are from Tyndale's forward to the reader as found in Daniell's modern spelling edition. These excerpts show that Tyndale never taught a lawless grace: “Moreover, because the kingdom of heaven, which is the scripture and word of God, may be so locked up, that he which reads or hears it, cannot understand it: as Christ testifies how that the scribes and Pharisees had so shut it up (Matt. 23) and had taken away the key of knowledge (Luke 11) that their Jews [who followed the Pharisees] which thought themselves within, were yet so locked out, and are to this day that they can understand no sentence of the scripture unto their salvation, though they can rehearse the texts everywhere and dispute thereof as subtly as the popish doctors of the dunce's dark learning, which with their sophistry, served us, as the Pharisees did the Jews. Therefore (that I might be found faithful to my Father and Lord in distributing unto my brethren and fellows of one faith, their due and necessary food: so dressing it and seasoning it, that the weak stomachs may receive it also, and be better for it, I thought it

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my duty (most dear reader), to warn you before, and to show you the right way in [to understanding the Scriptures], and to give you the true key to open it withal, and to arm you against false prophets and malicious hypocrites, whose perpetual study is to leaven the scriptures with glosses, and there to lock it up where [instead] it should save thy soul, and to make us shoot at the wrong mark, to put our trust in those things that profit their bellies only and slay our souls.

“The right way: yea and the only way to understand the scripture unto our salvation, is, that we earnestly and above all thing, search for the profession of our baptism or covenants made between God and us....If you shall forgive men their faults, your heavenly Father shall forgive you: but and if you shall not forgive men their faults, no more shall your Father forgive you your faults. Here also by the virtue and strength of this covenant wherewith God of His mercy has bound Himself to us unworthy, may he that forgives his neighbor, be bold when he returns and amends to believe and trust in God for remission of whatsoever he has done amiss. And contrary-wise, he that will not forgive, cannot but despair of forgiveness in the end, and fear judgment without mercy.

“The general covenant wherein all other are comprehended and included, is this. **If we meek ourselves to God to keep all his laws**, after the example of Christ: then God has bound himself unto us to keep and make good all the mercies promised in Christ, throughout all the scripture.

“**All the whole law** which was given to expose our corrupt nature, **is comprehended in the ten commandments**. And the ten commandments are comprehended in these two: love God and your neighbor. And he that loves his neighbor in God and Christ, fulfills these two, and consequently the ten, and finally all the other ...” (David Daniell, *Tyndale’s New Testament, Modern Spelling*, W. T. Unto the Reader, pp. 3-4, bold emphasis and bracketed comments added).

“**Now if any man that submits not himself to keep the commandments, do think that he has any faith in God: the same man’s faith is vain, worldly, damnable, devilish and plain presumption, as it is above said, and is no faith that can justify or be accepted before God**. And that is what James means in his Epistle. For how can a man believe says Paul, without a preacher (Rom. 10). **Now read all the scripture and see where God sent any to preach mercy to any, save unto them only that repent and turn to God with all their hearts, to keep his commandments**. Unto the disobedient that will not turn, is threatened, wrath, vengeance and damnation, according to all the terrible curses and fearful examples of the Bible.

“Faith now in God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the covenants and appointment made between God and us,

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is our salvation ...” (Ibid., pp. 4-5).

“Also you see that two things are required to begin a Christian man. The first is a steadfast faith and trust in almighty God, to obtain all the mercy that He has promised us, through the deserving and merits of Christ’s blood only, without all respect to our own works. And the other is, that **we forsake evil and turn to God, to keep His laws and fight against ourselves and our corrupt nature perpetually**, that we may do the will of God every day better and better.

“This have I said (most dear reader) to warn you, lest you should be deceived, and should not only read the scripture in vain and to no profit, but also unto your greater damnation. For the nature of God’s word is, that whosoever read it or hear it reasoned and disputed before him, it will begin immediately to make him every day better and better, till he be grown into a perfect man in the **knowledge of Christ and the love of the law of God**: or else make him worse and worse, till he be hardened that he openly resist the spirit of God, and then blaspheme, after the example of Pharaoh, Coza [Cora, Numbers 16], Abiram, Balaam, Judas, Simon Magus and such other” (Ibid., p. 5, bold emphasis added).

“Let us therefore that have now at this time our eyes opened again through the tender mercy of God, keep this in mind. **Let us so put our trust in the mercy of God through Christ, that we know it our duty to keep the law of God and to love our neighbors** for their Father’s [God the Father’s] sake which created them and for their Lord’s sake which redeemed them, and bought them so dearly with his blood. Let us walk in the fear of God, and have our eyes open unto both parts of God’s covenants, certified that **none shall be partaker of the mercy, save he that will fight against the flesh, to keep the law**. And let us arm ourselves with this remembrance, that as Christ’s works justify from sin and set us the favor of God, **so our deeds through the working of the spirit of God, helps us to continue in the favor and grace, into which Christ has brought us; and that we can no longer continue in favor and grace [other] than our hearts are to keep the law**.

“Furthermore concerning the law of God, this is the general conclusion, that the whole law, whether they be ceremonies, sacrifices, yea or sacraments either, or precepts of equity between man and man throughout all degrees of the world, all were given for our profit and necessity only, and not for any need that God has of our keeping them, or that his joy is increased thereby or that the deed for the deed itself, does please him. That is, all that God requires of us when we be at one with him and do put our trust in him and love him, is that we love every man his neighbor to pity him and to have compassion on him in all his

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needs and to be merciful unto him. This to be even so, Christ testifies (Matt. 7) saying: this is the law and the prophets” (Ibid., p. 7).

**“For only love and mercifulness understands the law, and nothing else. And he that has not this written in his heart, shall never understand the law,** no: though all the angels of heaven went about to teach him. And he that has that graven in his heart, shall not only understand the law but also shall do of his own inclination all that is required of the law....The gospel is glad tidings of mercy and grace and that our corrupt nature shall be healed again for Christ’s sake and for the merits of his deserving only: **Yet on the condition that we will turn to God** [in repentance], **to learn to keep his laws spiritually,** that is to say, of love for his sake, and will also suffer [bring about] the curing of our infirmities [that is, the weaknesses of human nature]” (Ibid., p. 8, bold emphasis and bracketed comments added).

It is evident that Tyndale taught an active living faith, based on repentance, forgiveness and grace. In addition, he taught that Christians are to keep the commandments of God, to love God and neighbor from “the bottom ground of the heart.”

***The Sabbath and Holy Days:*** Tyndale knew that living faith caused a Christian to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and become more perfect day by day. Likewise, through translating the Scriptures, he himself was learning and growing in grace and knowledge. In his *Pathway Into the Holy Scripture*, there is evidence that perhaps he was beginning to understand the commands of God to keep the seventh day Sabbath, and the annual holy days. Tyndale mostly lived alone, because he was hiding from the authorities in order to do his work of translating; therefore, of necessity, if he kept the Sabbath and holy days, he had to keep them by himself.

The following excerpts from Tyndale’s *Pathway Into the Holy Scripture* reveal his growing knowledge of the Sabbath and holy days. In this book he did not mention Sunday, as he did in *Obedience of a Christian Man*: “These things to know: first, the law; how that it is natural right, and equity; that we have but one God to put our hope and trust in, and him to love with all the heart, all the soul, and all our might and power, and **neither to move heart nor hand but at his commandment**, because he has first created us of nothing, and heaven and earth for our sakes; and afterwards when we had marred our self through sin, he forgave us, and created us again, in the blood of his beloved Son: “And that we have the name of our one God in fear and reverence; and that we dishonor it not, in swearing thereby about light trifles or vanity, or call it to record for the confirming of wickedness or falsehood, or aught [anything] that is to the dishonor of God, which is the breaking of his laws, or unto the hurt of our neighbor:

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“And inasmuch as He is our Lord and God, and we His double possession, by creation and redemption, and therefore we ought (as I said) neither to move heart or hand without his commandment; **it is right that we have needful holy days to come together, and learn his will, both the law which he will have us ruled by, and also the promises of mercy which he will have us trust unto;** and to give God thanks together for his mercy, and to commit our infirmities to Him through our Savior Jesus, and to reconcile ourselves unto Him, and each to other, if [anything] be between brother and brother that requires it. **And for this purpose and such like, as to visit the sick and needy, and redress peace and unity, were the holy days ordained only; and so far forth are they to be kept holy from all manner works that may be conveniently spared for the time,** till this be done [the observing of the holy day], and no further, but [after the holy day] then lawfully to work” (Parker Society, 1968, Tyndale, *Pathway Into the Holy Scripture*, pp. 24-25, bold emphasis and bracketed comments added).

“And even so he that trusts in any thing, save in God only and in his Son Jesus Christ, keeps no commandment at all, in the sight of God. For he that has trust in any creature, whether in heaven or in earth, save in God and his Son Jesus, can see no cause to love God with all his heart ... neither to abstain from dishonoring his name, nor **to keep the holy day for the love of his doctrine,** nor to obey lovingly the rulers of this world; nor any cause to love his neighbor as himself, and to abstain from hurting him, where he may get profit by him, and save himself harmless. And in like wise, against this law, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' **I may obey no worldly power, to do [anything] at any man's commandment** unto the hurt of my neighbor that has not deserved it, though he be a Turk:

“And to know how contrary this law is unto our nature, and how it is damnation not to have this law written in our hearts, though we never commit the deeds; and how there is no other means to be saved from this damnation, than through repentance toward the law, and faith in Christ's blood; which are the very inward baptism of our souls, and the washing and the dipping of our bodies in the water is the outward sign. The plunging of the body under the water signifies that we repent and profess to fight against sin and lusts, and to kill them every day more and more, with the help of God, and our diligence in following the doctrine of Christ and the leading of his Spirit; and that we believe to be washed from our natural damnation in which we are born, and from all the wrath of the law, and from all the infirmities and weaknesses that remain in us after we have given our consent unto the law, and yielded our self to be scholars thereof; and from all the imperfectness of all our deeds done with cold love, and from all actual sin

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which shall chance on us, while we enforce the contrary and ever fight there against, and hope to sin no more. **And thus repentance and faith begin at our baptism, and first professing the laws of God; and continue unto our lives' end, and grow as we grow in the Spirit: for the [more] perfect we be, the greater is our repentance, and the stronger our faith.**

**“And thus, as the Spirit and doctrine on God's part, and repentance and faith on our part, beget us anew in Christ, even so they make us grow, and wax perfect, and save us unto the end; and never leave us until all sin be put off, and we clean purified, and full formed, and fashioned after the similitude and likeness of the perfectness of our Savior Jesus, whose gift all is”** (Ibid., Society, pp. 26-27, bold emphasis added).

There is no question that Tyndale fully understood and taught that Christians are obligated to keep the laws and commandments of God, motivated by love. Yet, at the same time, they are to trust in God's grace and mercy through Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin, justification and eternal life. Tyndale also conveyed that those who love God and keep His commandments ought not keep any commandments of men that were contrary to the Word of God. Could it be that he was coming to an understanding that true Christians ought to keep the holy days of God, which had to include the weekly Sabbath—the seventh day of the week? Could it be, if Tyndale's life had not been cut short by martyrdom, he would also have rejected the Christianized pagan Sunday and holidays of Roman Catholicism and would have embraced the biblical Sabbath and holy days?

Perhaps, if his teachings had not been deliberately ignored and rejected because of ecclesiastical politics and envy by secret Romanists and Latinists (who preferred the Latin text over the Greek text), English Protestantism would not have eventually succumbed to a lawless grace and would instead have accepted the full gospel of Jesus Christ, including the Sabbath and holy days of God. If Tyndale had lived and been free to teach and preach publicly, there is little doubt that the English Reformation would have resulted in a more complete separation from Roman Catholicism. Unfortunately, because the Church of England did not wholly accept the Scriptures as its final authority, it removed itself only a few steps away from Catholic doctrines.

The English Reformation caused Protestants to reject the following false doctrines: papal authority; that Peter was the first pope; the perpetual virginity of Mary; Mary as a mediator; celibacy of priests; confession of sins to a priest; transubstantiation of the bread and wine of the Eucharist; vows of chastity and celibacy, the rosary; prayers for the dead; prayers to saints; purgatory; and most idols. However, they, as

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well as most other Protestants in Europe, retained these major doctrines that are based solely on the authority of the pope of Rome: the Trinity; Sunday keeping; infant baptism; Christmas, Easter, and Halloween observance; and a hierarchical church government. Instead of a full return to the Word of God to follow the Scriptures only, “*sola scriptura*”—which was the original Protestant slogan—they fell short. As a result, Protestants merely substituted the orthodox Catholic doctrine of salvation by works and sacraments for salvation through a lawless grace. Both doctrines of salvation are unscriptural.

### **Tyndale on Corruption and Evils in Roman Catholicism**

Tyndale wrote extensively against the evils and corruption of Roman Catholicism using the most impassioned words possible. He denounced the foolish ceremonies of the Mass and the evil and fearful superstitions instilled in the people by the clergy in order to keep the people in bondage to Rome. “What helps it [the instilling of fear and superstitions] also is that the priest, when he goes to mass, disguises himself with a great part of the passion of Christ, and plays out the rest under silence, with signs and proffers, with noddings, becking and mowing [gestures with the mouth], as it were jackanapes, when neither he himself, neither any man else knows what he means? Not at all, verily; but it hurts, and that exceedingly; for as much as it not only destroys the faith, and quenches the love that should be given unto the commandments, and makes the people unthankful, in that it brings them into such superstition, that they think that they have done abundantly enough for God, yea, and deserved above measure, if they be present once in a day at such mumming; but also makes the infidels to mock us and abhor us, in that they see nothing but such apes’ play among us, whereof no man can give a reason.

“All this comes to pass to fulfill the prophecy which Christ prophesied; that there shall come in His name, which shall say that they themselves are Christ. That do verily the pope and our holy orders of religion. For they, under the name of Christ, preach themselves, their own word and their own traditions, and teach the people to believe in them. The pope gives pardons of his full power, of the treasure of the church, and of the merits of saints. The friars likewise make their benefactors (which only they call their brethren and sisters) partakers of their masses, fasting, watchings, prayings, and woolward goings. Yea, and when a novice of the Observants is professed, the father asks him, Will you keep the rules of holy St Francis? And he says, Yea. Will you so in deed? says he. The other answers, Yea, forsooth [in truth], father.



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Then says the father, And I promise you again everlasting life. Oh blasphemy! If eternal life be due unto the bare traditions of lousy friars, where is the testament become that God made unto us in Christ’s blood? Christ says, ‘That there shall come pseudo-Christi’; which though I, for a consideration, have translated false Christs, keeping the Greek word, yet signifies it in the English ‘false anointed,’ and ought so to be translated. ‘There shall come,’ says Christ ‘false anointed, and false prophets, and shall do miracles and wonders so greatly, that if it were possible, the very elect, or chosen, should be brought out of the way.’ Compare the pope’s doctrine unto the word of God, and you shall find that there has been, and yet is, a great going out of the way; and that evil men and deceivers (as Paul prophesied in 2 Tim. iii.) have prevailed, and waxed worse and worse, beguiling other as they are beguiled themselves. You tremble and quake, saying, Shall God let us go so sore out of the right way? I answer, It is Christ that warns us; which, as He knew all that should follow, so prophesied He before, and is a true prophet, and His prophecies must needs be fulfilled. (Parker Society, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures by William Tyndale, Obedience of a Christian Man*, pp. 226-228).

**The Protestant Reformers Show Antichrist Is the Pope of Rome:** In his day, William Tyndale was one of many who were raising their voices against the Church of Rome and the abuses of the papacy. However, because he was translating and printing the Bible in English, he was their number one enemy. John Foxe’s (Last Unabridged Edition) *Acts and Monuments of Martyrs*, vol. 1, pp. 887-893 published in 1684, reveals, without a doubt, that the pope is, in fact, Antichrist. The decrees given by various popes down through the centuries show how the Catholic Church sought to destroy the Reformation. The true freedom in Christ found in the Scriptures struck at the very heart of Rome’s religious bondage and political power. The following excerpts of various papal decrees illustrate Rome’s intent to establish supremacy:

“For as much as it stands upon necessity of Salvation, for every human Creature to be subject to me the Pope of *Rome*, it shall be therefore requisite and necessary for all Men that will be saved, to learn and know the Dignity of my See and Excellency of my Domination, as here is set forth according to the truth and very words of mine own Laws, in style as follows: First my Institution began in the *Old Testament*, and was consummate and finished in the *New*, in that my Priesthood was prefigured by *Aaron*; And other bishops under me were prefigured by the Sons of *Aaron*, that were under him. Neither is it to be thought that my Church of *Rome* has been preferred by any General Council, but obtained the Primacy only by the Voice of the Gospel, and the mouth of the Savior.

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And has in it neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such like thing. Wherefore as other Seats be all inferior to me, and as they cannot Absolve me: so have they no power to bind me or to stand against me, no more than the Axe has power to stand or presume [to be] above him that hews with it, or the Saw to presume [to be] above him that rules it. This is the Holy and Apostolick Mother-Church of all other Churches of Christ.”

“Thus then forasmuch as the holy Church of *Rome*, whereof I am Governor, is setup the whole World for a glass [a mirror] or example, reason would what thing so ever the said Church determines, or ordains; that to be received of all Men for a general and a perpetual rule for ever. Whereupon we see it now verified in this Church, that was fore-prophesied by *Jeremy* [Jeremiah], saying, *Behold, I have set you up over Nations and Kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to build and to plant &c.* Who so understands not the Prerogative of this my Priesthood, let him look up to the Firmament, where he may see two great Lights, the Sun and the Moon, one ruling over the day, the other over the night; So in the Firmament of the Universal Church, God has set two great Dignities, the Authority of the Pope, and of the Emperor. Of which two, this our Dignity is so much more weightier, as we have the greater charge to give account to God for Kings of the Earth, and the Laws of Men. Wherefore [be] it known to you Emperors, which know it also right well, that you depend upon the judgment of us; we must not be brought and reduced to your will. For (as I said) look what difference there is betwixt the Sun and the Moon, so great is the power of the Pope ruling over the day, that is, over the Spirituality, above Emperors and Kings, ruling over the night; that is, over the Laity. Now seeing then the Earth is Seven times bigger than the Moon, and the Sun Eight times greater than the Earth; it follows that the Popes Dignity fifty six times does surmount the Estate of the Emperors.”

“... Now I say to all other Emperors, That they receiving of me their Approbation, Uction, Consecration, and Crown Imperial, must not disdain to submit their heads under me, and Swear unto me their Allegiance....By reason whereof, seeing my power is not of Man, but of God, who by his Celestial Providence has set me over his whole Universal Church, Master and Governor, it belongs therefore to my office, to look upon every mortal sin of every Christian Man....Thus you see all must be judged by me, and I of no man. Yea, and though I Pope of *Rome*, by my negligence or evil demeanor, be found unprofitable, or hurtful, either to my self or others; yea, if I should draw with me innumerable Souls by heaps to Hell, yet may no mortal Man be so hardy, so bold, or so presumptuous to reprove me....Wherefore be it known to all Men, that my Church of *Rome* is Prince and Head of all Nations, the Mother of the Faith, the Foundation Cardinal, whereupon all Churches

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do depend, as the Door doth depend by the Hinges, the first of all other Seats, without all spot or blemish. Lady, Mistress and Instructor of all Churches, a glass [mirror] and a spectacle unto all Men, to be followed in all whatsoever she observes....Against which Church of *Rome* who-soever speaks any evil, is forthwith an Heretic, yea, a very Pagan, a Witch, and an Idolater or Infidel, [the Church] having fullness of power only in her own hands in ruling, deciding, absolving, condemning, casting out, or receiving in.”

“By the Authority of which Church of *Rome* all Synods and Decrees of Councils stand confirmed. And has always full Authority in her hands to make new laws and Decremets; And to alter Statutes, Priviledges, Rights of Documents of Churches, to separate things joined, and to join things separated upon right consideration, either in whole or in part, either personally or generally. Of the which Church of *Rome* I am head as a King is over his Judges, the Vicar of St. *Peter*, yea, not the Vicar of *Peter* properly, but the Vicar of Christ properly, an successor of Peter, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Rector of the Universal Church, director of the Lords Universal flock, Chief Magistrate of the whole World ... head and chief of the Apostolic Church, Universal Pope, and Diocesan in all places exempt, as well as every Bishop is in places not exempt, most mighty Priest ... a living Law in the Earth judged to have all Laws in the cleft of my Breast, bearing the room of no pure Man, being neither God nor Man, but the admiration of the World, and a middle thing between both. Having both Swords in my power, both of the Spiritual and Temporal Jurisdiction, so far surmounting the Authority of the Emperor, that I of mine own power alone without a Council, have Authority to depose him, or to transfer his Kingdom, and to give a new Election...”

“What power then or potentate in all the World is comparable to me, who have Authority to bind and loose both in Heaven and Earth? That is, who have power both of Heavenly things, and also of Temporal things, To whom Emperors and Kings be more inferior, than Lead is inferior to Gold. For do you not see the necks of great Kings and Princes bend under our knees, yea and think themselves happy and well defenced if they may kiss our hand....If we, I say, have Power to bind and loose in Heaven, how much more then is it to be thought, that we have Power in Earth to loose and to take away Empires, Kingdoms, Dukedoms, and what else so ever mortal Men may have, and to give them where he will? And if we have authority over Angels, which be the Governors of Princes, what then may we do upon their inferiors and servants? And for that you shall not marvel that I say Angels be subject to us, you shall hear what my blessed Clerk *Antoninus* writes of the matter, saying, That our power, of *Peter* and me is greater than Angels in four things; 1. In juris-

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diction, 2. In administration of Sacraments, 3. In knowledge, 4. and in reward, &c....Briefly, who is able to comprehend the greatness of my Power and of my Seat? For by me only general Councils take their force and confirmation, and the interpretation of the said Councils, and of all other causes hard and doubtful, ought to be referred and stand to my determination. By me the Works of all Writers, whatsoever they be, either be reprov'd or allowed. Then how much more ought my Writings and Decrees to be preferred before all other? Inasmuch that my Letters and Epistles Decretal be equivalent with the general Councils, And whereas God has ordained all causes of Men to be judged by Men, he has only reserved me, that is, the Pope of *Rome*, without all question of Men, unto his own judgment. And therefore where all other creatures be under their Judge, only I, which in Earth am the Judge of all, can be judged of none, either of Emperor, nor the whole Clergy, nor of Kings, nor of the People. For who has the power to judge upon his Judge? This Judge am I, and that alone without any other resistance of any Council joined to me. For I have Power upon Councils; Councils have no Power upon me....Only my Sentence and judgment must stand ... Wherefore it is manifest, and testified by the voice of Holy Bishops, that the Dignity of this my Seat is to be revered through the whole World, in that all the faithful submit themselves to it as to the head of the whole body.

“Wherefore as I condemn all such worthily which will not obey my Decrees, to be dispossessed of all their honor without restitution; So all they that believe not my Doctrine, or stand against the privilege of the Church, especially the Church of *Rome*, I pronounce them Heretics....Only I am subject to no Creature, no not to my self, except I lift ... to my ghostly Father submitting my self as a sinner, but not as Pope. So that my papal Majesty ever remains unpunished; Superior to all Men, whom all persons ought to obey, and follow, whom no Man must judge nor accuse of any Crime, either of Murder, Adultery, Simony, or such like; No man depose, but I my self; No man can Excommunicate me, yea though I Communicate with the Excommunicate, for no Canon binds me. Whom no Man must lie to, For he that lies to me is a Church Robber, And who obeys not me is an Heretic, and an excommunicate Person ... I am greater than the Angels; and that in four things, as is afore declared; and have power to bind and loose in Heaven, and to give Heaven to them that fight in my Wars ... I have power to deliver out of Purgatory whom I please ...”

“And to the intent I would all Men to see and understand that I lack not witnesses more besides these, if I list [desire] to bring them out, you shall hear the whole Quire of my divine Clergy brought out, with the full voice testifying in my behalf in their Books, Tractations, Distinctions, Title, Glosses, and Summaries, as by their own words here

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follows. The Pope (say they) being the Vicar of Jesus Christ through the whole World, in the stead of the living God, hath that Dominion and Lordship which Christ here in Earth would not have, although he had it in *habitu*, and gave it to *Peter in Actu*, that is, the Universal jurisdiction both of Spiritual things, and also of Temporal, which double jurisdiction was signified by the two swords in the Gospel, and also by the offering of the wise men, who offered not only Incense, but also Gold, to signify not only the spiritual Dominion, but also the Temporal to belong to Christ and to his Vicar. For as we read, *The Earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof*; as Christ says, *All power is given to him both in Heaven and earth*: So it is to be affirmed *Inclusive*, that the Vicar of Christ hath Power on things Celestial, Terrestrial, and Infernal.... For I owe to Emperors no due Obedience that they can claim; but they owe to me as their Superior ... And as I am Superior to them, so am I Superior to all Laws, and free from all constitutions. Which am able of my self, and by my interpretation to prefer equity not being written before the Law written; having all Laws within the cleft of my Brest ...”

“All the Earth is my Diocess, and I the Ordinary of all men, having the Authority of the King of all Kings upon Subjects. I am all in all, and above all, so that God Himself and I the Vicar of God have both one Consistory, and I am able to do almost all that God can do ... It is said of me, that I have an heavenly Arbitrement, and therefore am able to change the nature of things ... and of nothing to make things to be; and of a Sentence that is nothing to make it stand in effect; In all things that I list [desire], my will to stand for reason. For I am able to the Law to dispense above the Law, and of Wrong to make Justice, in correcting Laws and changing them....Do you not see there manifestly expressed, how not Man, but God alone separateth that which the Bishop of *Rome* doth dissolve and separate? Wherefore if those things that I do be said to be done not of man, but of God; **What can you make me but God?** Again if Prelates of the Church be called and counted of *Constantinus* for gods, **I then being above all Prelates seem by this reason to be above all gods. Wherefore no marvel, if it be in my power to change time and times, to alter and abrogate Laws, to dispense with all things, yea with the Precepts of Christ**” (various excerpts from John Foxe’s (Last Unabridged Edition) *Acts and Monuments of Martyrs*, vol. 1, pp. 887-893, bold emphasis and brackets added).

Contrary to these presumptuous and blasphemous edicts of various popes, Tyndale fully understood that anyone who professed to represent God and His Word would believe, teach and follow God’s Word as led by the Holy Spirit. He vehemently opposed the pope, the Roman Catholic Church and their teachings as those of Antichrist. Tyndale wrote: “Antichrist of another manner hath sent

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forth his disciples, those ‘false anointed,’ of which Christ warneth us before, that they should come and shew miracles and wonders, even to bring the very elect out of the way, if it were possible. He [the pope] anointeth them after the manner of the Jews; and shaveth them and sheareth them after the manner of the heathen priests, which serve the idols. He sendeth them forth not with false oil only, but with false names also: for compare their names unto their deeds, and thou shalt find them false. He sendeth them forth, as Paul prophesied of them, with lying signs and wonders. What sign is the [true] anointing [of God]? That they be full of the Holy Ghost. Compare them to the signs of the Holy Ghost, which Paul reckoneth, and thou shalt find it a false sign. ‘A bishop must be faultless, the husband of one wife.’ Nay, saith the pope, the husband of no wife, but the holder of as many whores as he listeth [desires]. God commandeth all degrees [of church leaders], if they burn, and cannot live chaste, to marry. The pope saith, If thou burn, take a dispensation for a concubine, and put her away when thou art old; or else, as our lawyers say, *Si non caste, tamen caute*; that is, If ye live not chaste, see ye carry clean, and play the knave secretly. ‘Harbourous’: yea, to whores and bawds [brothel keepers, perhaps including homosexuals] for a poor man shall as soon break his neck as his fast with them, but of the scraps and with the dogs, when dinner is done. ‘Apt to teach,’ and, as Peter saith, ‘ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that ye have, and that with meekness.’ Which thing is signified by the boots [symbolic of being shod with the preparation of preaching the gospel] which doctors of divinity are created in, because they should be ready always to go through thick and thin, to preach God’s word; and by the bishop’s two-horned mitre, which betokeneth the absolute and perfect knowledge that they ought to have in the new Testament and the old. Be not these false signs? For they beat only, and teach not. “Yea,” saith the pope, “If they will not be ruled, cite them to appear; and pose [interrogate] them sharply, what they hold [believe] of the pope’s power, of his pardons, of his bulls, of purgatory, of ceremonies, of confession and such like creatures of our most holy father’s. If they miss in any point, make heretics of them, and burn them. If they be of mine anointed, and bear my mark, disgrace them, (I would say disgraduate them,) and after the ensample of noble Antiochus (2 Macc. vii) pare [by scraping with sharp shards of glass] the crowns [heads] and the finger [nail]s of them, and torment them craftily, and for very pain make them deny the truth.” (“But now,” say our bishops, “because the truth is come too far abroad, and the lay-people begin to smell our wiles, it is best to oppress them with craft secretly, and to tame them in prison. Yea, let us find the means to have them in the King’s prison, and to make treason

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of such doctrine: yea, we must stir up some war, one where or another, to bring the people into another imagination.”) “If they be gentlemen, abjure them secretly. Curse them four times in the year. Make them afraid of every thing; and namely, to touch mine anointed; and make them to fear the sentence of the church, suspensions, excommunications and curses. Be they right or wrong, bear them in hand that they are to be feared yet. Preach me [the pope] and mine authority, and how terrible a thing my curse is, and how black it maketh their souls. On the holidays, which were ordained to preach God’s word, set up long ceremonies, long matins [midnight and daybreak prayers—with mandatory attendance], long masses, and long evening songs, and all in Latin, that they understand not; and roll them in darkness, that ye may lead them whither ye will. And lest such things should be too tedious, sing some, say some, pipe some, ring the bells, and lull them and rock them asleep [in spiritual darkness and keep them from God’s word].” And yet Paul (1 Cor. xiv.) forbiddeth to speak in the church or congregation, save in the tongue that all understand. For the layman thereby is not edified or taught. How shall the layman say Amen (saith Paul) to thy blessing or thanksgiving, when he wotteth [knows] not what thou sayest? He wotteth not whether thou bless or curse.”

“What then saith the pope? ‘What care I for Paul? I command by virtue of obedience, to read the gospel in Latin. Let them not pray but in Latin, no, not their *Pater noster*. If any be sick, go also and say them a gospel, and all in Latin: yea, to the very corn and fruits of the field, in the procession week, preach the gospel in Latin: make the people believe, that it shall grow the better.’ It is verily as good to preach it to a swine as to men, if thou preach it in a tongue they understand not. How shall I prepare myself to God’s commandments? How shall I be thankful to Christ for his kindness? How shall I believe the truth and promises which God hath sworn, while thou tellest them unto me in a tongue which I understand not?” (Parker Society, Tyndale, *Obedience of a Christian Man*, pp. 232-234).

Tyndale’s writings clearly show that he understood the Roman Catholic Church to be the “Great Whore” and “Antichrist” spoken of in Revelation 13 and 17. Both from history and the current events of his time, he understood that she was the apostate church, exercising great power to rule over kingdoms and to instigate wars in order to reign supreme over kings of the earth as depicted in Revelation. The false religious system she propagates appears as if it is Christian, but it is counterfeit, receiving its authority from the dragon—Satan the devil: “And I saw another beast rising out of the earth; and he had **two horns like a lamb, but spoke like a dragon**; and he exercises all the authority of the first beast before him; and he causes the earth and those who dwell

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therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (Rev. 13:11-12).

In Revelation 17, a full description of this ruling world religious and political system is revealed: “And one of the seven angels who had the seven vials came and spoke with me, saying to me, ‘Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great whore who sits upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ Then he carried me away in *the* spirit to a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns, full of names of blasphemy. And the woman *was* clothed in purple and scarlet, and *was* adorned with gold and pearls and precious stones; *and* she had a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominations and *the* filthiness of her fornication; and across her forehead a name *was* written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. **And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.** And after seeing her, I wondered with great amazement....Then he said to me, ‘The waters that you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. But the ten horns that you saw on the beast shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her with fire; for God has put into their hearts to do His will, and to act with one accord, and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God have been fulfilled. **And the woman whom you saw is the great city that has royal power over the kings of the earth’**” (Rev. 17: 1-6, 15-18).

In the most resolute terms, Tyndale wrote of the political power and intrigue of the Roman Catholic Church, the only church in the world that is a sovereign state and has diplomatic relations with nearly every nation in the world: “Traitors they are to all creatures, and have a secret conspiracy between themselves. One craft they have, to make many kingdoms, large and small; and to nourish old titles or quarrels; that they may ever move them to war at their pleasure; and if much lands by chance fall to one man, ever to cast a bone in the way, that he shall never be able to obtain it, as we now see in the emperor. Why? For as long as the kings be small, if God would open the eyes of any to set a reformation in his realm, then should the pope interdict his land, and send other princes to conquer it....**They are not content to reign over king and emperor, and the whole earth; but challenge authority also in heaven and in hell. It is not enough for them to reign over all that are quick [living], but have created them a purgatory, to reign also over the dead, and to have one kingdom more than God**



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**himself hath**” (Parker Society, p. 235, bold emphasis added).

Little did Tyndale realize that what he wrote would turn out to be a prophecy for England. After Tyndale died, King Henry VIII severed all ties with Rome, furthering the reformation and establishing the Church of England as the state church. In turn, Rome did exactly as Tyndale prophesied and tried to destroy the English Reformation; and for a time under Catholic Queen “bloody” Mary (1553-1558), those loyal to the pope again seized political and religious power. They then instituted an intense inquisition against the reformers, whom they tortured and executed by burning or beheading. Afterwards, during Queen Elizabeth’s reign (1558-1603)—the daughter of Henry VIII by his second wife, Ann Boyelyn—the reformed Protestant Church of England was re-established. True to Tyndale’s words, Rome did indeed raise up the Catholic Empire of Spain in a final attempt to retake England and once again make it a Catholic realm. The Spanish assembled the largest army possible and the greatest fleet of war ships that the world had ever seen—the Spanish Armada. However, by the hand of God, the Spanish were totally defeated in this epoch battle with the destruction of their entire armada in 1588. After this providential intervention, England finally had rest from the foreign wars that were instigated by the papacy against her.

Toward the end of his book, *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, Tyndale again exposed the hypocrisy of the apostate religious system of Roman Catholicism, comparing its teachings to the teachings of Scripture. He wrote: “Thus is God and Christ all in all; good and bad receive I of God. Them that are good I love, because they are in Christ; and the evil, to bring them to Christ. When any man doth well, I rejoice that God is honoured; and when any man doth evil, I sorrow because God is dishonoured. Finally, inasmuch as God hath created all, and Christ bought all with his blood, therefore ought all to seek God and Christ in all, and else nothing.

“But contrariwise unto monks, friars, and to the other of our holy spirituality, the belly is all in all, and the cause of all love. Offer thereto; so art thou father, mother, sister and brother unto them. Offerest thou not? so know they thee not; thou art neither father, mother, sister, brother, nor any kin at all to them. ‘She is a sister of ours, he is a brother of ours,’ say they; ‘he is verily a good man, for he doth much for our religion: she is a mother of our convent; we be greatly bound to pray for them. And as for such and such, (say they,) we know not whether they be good or bad, or whether they be fish or flesh, for they do nought for us: we be more bound to pray for our benefactors (say they) and for them that give us, than for them that give us not.’ For them that give little are they little bound, and them they love little: and

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for them that give much they are much bound, and them they love much: and for them that give nought are the nought bound, and them they love not at all. And as they love thee when thou givest, so hate they thee when thou takest away from them, and run all under a stool, and curse thee as black as pitch. So is the cloister-love belly-love; cloister-prayer, belly-prayer; and cloister-brotherhood, belly-brotherhood” (Ibid., p. 299).

“The spirituality increaseth daily. More prelates, more priests, more monks, friars, canons, nuns, and more heretics, (I would say heremites,) with like draff [drawing in as with a fish net]. Set before thee the increase of St Francis’s disciples in so few years. Reckon how many thousands, yea, how many twenty thousands, not disciples only, but whole cloisters, are sprung out of hell of them in so little space. Pattering of prayers increaseth daily. Their service, as they call it, waxeth longer and longer, and the labour of their lips greater; new saints, new service, new feasts, and new holidays. What take all these away? Sin? Nay; for we see the contrary by experience, and that sin groweth as they grow. But they take away first God’s word, with faith, hope, peace, unity, love and concord; then house and land, rent and fee, tower and town, goods and cattle, and the very meat out of men’s mouths. All these live by purgatory. When other weep for their friends, they sing merrily; when other lose their friends, they get friends. The pope, with all his pardons, is grounded on purgatory. Priests, monks, canons, friars, with all other swarms of hypocrites, do but empty purgatory, and fill hell. Every mass, say they, delivereth one soul out of purgatory. If that were true, yea, if ten masses were enough for one soul, yet were the parish priests and curates of every parish sufficient to scour purgatory: all the other costly workmen might be well spared” (Ibid., pp. 302-303).

These extended quotes from Tyndale and Foxe convey the overwhelming oppression and tyranny of the popes and the Roman Catholic Church, which sparked the Reformation. History records the fierce, hellish inquisition unleashed by the lawless, antichrist popes and clergy in torturing, burning, killing, and warring against those persons and nations who opposed them. The bloodbath of millions of innocent people, who were slaughtered because they loved God more than their own lives, is a perpetual witness against such a lawless, satanic and ungodly system.

***Tyndale’s Betrayal, Arrest and Execution:*** During the years 1525 to 1535, Tyndale was able to evade the authorities who were seeking to arrest and execute him. In the spring of 1535, Tyndale was living in Antwerp with Thomas Poyntz. Little did he realize that a traitor named Henry Phillips was stalking him at the behest and hire of the Catholic authorities of England and Brussels. Using stealth, cunning

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and charm, Phillips discovered where Tyndale was living. After befriending Tyndale, Phillips arranged to betray him and led the authorities to entrap and arrest him. Tyndale was arrested in May 1535, and authorities imprisoned him at Vilvorde Castle, near Brussels, where he remained until his death in October 1536. (Daniell, *Biography of William Tyndale*, pp. 361-384).

Of Tyndale’s execution Daniell wrote: “... Early in the morning of one of the first days of October 1536, Tyndale was executed. Tradition has it that it was the sixth day of the month, and the Anglican Church has always commemorated his death on that day. We have only Foxe’s meagre account of what happened. He was not burned alive, a fiercer punishment reserved for lesser creatures. He was strangled at the stake, and his dead body then burned: ‘At last, after much reasoning, when no reason could serve, although he deserved no death, he was condemned by virtue of the emperor’s decree ... and, upon the same, brought forth to the place of execution, was there tied to the stake, and then strangled first by the hangman, and afterwards with fire consumed, in the morning at the town of Vilvorde, A. D. 1536: crying thus at the stake with a fervent zeal, and a loud voice, **“Lord! Open the king of England’s eyes”**’ ” (Daniell, *Biography of William Tyndale*, pp. 382-383).

From other records of similar executions, Daniell reconstructed the scene of Tyndale’s last moments and death in vivid, gruesome details: “We have, however, eye-witness accounts of two such executions, one in Brussels and one in Louvain, recorded by Enzinas, a Spaniard arrested at Brussels seven years later for translating the New Testament into Spanish. From it we can reconstruct Tyndale’s last hour. We are to imagine a large crowd held back by a barricade. In the middle of the circular space two great beams were raised in the form of a cross, with at the top iron chains, and a rope of hemp passing through holes in the beams. Brushwood, straw and logs were heaped ready near by. At a set time, the procurer-general and his colleagues on the commission came and sat on prepared chairs within the circle. The crowd parted to let the guards bring the prisoner through the barricade. As they crossed the space and approached the cross, the prisoner was allowed a moment to pray, with a last appeal for him to recant. Then he alone moved to the cross, and the guards busily knelt to tie his feet to the bottom of the cross. Around his neck the chain was passed, with the hempen noose hanging slack. The brushwood, straw and logs were packed close round the prisoner, making a sort of hut with him inside. A scattering of gunpowder was added. The executioner went to stand behind the cross, and looked across at the procurer-general. It is at this moment, most probably, that Tyndale cried, **‘Lord, open the**

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**king of England's eyes.'** When the procurer-general was ready, he gave the signal, and the executioner quickly tightened the hempen noose, strangling Tyndale. The procurer-general watched Tyndale die, and as soon as he judged him dead, he reached for a lighted wax torch being held near him, took it and handed it to the executioner, who touched off the straw, brushwood and gunpowder" (Ibid., p. 383).

Thus, William Tyndale was martyred. He was executed for his "high crimes" against the pope and emperor, because he loved God the Father and Jesus Christ with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind and all his strength; and for translating the Bible from the Greek and Hebrew into English for the common man and woman—even the plow-boy.

***How God Answered Tyndale's Prayer:*** Almost immediately God began to answer William Tyndale's prayer, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." Unknown to Henry Phillips, Tyndale's "Judas," Tyndale had a friend named John Rogers who assisted him at the time he was betrayed and arrested. Apparently, John Rogers fell heir to all of Tyndale's notes and unpublished translations of the Old Testament. God inspired Rogers to finalize the rest of Tyndale's work on the Old Testament, making it ready for printing.

God continued His intervention to answer Tyndale's prayer in a profound way. He caused King Henry VIII to change his mind and allow the Bible to be printed in English. Daniell wrote of this extraordinary incident: "The King's policy about the Bible in English had been changing, and Cromwell had been able to persuade him to license this book. This volume is generally considered to be the primary version of our English Bible" (Ibid., p. 335).

Thus, in 1537, less than two years after Tyndale's prayer, King Henry VIII authorized a license for the Thomas Matthew Bible to be printed. As Daniell recorded: "In 1537 there appeared a large folio Bible, well printed (probably in Antwerp) in double columns of black-letter, and on the title-page [it read as follows]: 'The Bible, which is all the holy Scripture: In which are contained the Old and New Testaments truly and purely translated into English by Thomas Matthew Esq. Hearken to ye heavens and thou earth give ear: For the Lord speaketh. MD XXXVII. Set forth with the King's most gracious licence' " (Ibid., p. 334).

" 'Thomas Matthew' with his good New Testament names, making this whole Bible, is a fiction, to hide Tyndale's presence. That has been understood from the earliest time. John Bale in 1548, and Foxe in 1563 and 1570, refer to a Bible 'under the name of Thomas Matthew'. Both authorities, further, say that the volume was in fact prepared by Tyndale's friend John Rogers" (Daniell, p. 335). However,

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John Rogers made it clear that the translation of the entire Old Testament was, in fact, William Tyndale’s. On the last page of the Old Testament, Rogers intentionally placed the huge initials, “‘W.T.’... which may be intended to stand for the larger presence of William Tyndale in the whole” (Ibid., p. 335).

Unfortunately, as history records, John Rogers “returned to England, and early in [Catholic Queen “bloody”] Mary’s reign [1553-1558 and wife of Philip II of Spain] was in serious trouble for his reformer’s views. In that year [1553] he went to the stake, the first of the three hundred or so Protestants burned by Mary. Official documents about him refer to ‘John Rogers alias Matthew’ ” (Ibid., p. 335).

### *Tyndale’s Humility and His Mistakes*

Tyndale’s godly humility shines forth in all of his writings. Without a doubt, through the Spirit of God, he understood the evil depths of human nature. Daily, he realized his own weaknesses and proclivity to sin and cried out to God the Father and Jesus Christ for His Spirit, His mercy, His forgiveness and His love. Likewise, his humble spirit was evident when he wrote about his translations of the Word of God. It was his consuming desire to translate the Word of God from the Greek and Hebrew into English as faithfully as possible so that their true meaning would be conveyed.

In spite of his best effort and work, he realized that he made some errors, mistakes, or misinterpretations. For this reason, Tyndale was always revising his translations as he grew in grace and knowledge. He was constantly refining and improving his work, endeavoring to present the pure words of God in English.

In the opening sentence “W. T. to the Reader,” which prefaced His Old Testament, Tyndale wrote, “When I had translated the new testament, I added an epistle unto the latter end, in which I desired them that were learned to amend if ought were found amiss” (Daniell, *Tyndale’s Old Testament, a Modern Spelling Edition*, p. 1). This appeal also occurs in a footnote at the beginning of *A Pathway Into the Holy Scripture*, where he wrote: “I have here translated, brethren and sisters, most dear and tenderly beloved in Christ, the New Testament, for your spiritual edifying, consolation, and solace; exhorting instantly and beseeching those that are better seen in the tongues than I, and that have better gifts of grace, to interpret the sense of the Scripture, and meaning of the Spirit, than I, to consider and ponder my labour, and that with the spirit of meekness; and if they perceive in any places that I have not attained the very sense of the tongue, or meaning of the scripture, or have not given the right English word, that they put to

## *Tribute to William Tyndale*

their hands to amend it, remembering that so is their duty to do. For we have not received the gifts of God for ourselves only, or for to hide them; but for to bestow them unto the honouring of GOD and Christ, and edifying the congregation, which is the body of Christ” (Parker Society, p. 7).

In his *Introduction to Tyndale’s New Testament, Modern Spelling*, Daniell notes some of Tyndale’s mistakes, showing the probable reasons for them: “Understanding the original Greek has become a more formidable task than Tyndale could have imagined, as modern translators are faced with so many families of textual variants and vast accumulations of knowledge of vocabulary, idiom and social and religious contexts. By modern standards, Tyndale got things wrong. He followed Erasmus’s Greek New Testament. Though he pursued true Greek manuscript readings like a modern scholar, Erasmus had occasional second thoughts between his first (1516) edition, and the four more he published (1519, 1522, 1527, 1535). Tyndale used the second and third editions, where Erasmus sometimes went astray, as in including (albeit in parentheses) the sentences in 1 John 5 that have no proper Greek authority. Tyndale misunderstood the Greek word *asson* (*asson*, ‘nearer’) in Acts 27, and also the Greek word for serving as a soldier in James 4, which he translates as ‘rain’ (i.e., reign). Also in James 4 Tyndale has ‘ye envy’, following a conjecture of Erasmus, instead of ‘ye kill’. Tyndale was, as any translator must be, an incessant reviser, and he restored in 1534 the doxology at the end of the Lord’s Prayer (omitted by the Vulgate) in Matthew 6; and so on.... More seriously, Tyndale can be accused, on occasion, of not properly appreciating the importance of Greek particles, the little words which give the language its character suppleness. Most seriously of all, he never satisfactorily solved the problem of what to do consistently with proper names—whether to transliterate or translate them. Thus in the gospels he can give ‘Sabot’ (Sabbath) and then, anachronistically, ‘Sunday’, leading to ‘Good Friday’, ‘Easter’, and in Acts, ‘Whitsunday’, leaving him wide open to all those attacks on him as ‘homely’ and rather comic. Today it seems an unfortunate decision to have followed Luther’s German and given ‘sweet bread’ for *azumos* (ἄζυμος)—what, since the Geneva Bible, we know as ‘unleavened bread’ ” (Daniell, pp. xx-xxi). These mistakes are easily noted and are readily corrected, as later translations have done. For Tyndale’s treatment of three key doctrinal subjects, “born again,” “born of God” and “the works of the law” please see Appendices L, M and N.

William Tyndale, one man against the world, empowered by the Holy Spirit of God, filled with the love of God, thirsting for the Word of God, with selfless sacrifice and dedicated determination,

## *The “Father” of All English Bibles*

translated the Bible into English so that even the plowboy could read the Holy Bible. From his day to this, the English Bible, beginning with his translations, has impacted the civilizations of English-speaking people more than any other book. Tyndale could never have imagined that nearly five hundred years after his prayer to open the king of England’s eyes, God would cause the English language to become the predominant language to be used to preach and publish the Gospel worldwide.

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