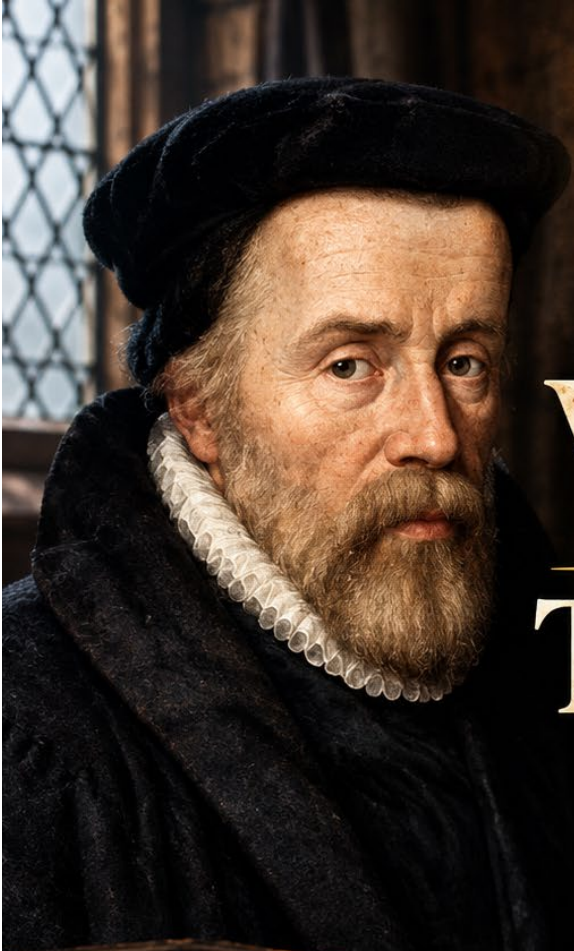




William *the* Translator

Celebrating the 500th
Anniversary of the
Tyndale New Testament.

The Gospel of Matthew



1 The booke of the generation
of Iesus Christ, the sonne
of Dauid, the sonne of
Abraham.

2 Abraham begat Isaac,
and Isaac begat Jacob, and
Jacob begat Iuda, and his
brethren.

3 And Iuda begat Pharez
and Zara of Thamar: and
Pharez begat Esrom, and
Esrom begat Aram.

4 And Aram begat Aminadab,
and Aminadab begat Naasson,
and Naasson begat Salmon.

5 And Salmon begat Booz,
of Rahab; and Booz begat
Obed of Ruth, and Obed
begat Jesse.

6 And Jesse begat David
the king.

7 And David the king begat
Solomon of her that was
the wife of Urias.

8 And Solomon begat Roboam,
and Roboam begat Abia.

Introduction

The quinentenary (500th Anniversary) of William Tyndale's 1526 New Testament provides a fitting occasion to reexamine the life, work, and enduring legacy of the man often described as "the father of the English Bible." Few individuals have exercised a greater influence upon the religious, linguistic, and cultural development of the English-speaking world. Tyndale's translation enterprise not only furnished the textual foundation for later Reformation-era English Bibles, culminating in the Authorized Version of 1611, but also helped shape the very vocabulary and expression of modern English Christianity. Any serious assessment of the English Bible tradition must therefore reckon with the historical circumstances that produced Tyndale, the translational methods he employed, and the theological convictions that motivated his life's work.

The studies gathered in this volume were originally presented at William The Translator: Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Tyndale New Testament, a Bible conference held at Columbus Bible Church in Columbus, Ohio, during the weekend of October 16-18, 2026. The conference brought together the research and teaching ministries of Bryan Ross, David Reid, and Alex Bojko in commemoration of the quinentenary of William Tyndale's landmark 1526 New Testament. Through a series of historical, textual, linguistic, and theological presentations, the conference sought to reassess Tyndale's enduring contribution to the English Bible, the English language, and the broader history of Protestant Christianity.

The notes prepared for this conference approach these questions from complementary perspectives. Bryan Ross examines the broader historical and intellectual world that preceded Tyndale, tracing the development of the English language, the rise of vernacular Scripture, the Renaissance recovery of biblical languages, and the influence of Erasmus and the printed Greek New Testament. Ross also describes the production and dissemination of William Tyndale's 1526 Worms New Testament, controversial translational choices of William Tyndale, and how William Tyndale's New Testament translation served as a rough draft of the King James Bible. Through these studies, Ross situates Tyndale within the larger continuum of English Bible history and demonstrates that the Reformation translator emerged from a rich and complex historical context rather than from an intellectual vacuum.

David Reid's studies focus on addressing popular misconceptions about William Tyndale. Alongside his discussion of Tyndale's 1525 Cologne fragment, Reid explains the origins of Tyndale's famous ploughboy statement and provides insights into whether Tyndale actually said, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the ploy to know more of the Scripture than thou doest!" Reid also addresses how the ploughboy statement is misused by advocates of modern versions of the Bible to argue for a dynamic equivalent translation. Reid also discusses Tyndale's relationship to King Henry VIII and Tyndale's enduring legacy in the twenty-first century.

Finally, Alex Bojko provides critical analysis of Tyndale's life, translation work, and theological legacy. His investigations explore the formative influences that shaped Tyndale; Tyndale's Old Testament translation work and translation philosophy; and theological commitments reflected in his prologues, prefaces, and theological treatises. Throughout his studies, Bojko argues that the theology of John

Wycliffe and the Lollards influenced William Tyndale to translate the New Testament, more so than Lutheranism. Regarding Tyndale's theology and interpretive legacy, Bojko engages in questions related to biblical authority, covenant theology, Augustinian influence, and the relationship between Tyndale's thought and later Protestant traditions. Bojko's work seeks not merely to celebrate Tyndale but to evaluate his theological positions within their historical setting and in light of subsequent doctrinal developments.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that William Tyndale was more than a translator. He was a product of centuries of linguistic development, a beneficiary of Renaissance scholarship, a catalyst for religious reform, and an architect of English biblical expression whose influence continues to be felt five hundred years after the publication of his New Testament. By bringing together the investigations of Ross, Reid, and Bojko, this conference seeks to provide a comprehensive reassessment of Tyndale's life, work, and legacy for a new generation of students and readers of the English Bible.

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Lesson 1

Assessing the Pre-Tyndale Historical Context (900-1500)

Prepared & Taught by Bryan C. Ross

A Brief History of the English Language

- “The English language, like all languages, has been evolving for centuries and will continue to do so throughout the twenty-first century. . . Compared with language development of many civilizations, however, English developed relatively rapidly. For instance, while the development of Greek and other ancient languages spanned several thousand years, the time it took for the Anglo-Saxon language (forerunner of modern English) to develop into words similar to those we speak today can be measured in a few hundred years” (Brake, *King James Bible*, 21).
- Three distinct periods mark the development of English:
 - Old English—6th century to the Norman Conquest of 1066
 - Middle English—1100 to 1500
 - Modern English—1500 to the present
- When the Romans landed on the island of England a few years before the birth of Christ, English did not exist. The language of this time and place included both Germanic and Celtic elements. It was not until the sixth century that a small percentage of people in Britain spoke a prototype of English (Brake, *King James Bible*, 22).
- “During this period, from the sixth century until the Norman Conquest, the British were tossed about by an influx of invasions and missionary endeavors that added to the flavor and texture of the English language. The development of English was shaped, in part by the Germanic tribes, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, who battled for supremacy among themselves and with tribal Picts, Scots, and Gaels who inhabited the island. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory, who viewed the island dwellers as pagans, sent a monk named Augustine [not the famous Church Father] to convert King Ethelbert to Christianity. . . Augustine’s mission was successful and, over time, Latin and Greek words found their way into the English vocabulary. Over the course of one thousand years, these combined cultural forces created a hybrid language that assimilated elements of Roman, Saxon, Danish, and Norman into a new strain of English” (Brake, *King James Bible*, 22).
- “The politics of invasion and conquest take language captive, along with its people. The early invaders’ language, today known as Old English or Anglo-Saxon English, formed a rudimentary base for the English we speak today. The Anglo-Saxon conquest was so successful that very few

words have survived from the original British language (Celtic)” (Brake, *King James Bible*, 22-24).

- Viking invasions between 750 and 1050 also impacted the development of Old English. Monosyllabic words such as sky, skin, and root have their roots in the Old Norse language (Brake, *King James Bible*, 24).
- “The English Language went through a period of severe neglect in the Middle Ages. The conquest of England by the Normans in 1066 (Battle of Hastings) had led to the suppression of English in public life. French—or, more accurately, the form of Anglo-French that arose after the Norman conquest—dominated public discourse, particularly government departments and courts. The English upper class spoke Anglo-French as a matter of principle, to distinguish themselves from the lower classes, who spoke Middle English. . .” (McGrath, 26).
- “The widespread perception that French had established itself as the lingua franca of the cultural elite of Europe inevitably led to English being dismissed as a crude language, incapable of conveying the subtle undertones necessary for diplomacy, the fine distinctions of philosophy, and the complexities of legal and financial negotiations. English would do very well for the common laborer; French was the language of choice for the elite” (McGrath, 27).
- In the 13th and 14th centuries things began to change. William of Shoreham and Richard Rolle, both translated the Psalter into Anglo-Norman from the Latin Vulgate. From the middle of the 12th century a genuine English language began to replace the Anglo-Norman language (Brake, *King James Bible*, 42).
- It was during this Middle English period that John Wycliffe began the process of translating the Bible into the vernacular English of his day. There was much anxiety amongst the academic elite of England whether English as a language was capable of expressing the deep nuanced truths of the Bible in particular and the Christian faith in general (McGrath, 33).
- In 1401 a debate over the use of English in church life ensued at Oxford. In 1407, Thomas Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury issued the following statement:
 - “We therefore legislate and ordain that nobody shall from this day forth translate any text of the Holy Scripture on his own authority into the English, or any other, language, whether in the form of a book, pamphlet or tract; and that any such book pamphlet or tract whether composed recently or in the time of John Wycliffe, or in the future, shall not be read in part or in whole, in public or in private.”
- “English thus became the language of the religious underground. To write in English was tantamount to holding heretical views” (McGrath, 33).

- In describing the circumstances John Wycliffe and his followers lived under when translating the Bible, Melvyn Bragg in his *The Adventure of English: The Biography of a Language* writes,
 - “It is difficult to appreciate the extent and the audacity of this enterprise [the work of developing the Wycliffe Bible]. Wycliffe was leading them [the Lollards] into the cannon’s mouth. All of them knew it and yet behind the obedient honey-coloured Latinate walls of Oxford colleges, the medieval equivalent of the subversive samizdat press which bypassed Stalin’s controls in Russia was organized, and effectively” (Bragg, 81).
- “The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) served to consolidate the growing popular impression that French was the language of England’s enemy. . . The war with France at an end, English became the language of choice of the upper class and government departments. No longer was English dismissed as the language of the lower classes; it was now the language of choice of a nation with an increasing sense of national identity shared purpose, strengthened by England’s growing maritime enterprise” (McGrath, 29-31).
- “The story of the King James Bible cannot be told without an understanding of the remarkable rise of confidence in the English language in the late sixteenth century. What was once scorned as the barbarous language of plowmen became as the language of patriots and poets—a language fit for heroes on the one hand, and for the riches of the Bible on the other. Gone were any hesitations about the merits of the English language. Elizabeth’s navy and armies had established England’s military credentials; her poets, playwrights, and translators had propelled English into the front rank of the living European languages. The King James Bible consolidated the enormous advantages in the English language over the centuries, and can be seen as the symbol of a nation and language that believed that their moment had finally arrived” (McGrath, 24-25).
- “In his 1589 *Art of English Poesy*, written at the height of the Elizabethan Age, George Puttenham declared that English was just as sophisticated as Greek or Latin, and perfectly capable of expressing the full range of human emotions and thoughts” (McGrath, 25).
- “To write in English—or translate into English—was a political act, affirming the intrinsic dignity of the language of a newly confident people and nation. And why should not that nation have its own bible in its own language?” (McGrath, 26).

The English Bible Before Wycliffe

- According to Bible historian Donald L Brake, “no complete Bible in the language of the people of England existed before the fourteenth century. Even for the mostly educated clergy, the Bible was inaccessible—available only in the Latin Language” (Brake, *English Bible*, 34).

- David L. Brake also notes the connection between the Gothic Bible and the Anglo-Saxon language of the Old English period:
 - “A Gothic translation of the Gospels called *Codex Argenteus* or “Silver Book,” so called because it was copied in letters with a silvery hue, represented a pre-English language. Translated by the famous missionary Ulphilas in about AD 360 for the heathen Goths, it represents a pre-Old English version in the first vernacular translation ever produced. It is also a prototype of the Old English. Several phrases when compared, reveal many similarities of the German tongue to Old English” (Brake, *English Bible*, 38-39).
- Brake reports that, “The earliest portions of Scripture in Anglo-Saxon were songs set to verse by a layman, Caedmon, at Yorkshire monastery. A legend describes his habit of singing portions of Scripture in a highly complicated vernacular meter. The only surviving manuscript attributed to Caedmon is a hymn about creation” (Brake, *English Bible*, 38-39).
- The first known translation of an actual Biblical text into Old English was a portion of the Psalter (Psalms) which dates from the beginning of the eighth century (700s). The work was the product of Aldhelm, the first Bishop of Sherbore in Dorset. Upon his death, the work was continued and completed by the Venerable Bede according to church tradition. Unfortunately, no copies of this Psalter are known to be extant (Brake, *English Bible*, 40).
- The greatest achievement in terms of Bible translation during the Old English period was far and away the Lindisfarne manuscript.
 - “The Old English period (to AD 1066) is characterized by its interlinear glosses in Latin manuscripts. Glossing, an Anglo-Saxon pedagogical method for introducing Latin to the reader, placed a word-for-word vernacular translation in direct juxtaposition to the Latin text. Undoubtedly the most famous example of this is seen in the eighth-century Lindisfarne manuscript, which contains a literal rendering of the text into an Anglo-Saxon dialect by the scribe named Aldred. . .the first extensively written Old English that has survived. Later scribes drew from these glosses to craft their translations” (Brake, *English Bible*, 40).
- In 2003, Yale professor and author David Daniell penned a massive work titled *The Bible In English: Its History and Influence*. Regarding this “glossing” described by Brake during the Old English period, Daniell stated the following:
 - “The Gospels, Psalms, and other parts of the Old Testament were several times translated: most often only as Old English glosses between the lines of the Latin, keeping the Latin word order rather than writing fluent English. Old English prose—for the language, the phrases ‘Old English’ and ‘Anglo-Saxon’ are usually interchangeable—is capable of stylistic excellence, even nobility, but the glory of Anglo-Saxon literature is in its poetry, of which thirty thousand lines have survived. Most of the poetry has some Christian basis, and much of it is directly biblical in origin, as will be seen: no account of the Bible in England should neglect this body of superb poetry (Daniell, 44).

- Stemming the tide of the Viking invasions, Alfred the Great (AD 849-901) contributed to the development of English by insisting that schools teach in the vernacular. Alfred even learned Latin at the age of 40 so that he could translate various Biblical texts into Old English: Ten Commandments, Exodus, Acts, and a form of the Golden Rule (Brake, *English Bible*, 41).
- The tenth-century translation of the four Gospels into Old English known as the Wessex Gospels is the first extended portion of the Bible into English. The Wessex Gospels is anonymous and does not bear a date. The earliest known manuscript dates from the 12th century (Brake, *English Bible*, 41).
- Daniell reports the following regarding the English Bible after the Norman conquest of 1066:
 - “After 1066 there is no record of new attempts to translate the Bible into English for two and a half centuries. The Bible in England was in either Latin, or, occasionally, part of it in Norman French. In spite of the strength of their earlier work, the ordinary English people became deprived of access to much of the Bible. . .” (Daniell, 56).
- Thus, in summation, the pre-Wycliffe period epitomized the notion that only the clergy could own and read the Scriptures. The clergy not only prevented the laity from reading the Scriptures; copies of the sacred text were simply not available. They were either not in the laity’s language, or they were too expensive to purchase. Thus, the use of the Bible by the poor was not possible until the end of the fourteenth century (Brake, *English Bible*, 43).
- Condit records that, at the Council of Toulouse in 1229, the Catholic move to canonize the functional situation that had been in existence in England for some time and that it banned layman from possessing the scriptures in the common tongue.
 - “We forbid that Laymen be permitted to have the books of the Old and New Testaments, unless some out of Devotion desire to have the Psalter or Breviary for Divines Offices, and the Hours of the Blessed Virgin; but even these, they may not have in the Vulgar Tongue” (Condit, 19).

Saxon Gospels

- Blackford Condit author of *The History of the English Bible: Extending from the Earliest Saxon Translations to the Present Anglo-American Revision, With Special Reference to the Protestant Religion and the English Language* (1882) states the following regarding the Saxon Gospels:
 - “The Anglo-Saxon versions of the Four Gospels may be referred to as the age of Alfred; though the manuscripts differ widely from the time of Bede to that of the Norman Conquest” (Condit, 35).
- Joseph Bosworth added the following regarding the Old English Bible in his *The Gospels: Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Wycliffe, and Tyndale Version Arranged in Parallel Columns*:
 - “We are not certain as the names of those patriotic Anglo-Saxons, who devoted their time, talents, and learning to the translating of the Scriptures into Anglo-Saxon, that they

might be read by the people, and their churches; but we have an indisputable evidence in the Rubrics, printed in our notes from the MS that they were constantly read in Anglo-Saxon churches, as the rubrical directions declare what part of the Scriptures was appointed for successive seasons. We have no more knowledge of the exact date when the Gospels were first translated into Anglo-Saxon, than we have of the translators” (Bosworth, xii).

- Bosworth repeats the common speculation from the pen of Cuthbert, a pupil of the Venerable Bede, that Bede finished his translation of St. John on his death bed in May of 735. Since John is the fourth gospel, it is extrapolated by some that Bede succeeded in translating the Gospels into Anglo-Saxon before his death.
 - “We have no satisfactory evidence to prove that his was the first translations of the Gospels, nor that Bede’s version has come down to us. The Scriptures, in their own tongue, were revered by the Anglo-Saxons, for Alfred the Great placed the Commandments at the head of his Laws, and incorporated many passages from the Gospels. Subsequent translations would naturally avail themselves of the versions made by their predecessors, and write them in the orthography, the language, and the style of the time in which they lived” (Bosworth, xii).
- In his “Preface” Bosworth catalogues the extant textual witnesses to the Anglo-Saxon gospels. Please note the following summary points from Bosworth’s “Preface”:
 - “I. B. . . . is said to be copied from an older MS. Before the Conquest [1066]. I think between A.D. 990 and 1020. . .
 - II. C. denotes the MS. Of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels, in the University of Cambridge marked Ii. 2.11. This MS. is small folio, written in a good clear hand about the time of the Norman Conquest if not earlier, it is very valuable for its accuracy in grammatical forms, and orthography as adopted in the best West-Saxon; and because it is the only copy which has the Rubrics complete and written in the same hand and just after the other parts of the MS.
 - III. This is what remains of the once fine MS. written on vellum before the Norman Conquest, and denoted by Cot. because it is in the Cotton Library, British Museum, Otho C. I. . . Planta, in his Catalogue of the Cotton MSS., describes it as “once containing 290 leaves but now (1802) so much burnt and contracted as to render the binding of impracticable [Accounts differ as to the extent of the damage.]. . . St. Luke is nearly complete, and occupies fol. 39-93. St. John fills fol. 95-135, and is nearly perfect especially in the latter part. There are no rubrical directions, and only a few badly formed capital letters of a dingy red colour in this MS.
 - IV. H. The Hatton MS. No. 38 in Bodleian, Oxford, is the size of a large 8vo. and written on vellum in a very uniform and beautifly, but late hand about the time of Henry II. The letters are so uniform, upright, and near together, as to appear like printing in facsimili types. . . The four Gospels are arranged not in the usual order, but St. Matt. Is placed after

St. Luke; thus, Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John [The only Anglo-Saxon Rubric is at the beginning of St. John.].

V. This MS. denoted by RL is in the Royal Library, British Museum, I.A. XIV. It is very similar to the Hatton in the 8vo. size, but a little smaller. The writing is somewhat earlier in date, and less regular than Hatton. The Rubrics are very few, and of a brighter red than Hatton. . . The four Gospels are placed in this order,--Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. . .

VI. O. The Oxford MS. in the Bodlean, No. 441, is closely allied to the best MSS. B, C. and Cot.; names to I, II, and III.—This Oxford MS. of the four Anglo-Saxon Gospels is in a small folio, written before the Norman Conquest, in a fine bold Anglo-Saxon character. . . The Rubrics are written in small and recent hand, between the paragraphs or, for want of room in the margin. . . The first [printed] edition of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels by John Foxe, in 1571 was printed from this Oxford MS. No. 441. It was also the basis of the edition of Junius and Marshall in 1665.

VII. The Latin of the Lindisfarne Gospels, or the Durham Book, is said to have been written about A.D. 687 by Eadfrith, a monk, and the interlinear and verbal Anglo-Saxon Gloss by Aldred a Priest, between 946 and 968. Both Eadfrith and Aldred became Bishops of Durham. It is one of our finest MSS.

VIII. The Latin of the Rushworth Gospels appears to have been written about the end of the 7th century; and the interlinear and verbal Anglo-Saxon Gloss of the 10th. . .” (Bosworth, xiii-xvi).

- David Daniell reports that one result of the Norman Conquest in 1066 was that “the capacity to read Anglo-Saxon had been quite lost.” He also reports that:
 - “The Old English versions of the Bible were rediscovered and published in the second half of the 16th century [1500s] for antiquarian, linked with nationalist reasons by Elizabeth’s first Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker: before the ‘Norman Yoke’, the sturdy English yeoman had no truck with papist practices” (Daniell, 59).
- In terms of printed editions, Bosworth’s “Preface” includes the following entries:
 - 1571—“The Anglo-Saxon Gospels were first printed at the suggestion of and expense of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, under the care of John Foxe, the Martyrologist, . . .”
 - 1665—“A much improved edition of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels was published with the Gothic by Junius and Marshall, in 1665. . .”
 - 1842—Benjamin Thorpe printed “a very neat and handy edition of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels.”

- Textually, like the Gothic Bible, the extant Anglo-Saxon Gospels represent a *mixed text*. In terms of major variants, the Anglo-Saxon Gospels include the long ending of Mark (16:9-20) and the Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7:53-8:11).
- The following is a portion of a popular meme that circulates on the internet which describes the verse omissions in modern versions.



- Of the sixteen verses listed on this meme, ten of them are taken from the Gospels. When one compares the extant Anglo-Saxon Gospels against this list of verses that are missing from modern versions, one observes the following:
 - The extant Anglo-Saxon Gospels contain all the following verses: Matthew 12:21, 18:11; Mark 7:16, 9:44, 46, 15:28; Luke 17:36; John 5:4.
 - Only Matthew 23:14 is missing in its entirety whereas Mark 11:26 is missing the second half of the verse.
- From this we can conclude that the extant Anglo-Saxon Gospels are in far better textual shape than are modern versions.

Wycliffe Bible & Catholic Response

- In the 1380s, John Wycliffe translated the Bible out of Latin into the Middle English. These Bibles were all copied by hand before the invention of the printing press. Donald L Brake author of *A Visual History of the English Bible* reports the following regarding the influence of the Wycliffe Bible:
 - “In spite of the bitter opposition, the reading of the English Bible continued. There are today—six hundred years later—about 250 recorded copies of the Wycliffe Bible. The

large number in spite of intense Bible destructions and confiscations testifies to the widespread distribution of the bible during those early years” (Brake, 66).

- Earlier Brake stated the following regarding Catholic opposition to the Wycliffe Bible:
 - “Not everyone embraced the arrival of a Bible in the English tongue. The English Catholic Church’s opposition to a vernacular translation was predictable. The Authority of the priests rested solely in the church. The church’s powerful hold on the laity depended on biblical ignorance. Any free use of the Bible in worship and though signaled a deep threat to the church’s authority” (Brake, 63).
- Blackford Condit author of *The History of the English Bible* states the following regarding Catholic reception to the Wycliffe Bible:
 - “The English version of the Bible by Wycliffe was such an offense, that a bill was introduced into the House of Lords in 1390, to suppress it. In the course of the debate the Duke of Lancaster is reported to have said: “We will not be the dregs of all: seeing other Nations have the Law of God, which is the Law of Faith, written in their own Language. . . That he would maintain our having the Law in our own tongue against those, whoever they should be, who first brought in the Bill.” He was sustained by others, and finally the “Bill was thrown out of the House” (Condit, 62-63).
- The Wycliffe translation also gave rise to the established church’s intense hatred for a vernacular Bible. First, the *De heretico comburendo* (*On The Burning of Heretics*) from 1401 promised death to heretics by means of burning the offender alive. In 1408 the infamous *Constitutions* were formulated in direct response to the overwhelming reception of Wycliffe’s ideas that every man should have a Bible in his own language. The *Constitutions* forbade the Sacred Latin Vulgate Bible to be translated into a common tongue without express supervision of the church. It soon followed that translating Scriptures into English or reading the Bible in English were heretical acts” (Brake, 47).
- “The Oxford Council summoned in 1407-8 by Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, restated the restriction of English translations. The church historian John Foxe quotes the seventh enactment:
 - “We therefore decree and ordain, that no man, hereafter, by his own authority translate any text of the Scripture into English or any other tongue, by way of a book, libel, or treatise, now lately set forth in the time of John Wycliffe, or since, or hereafter to be set forth, in part or in whole, privily or apertly, upon pain of greater excommunication, until said translation be allowed by the ordinary of the place, or, if the case so require, by the council of provincial. He that shall do contrary to this, shall likewise be punished as a favourer of error and heresy” (Brake, 66).

- From the early 15th century, the *Constitutions* held sway over England and continued to do so at the time of William Tyndale.

Invention of the Printing Press

- Johannes Gutenberg invented his mechanical movable type printing press in Mainz, Germany, around 1440. While development began in the late 1430s, the technology was finalized by 1450, with the famous Gutenberg Bible printed between 1452 and 1455.
- Roger B. Beck and the authors of *World History: Patterns of Interaction* state the following regarding the historical impact of Gutenberg's Press:
 - "During the 13th century, block-printed items reached Europe from China. European printers began to use block printing to create whole pages to bind into books. However, this process was too slow to satisfy the Renaissance demand for knowledge, information, and books.

Around 1440 Johann Gutenberg, a craftsman from Mainz, Germany, developed a printing press that incorporated a number of technologies in a new way. The process made it possible to produce books quickly and cheaply. Using this improved process, Gutenberg printed a complete Bible, the Gutenberg Bible, in about 1455. It was the first full-sized book printed with movable type.

The printing press enabled a printer to produce hundreds of copies of a single work. For the first time, books were cheap enough that many people could buy them. At first printers produced mainly religious works" (Beck, 484).

- In a cutout titled "Global Impact" at the bottom of page 484 Roger B. Beck and company state the following regarding how the printing press increased book production:
 - "A copyist took five months to produce a single book. One man and a printing press could produce 500 books in the same amount of time" (Beck, 484).

Fall of Constantinople

- Constantinople was established by Emperor Constantine as the Eastern capital of the Roman Empire in 330 AD. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the late 5th century (400s), the Eastern Roman Empire in Constantinople lasted for another 1,000 years. Historians have called the Eastern Roman Empire the Byzantine Empire or Byzantium. The citizens of Byzantium called themselves Romans believing that they were a continuation of the Ancient Roman Empire.
- Situated on major trade routes, Constantinople earned its wealth through the spice trade. Traders passing back and forth between Europe and Asia would inevitably pass through Byzantine

controlled lands if not the city of Constantinople itself. Situated on a strategic chokepoint, the Byzantines could control access to the Black Sea through the Bosphorus Strait.

- Consequently, given its strategic importance, the city of Constantinople had been sieged 23 times, in its history, without being breached.
- In 1453, Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II, a Muslim, began an eight-week siege of the city on Monday, April 2, 1453. By 1453, the city of Constantinople was the last Christian stronghold in the East as Muslim armies had already taken all of modern-day Turkey and the bulk of the Hinter Land beyond the Bosphorus in the Balkan region of Europe.
- The Islamic conquest of Constantinople contributed to the Renaissance, as Greek scholars left the city and immigrated to Italy, bringing Greek texts with them. Greek not Latin had been the official language of the Byzantine Empire. The fall of Constantinople is one mechanism that served to introduce Byzantine Greek MSS into Europe on the eve of the Protestant Revolution during the same time frame that the printing press was invented. Another mechanism that exposed Europe to the Byzantine readings of the Greek Church before 1453 was the ministry of the Paulicians.

The Spirit of the Renaissance

- During the Renaissance people became interested in ancient culture. Knowledge from ancient Greece and Rome that had been largely lost during the Middle Ages was rediscovered. Scholars thought that ancient Greek and Roman writings could help them solve contemporary problems. (Beck, 472)
- The study of classical texts led to the creation of a new type of scholar, the humanist. Alister McGrath explains how the Renaissance usage of the term “humanism” differs from its modern connotation. McGrath writes,
 - “The term humanism has now come to mean a worldview which denies the existence or relevance of God, or which is committed to a purely secular outlook. This is not what the word meant at the time of the Renaissance. Most humanists of the period were religious, and concerned to purify and renew Christianity, rather than eliminate it” (McGrath, 37).
- As an intellectual movement, humanists focused on human potential and achievements. Rather than trying to make classical texts agree with Christian teachings as medieval scholars had (Scholastics), humanists studied them to understand ancient Greek values (Beck, 472). The Italian Renaissance of the Southern Europe therefore took on a more secular flavor than did the Northern Renaissance.
- In Northern Europe the ideals of the Renaissance took a more religious track and planted the seeds of the Reformation across this region of Europe.

- “Italian humanists were very interested in reviving classical languages and classical texts. When the Italian humanist ideas reached the north, people used them to examine the traditional teaching of the Church. The northern humanists were critical of the failure of the Christian Church to inspire people to live a Christian life. This criticism produced a new movement known as Christian humanism. . . The best known of the Christian humanists were Desiderius Erasmus of Holland and Thomas More of England. . . Erasmus believed in a Christianity of the heart, not one of ceremonies and rules. He thought that in order to improve society, all people should study the Bible” (Beck, 482).
- In terms of literature, Renaissance writers popularized the practice of writing in the vernacular or native language of the people instead of Latin.
- Taken together, these developments created an opportune yet perilous environment on the eve of William Tyndale’s ministry. The Wycliffe Bible had awakened a hunger for Scripture in the vernacular, even as the Church responded with legal prohibitions and lethal penalties. The invention of the printing press made the mass dissemination of Scripture technologically possible, while the fall of Constantinople and the rise of Renaissance humanism restored access to Greek learning and the original biblical languages. In Northern Europe, this renewal took on a distinctly religious character, calling for reform grounded in Scripture itself. Tyndale would step onto this stage as the first Englishman positioned to unite these forces—vernacular translation, Greek scholarship, and print technology—yet he would do so under the shadow of laws specifically designed to prevent precisely the work he believed God had called him to do.

The Life and Career of Erasmus

- Alister McGrath, author of *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, discusses how the Northern Renaissance took a more religious tone than the Italian Renaissance. McGrath states:
 - “Although there are major variations within northern European humanism, two ideals seem to have achieved widespread acceptance throughout the movement. First, we find the same concern for written and spoken eloquence after the fashion of the classical period, as in the Italian Reformation. Second, we find a religious program directed toward the corporate revival of the Christian church. The Latin slogan *Christianismus renascens*, “Christianity being born again,” summarizes the aims of the program . . .” (McGrath, 40).
- Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) is generally regarded as the most important humanist writer of the Renaissance. Consequently, Erasmus had a profound impact upon Christian theology during the first half of the sixteenth century. Although not a Protestant in any sense of the term, Erasmus did much to lay the intellectual foundations of the Reformation (McGrath, 40).
- According to the entry in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* edited by Walter E. Elwell on Erasmus:

- “. . . [Erasmus] was educated at Deventer by the Brethren of the Common Life (1475-84), he spent six years as a monk and then attended the College de Montaigu in Paris (1494). In 1499 he visited England, where he met John Colet and Thomas More. This experience influenced him to employ literary talent, intellectual brilliance and clever wit in the service of Christ” (Elwell, 383).
- The following is a summary of the life and career of Erasmus presented in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*:
 - From Paris
 - 1500—*Adages*, an annotated collation of classical proverbs, was published.
 - 1503—*Enchiridion*, a handbook of practical theology, as well as editions of Cicero and Jerome and a critical edition of the *Annotation of the New Testament* by Lorenzo Valla went to press.
 - From England
 - 1505—began his translation of the New Testament.
 - Traveled to Italy in 1506 and experienced direct contact with humanist culture.
 - In 1509 Erasmus went back to England where he finished and published *Praise of Folly*.
 - Between 1509 and 1516, when his Greek edition of the New Testament was published, Erasmus traveled all over Europe studying Greek manuscripts. Moreover, it was also during this time period that critical editions of Jerome, Seneca, Plutarch, and Cato were published. Lastly, it was during these years that the *Education of a Christian Prince* was printed (Elwell, 384).
- David Daniell, author of *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*, reports that in the 1480s Erasmus was a youth in the Dutch monastery of Steyn, one of the most “austere” and “anti-intellectual” monastic orders of the late Middle Ages (Danniel, 113). The early letters of Erasmus reveal that upon leaving the monastery he became acquainted and fell in love with the writings of the Italian Renaissance, especially Lorenzo Valla.
 - “Erasmus’s earliest surviving letters, however, written only a few years after his time at Steyn, reveal him as an enthusiastic and slightly intoxicated disciple of Italian humanism. This shift to a mental Italy was not—or not only—a rebellious later-adolescent separation from the monastic life in which he had been brought up. Everything that had been given to him by the *Devotio moderna* [his monastery] he took with him, making it more and more personal through the rest of his life.

Yet he fell in love with secular Italy and the ancient world. All his realism and growing awareness of the fullness of humanity, all his sense of the possibility of life’s experience, grew as he understood that the new Italians were showing him something ‘bold and

disturbing', contrasting with what was 'worn out or dead or medieval religiosity'. The new Italian books offered instead 'a humanity eager for self-expression and full of self-confidence'. In his new Italian citizenship, as it were, the spiritual ideals of the *Devotio moderna* stayed with him, and leavened the whole. From the pairing grew his response to Lorenzo Valla's gift of Bible understanding—nothing less than the sudden rediscovery of the New Testament.

Lorenzo Valla (1407-57), pioneering theoretician of the new Italian humanism, both in its philological base and as *Miles Christianus* ('soldier of Christ'), wrote at Rome towards the end of his life his *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum*. Erasmus read Valla. At eighteen, he made a summary of Valla's famous *Elegantiae*. . . Early in 1504, Valla was for Erasmus, as for many, simply an exciting model of literary humanism. Later that same year Erasmus, then in Premonstratensian monastery at Louvain, apparently by chance opened the pages of Valla's *Adnotationes*. It is not too fanciful to suggest that the opening of that book on his desk in the Abby of Park in Heverelle on that day, was, to the world of Bible studies, the moment of the break from the medieval to the modern. Erasmus, at once began to set out for himself his life's work, which would be on the Bible" (Daniell, 113-114).

- Prior to reading Valla's *Adnotationes* at Louvain Library late in 1504, Erasmus had discovered Jerome and done a study of Origen's *Hexapla*. Between 1504 and 1509 Erasmus traveled all over Europe including two stays in England where he befriended Thomas More and later in Venice. After causing Valla's *Adnotationes* to be represented in 1505, he published his own new Latin version of the Gospels and Epistles based on a Greek manuscript shown to him at St. Paul's by his friend John Colet. Regarding Valla's *Adnotationes* William W. Combs of Detroit Baptist Seminary writes:
 - "Valla's purpose was to evaluate the Vulgate as a translation of the Greek New Testament, and his work consisted of a compilation of annotations on the Vulgate in light of Greek manuscripts" (Combs, 4).
- Put another way, the humanist Valla was seeking to improve the Vulgate by conforming it more closely with Greek MSS. Taking his cue from Valla, Erasmus sought to do likewise:
 - "Like Valla, Erasmus was convinced that the Vulgate New Testament had many deficiencies that could only be corrected by comparing to the Greek New Testament" (Combs, 5).
- Daniell credits Erasmus with a public renewal in Biblical studies during the first decade of the 16th century. Simply stated, Erasmus desired to "reform the church from within by a renewal of biblical theology based on philological study of the New Testament text, and supported by a knowledge of patristics, itself renewed by the same methods" (Daniell, 114-115).
- In order to accomplish this task Erasmus advanced on four fronts: 1) "establish a sound Greek New Testament text and print it with critical commentary and notes," 2) "edit and print equally sound editions of those Fathers who were great biblical commentators," 3) "proposed further editions and commentaries of the greatest biblical texts", and 4) "expand his Preface to his Greek

New Testament into a treatise of methodology. . . which both summed up and fed back into the other biblical work” (Daniell, 115-116).

- In summation Daniell states:
 - “All this he did. The importance was not simply in the works themselves, though that was very high. It was even more that the greatest and most famous scholar in all Europe, the author of *The Praise of Folly*, *The Enchiridion*, *De copia* and *Adagia* (to whom More’s Utopia was dedicated), was, as one might put it, ‘doing’ the Bible. He was undercutting the texts of the Fathers, including some that, to his dismay, he had discovered to be fakes. Not only was he focusing on biblical theology; he was editing the New Testament in Greek” (Daniell, 116).
- Erasmus was a prolific writer, and each main category of his works reveals something of his personality:
 - “First, he produced many scholarly books including historical material, lexicons, translations, and critical editions of earlier books. His purpose was to combat ignorance. He believed truth was attainable through clarity of expression.

A second element of his approach is revealed in his satirical works such as *Praise of Folly*. Here Erasmus ridicules humanists and scholars who take themselves too seriously, but he saves his most biting satire for bigoted churchmen, pompous lawyers, warmongering rulers.

A final category of his work, the more overtly Christian writings, demonstrates that neither scholarship nor humor was to be an end in itself. These elements were pursued to reach the goal of the restoration of primitive Christianity. Erasmus felt called to cleanse and purify the church through the application of humanistic scholarship to Christian tradition” (Elwell, 384).
- According to Alister McGrath, *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* was a landmark in religious publishing.
 - “Although the work was first published in 1503, and then reprinted in 1509, its real impact dates from its third printing in 1515. From that moment onward it became a cult work, apparently going through twenty-three editions in the next six years. Its appeal was to educated lay men and women, whom Erasmus regarded as the most important resource that the church possessed” (McGrath, 47).
- The *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* developed the revolutionary thesis that the church of the day could be reformed by a collective return to the writings of the Fathers and Scripture. The regular reading of Scriptures is put forward as the key to a new lay piety, on the basis of which the church may be renewed and reformed . . . Erasmus does not understand Christianity to be a mere external observance of a moral code. His characteristically humanist emphasis upon inner religion leads him to suggest that reading Scripture transforms its readers, giving them a new motivation to love God and their neighbors (McGrath, 47).

Erasmus and the Greek New Testament

- Bible collector and historian Donald L. Brake notes in *A Visual History of the English Bible* that from the birth of printing in 1450s until years of the 16th century, no Greek New Testament had been printed.
 - “It may seem strange that for more than fifty years after the invention of moveable type, no Greek New Testament had been printed. The absence of the forbidden English Bible is understandable, but there was no printed Greek New Testament either” (Brake, 92).
- One cannot adequately tell the story of the first Greek New Testament without noting the role that the fall of Constantinople played.
 - “Greek learning remained the domain of the Eastern Church until the fall of Constantinople (1453). When the Turks took control of this center of learning, scholars fled to the West and with them came the resurgence of the Greek language.

Both the emphasis on the interpretation of Scriptures, now available to all, and the rebirth of Greek language studies brought great promise for a resurgence of a reformed Christianity. The recipients of the new academic climate were the pre-reformed and able humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam and a Roman Catholic priest and scholar, Ximenes of Alcala, Spain” (Brake, 92-93).

- E.H. Broadbent, author of *The Pilgrim Church*, highlights that the single biggest outcome of the Renaissance’s (humanist) interest in classical literature was the restoration and publication of the text of the Greek New Testament (Broadbent, 134).
- The first printed Greek New Testament was published by Erasmus in 1516. Bible historians such as David Daniell and Donald L. Brake note that while Erasmus was first to publish with his Greek New Testament, he might not have been the first to produce such an edition. Regarding the matter, Brake states the following:
 - “Cardinal Ximenes edited the first printed Greek New Testament in his massive six-volume multilingual bible in 1514. His carefully edited Greek New Testament was not published until 1520. It could have been the standard for years to come except for the work of Johann Froben, an enterprising publisher who wanted to be the first to publish a New Testament in Greek.

A modern business person will not be surprised that an entrepreneur would emerge to fill the economic gap. Johann Froben, seeing an opportunity, employed Desiderius Erasmus to edit a Greek New Testament after receiving word or rumor of Ximenes’s project. In 1515, Erasmus began searching for manuscripts of sufficient quality to be typeset. Since the project required the utmost haste, Erasmus did not take the time to find a complete manuscript of the Greek New Testament. After all, these manuscripts were hand copied centuries before and were quite rare even in the sixteenth century. With approximately five manuscripts in hand, he began the task of editing. When parts of the text were

indecipherable, Erasmus used the Latin text and translated it back into Greek. Oddly, several of his renderings do not appear in any known Greek manuscripts, and they are still used in some modern translations.

Although Erasmus's text appeared to be inferior in quality to the one produced by Ximenes, it gained early dominance because it was published in 1516, four years before Ximenes's *Complutensian* (1520)" (Brake, 93).

- Regarding Cardinal Ximenes' *Polyglot*, Dr. William W. Combs adds:
 - "The *Complutensian Polyglot* was actually a complete Bible in six volumes. The OT had the Hebrew, Latin Vulgate, and Greek Septuagint texts in parallel columns, and in the NT, the Latin Vulgate, and Greek in parallel columns. Only 600 copies of the Complutensian Polyglot were ever printed. Because of its expense, its influence was limited in comparison to the more popular editions of Erasmus" (Combs, 7).
- Historical evidence has caused some to believe that when Erasmus came to Basel in 1514 it was not with the intention of publishing the Greek New Testament but rather to print his life's work to date, i.e., a copy of the Latin Vulgate accompanied by his *Annotations*. In addition, Combs reports that Erasmus may have not originally planned on using Froben to print his volume, favoring a printer named Aldus instead. But alas, Aldus died in February 1515 thereby forcing Erasmus to find a different printer. It is at this point that many scholars believe that Froben heard of Cardinal Ximenes's project and persuaded Erasmus against his original plans to include the Greek New Testament in his work (Combs, 8).
- Dr. Combs states the following regarding the inaugural edition of the *Novum Instrumentum* by Erasmus in 1516.
 - "... Erasmus' Greek NT of 1516 was the first one to be published. It was, as has been noted, a Latin-Greek edition, which he called *Novum Instrumentum*. Years later, in 1527, Erasmus explained that he "chose the word *Instrumentum* in the title because it conveyed better than *Testamentum* the idea of a decision put down in writing: *Testamentum* could also mean an agreement without a written record." More than one thousand pages of *Novum Instrumentum* contain three parts: the Greek text, Erasmus' Latin translation [not the Vulgate], and his *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*. The latter. . . were his explanatory remarks. Erasmus felt they were essential in order to explain and defend his Latin translation according to its Greek base. The Greek and Latin texts are set out in parallel columns with *Annotationes* following on separate pages. To forestall criticism Erasmus prefaced the text of the NT with a number of apologetic writings. These included a letter addressed to the reader, a dedication to Pope Leo X, an appeal to study Scripture (*Paraclesis*), a program of theological studies (*Methodus*), and a defense of his work (*Apologia*)" (Combs, 9).
- Many scholars have questioned whether Erasmus' main purpose behind the *Novum Instrumentum* was to produce the first Greek New Testament.

- “Erasmus and his contemporaries regarded the *Novum Instrumentum* and its later editions in the first place as the presentation of the NT in a new Latin form, and not as an edition of the Greek text.” The primary purpose of Erasmus was to publish his annotations along with his Latin translation. The Greek text was only there for the purpose of confirming the Latin translation. This is easily demonstrated” (Combs, 9-10).
- In order to prove this assertion, Combs goes on to state the following:
 - “First, the title under which Erasmus published his work includes these words, *Novum Instrumentum . . . recognitum et emendatum*, which means “The New Testament. . . revised and improved.” These words must refer to the Erasmus’ Latin translation, not to the Greek text, since there was not at that time a printed edition of the Greek NT in circulation that could be “revised and improved.” They mean: here you have a NT, obviously in the language in which it was current, Latin, but in an improved and revised form, i.e., no longer the generally current Vulgate version. The title offers no evidence at all that *Novum Instrumentum* contains an edition of the Greek text.

Second, in his dedication to Pope Leo X, Erasmus says:

I perceived that the teaching which is our salvation was to be had in a much purer and more lively form if sought at the fountain-head and drawn from the actual sources than from pools and runnels. As so I have revised the whole New Testament (as they call it) against the standard of the Greek original. . . I have added annotations of my own, in order in the first place to show the reader what changes I have made, and why; second, to disentangle and explain anything that may be complicated, ambiguous, or obscure.

In Erasmus’ own words, then, what he offers is his new translation based on the Greek. In addition, he has included his explanatory remarks (*Annotationes*), which were to justify the new translation’s deviations from the Vulgate. In all of this, Erasmus gives not a hint that he is also offering an edition of the Greek text.

Third, numerous statements in the *Apologia* clearly demonstrate that what Erasmus was defending was not the Greek text, but his new Latin translation. At one point he says the “Greek text has been ‘added’ so that the reader can convince himself that the Latin translation does not contain any rash innovations, but is solidly based.” This is not to say that the Greek text was not important, but clearly it was subordinate to the Latin translation. Erasmus was concerned about the Greek text only to the extent that it proved his Latin translation was not plucked out of thin air. That he was not primarily interested in the Greek text is clear from the fact that he never brought out a separate edition of just the Greek text, in spite of the fact he was encouraged to do so” (Combs, 10-11).

- While I do not agree with Combs’ conclusion regarding preservation and the Biblical text, his comments regarding the primary motives of Erasmus in publishing *Novum Instrumentum* appear to be consistent with the historical facts. Erasmus’ main goal was not to produce the first Greek New Testament as much as it was to textually justify his new Latin translation. Furthermore,

viewing Erasmus' work in this fashion places him in complete agreement with his idol and fellow humanist Valla.

Conclusion

- Will Durant, in his landmark series the Story of Civilization, states the following regarding the publication of the Greek New Testament.
 - “These two works marked the application of humanistic learning to the early literature of Christianity, and the beginning of Biblical criticism which in the nineteenth century restored the Bible to human authorship and fallibility” (Durant, 283).
- “Reuchlin and Erasmus gave the Bible to the learned; Luther gave it to the people” (Miller, 501).
 - Erasmus performed the necessary groundwork of compiling the correct Greek text. This is the foundation for Tyndale's English Bible, Luther's German Bible, etc., which made the word of God available in the vernacular tongues.
 - Since God's word does not return unto him void but accomplishes that which he pleases (Isaiah 55:11), the translation of the word of God into the vernacular tongues was the most enduring and impactful consequence of the Reformation.

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Lesson 2

The Life and Times of William Tyndale (1494-1524)

Prepared & Taught by Alex Bojko

Introduction

- In this lesson, I will outline the following regarding the life and times of William Tyndale:
 - Tyndale's exposure to Lollardy in Gloucestershire and the influence it had on him as a translator.
 - Tyndale's self-education and formal Oxford education.
 - Tyndale's time at the Walsh household and his failed meeting with Cuthbert Tunstall.
- This lesson will also provide important foundational material for my Sunday morning lesson on the theological beliefs of William Tyndale.

William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Lollard Influence

- In his historical survey of the English language titled *The Adventure of English: The Biography of A Language*, Melvyn Bragg provides the following description of William Langland and his famous poem *Piers Plowman*:
 - “William Langland was a Lollard and his religious poem, *Piers Plowman*, was published in 1390. It was the most popular poem of its day, and it shows how deeply Wycliffe's ideas had bitten in. Langland wrote in the West Midlands dialect and while Chaucer's base was London and the cognoscenti, *Piers Plowman* gathered in the provincial and the strongly religious-minded rural population with whose often desperate plight he sympathized wholly” (Bragg, 85).
- When comparing the acknowledged birthplace of William Tyndale with the setting of *Piers Plowman*, one finds that there is a shared geographic connection. Consider the following annotated map:



Modern Map of the United Kingdom (Wikimedia Commons). The black circle outline indicates the area of Gloucestershire where Tyndale was born.



1577 Map of Gloucestershire created by Christopher Saxton

- Tyndale scholar David Daniell also mentions this geographical connection in discussing the early life of William Tyndale. He writes in *William Tyndale: A Biography*:
 - “The great interlacing allegorical poem by William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, mostly written at the time of Wyclif, between 1360 and 1390, and like him critical of much in the practice of the Church, is set in the Vale of Berkeley and also a little further north in the Malvern Hills” (Daniell, 15-16).
- Nine years later in *The Bible English*, Daniell makes more connections between Langland and Tyndale:

- “What were Tyndale’s models? [for his translation style] West Country speech may be one: Tyndale was a Gloucestershire man. William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* was written in the 1380s just a few miles north of the Tyndale’s home in Gloucestershire, still by the River Severn. Though England’s first printer of note, Caxton, printed edition after edition of Chaucer for his courtly readership, no one printed Langland, in his country speech, until Robert Crowley, a man of some importance as printer and writer, produced an edition in 1550” (Daniell, 257).
- Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire in 1494. There is testimony from William Tyndale’s writings that indicates he was born in Gloucestershire. Through reading Tyndale’s writings, one finds that he frequently used metaphors and similes. The metaphors and similes frequently represent aspects of everyday life. Thus, one can learn from Tyndale about his life simply from the figures of speech he uses in his writings. In *The Obedience of A Christian Man*, Tyndale provides an example of an allegory that connects with his early life while he is discussing the differences between various modes of interpretation of the Scriptures:

ge or borrowed speech. As when we saye
of a wātā childe / this shepe hath magottes
in his taylor / he must be anoynted with byr
chi salve which speech I borrow of the she
perdes ¶ Thou shalt understode therefore

Transcription: “As when we say of a wanton child, ‘This sheep hath magots in his tail, he must be anointed with birchen salve;’ which speech I borrow of the shepherds.”

- The historical record indicates that Tyndale was present in roughly four to five locations in his early life before leaving for Germany: Gloucestershire, Oxford, Cambridge (no hard evidence), Gloucestershire (again), and London. Out of these five places, the only one where Tyndale would have the background knowledge to make the statement he did was when he was in Gloucestershire, which was known for its wool and cloth industry.
- David Daniell provides the following comments on the wool and cloth industry in Gloucestershire in *William Tyndale: A Biography*:

- “From Gloucestershire several generations of English merchants had been travelling to the Low Countries and France and further afield, as far as Italy and Spain; their foreign counterparts had from long before taken to coming to Gloucestershire to buy the strong, white wool of the Cotswold sheep, in fleeces as well in the best of the spring and autumn clips, for themselves. The trade was refined when it was recognized that, instead of raw wool, woollen cloth would be more profitable still” (Daniell, 14).
- Though semi-allegorical, Langland’s *Piers Plowman* provides an important window into the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church in rural England and sets the stage for the greater English reformation to come under Tyndale. Consider the following excerpts from the preface of *Piers Plowman* compared with statements Tyndale makes in his 1528 work [The Obedience of a Christian Man](#) and his 1531 Prologue to [Jonah](#) (a screenshot of a handwritten manuscript copy of [Piers Plowman](#) is provided, followed by a modern English transcription. Bolding and [#] indicate similarities between the passages):

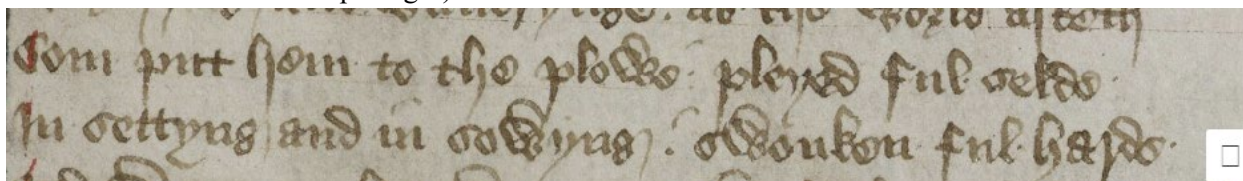


Image 9

<i>Piers Plowman</i> (ca. 1390)	<i>The Obedience of A Christian Man</i> (1528)
“Some put them to the plow pleyed full selde [1] [no time for pleasure] In setting [planting] and in sowing [sowing] swonken [toiling] full hard”	“They [Rome] will say haply, the scripture requireth a pure mind and a quiet mind: and therefore the lay-man, because he is altogether cumbered with worldly business [1], cannot understand them. If that be the cause, then it is a plain case that our prelates understand not the scriptures themselves: for no lay-man is so tangled with worldly business as they are. The great things of the world are ministered by them; neither do the lay-people any great thing, but at their assignment” (Tyndale, 1:146).

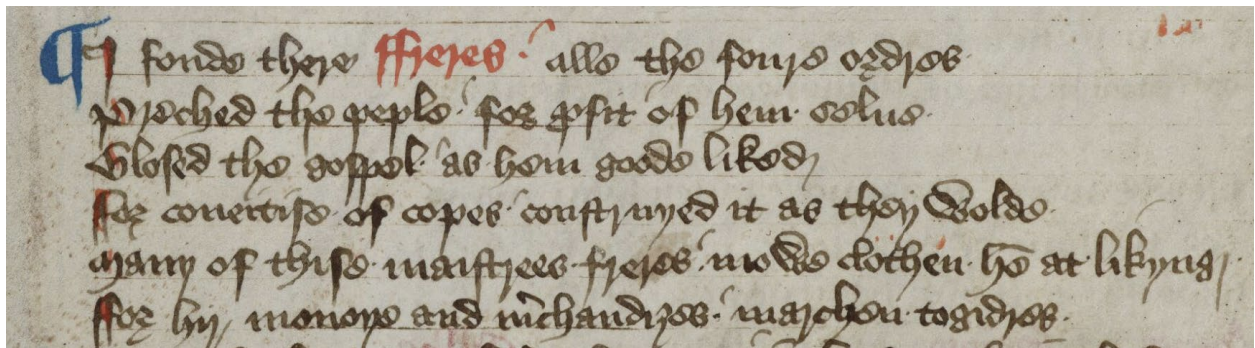


Image 10

<i>Piers Plowman</i> (ca. 1390)	Prologue to Jonah (1531)
"I found there the fryers [friars] all the four orders Preached to the people for profite of themselves Glosed [comment on, interpret, explain, paraphrase] the gospel as them good liked [1] For covetous of copes [ecclesiastical outer garment], construed it as they would [2] Many of these master friars might clothen them at liking, for her money and her merchandise marchen together" [3]	"And when they come to the gospel [1], there they mingle their leaven, and say, God now receiveth us no more to mercy, but of mercy receiveth us to penance, that is to wete, holy deeds that make them fat bellies and us their captives [2], both in soul and body. And yet they feign their idol the pope so merciful, that if thou make a little money glister in his Balam's eyes, there is neither penance nor purgatory nor any fasting at all but to fly to heaven as swift as a thought and at the twinkling of an eye [3]." (Daniell, <i>Tyndale's Old Testament</i>, 629).

- When comparing the preface of *Piers Plowman* with Tyndale's *The Obedience of A Christian Man* and prologue to Jonah, it is clear that there are distinct parallels.
- It is also worth noting that Tyndale directly mentions the Lollard John Wycliffe four times in his writings and quotes Sir Thomas More's two mentions of Wycliffe from More's *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529) in *An Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* (1531):

They coulde not at theyre owne luste slea
the pooze wretches which at that tyme we
re conuerted vnto repentaunce / and to the
true faith / to put their trust in chrysts death
& bloudsheddyng for the remission of their
sinnes by the preachinge of Johan Wycliffe
fe / Als sone as the archbysshop was out of
the royaume, the Irishmen began to rebel
against kynge Rycharde as befoze against
Kynge Jhon: But not hardely withoute
the muysible inspyzation of them that rule
bothe in the courte and also in the consciences
of al men. They be one kingdom & woze

Practice of Prelates, 1530

Transcription: "They could not at their own lust slay the poor wretches which at that time were converted unto repentance and to the truth faith, to put their trust in Christ's death and blood-shedding for the remission of their sins, by the preaching of John Wicliffie. As soon as the archbishop was out of the realm, the Irishmen began to rebel against king Richard, as before against king John; but not, hardly, without the invisible inspiration of them that rule both in the court and also in the consciences of all men."

pe and some of their ordinaries. And when the
 parishes goo to law with them to put a waye
 their hoyses / the bishopes officers mocke them/
 poll them and make them spend their thyftes/
 and the prestes kepe their hoyses still. Howbe it
 in very dede sens they were rebuked by the pre
 achynge of wicleffe/oure englesch spiritualtie ha
 ue layd their snares vn to mens wiues/to couer
 their abhominacions / though they byde not all
 waye secret.

[An Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue, 1531](#)

Transcription: “And when the parishens go to law with them, to put away their whores, the bishop’s officers mock them, poll them, and make them spend their thrifts, and the priests keep their whores still. Howbeit, in very deed, since they were rebuked by the preaching of Wicliffie, our English spirituality have laid their snares unto men’s wives, to cover their abominations, though they bide not alway secret.”

Master Mores thirde boke Fo. L. iiii
Wiclicke was the occasion of the vtter subuersion of the realme of Bohem/both
 in faith and good liuynge and of the losse of ma
 ny a thousand liues. **T**he rule of their faith ar **Tyndale**.
 chrystes promises/and the rule of their liuynge
 gods lawe. And as for losse of liues/it is trouth
 that the pope slew I thynke an hundred thou
 sande of them because of their faith and y they
 wold no lenger serue him. As he slew in englon
 de many a thousande/and slew the true kynge
 and sett vpp a false vn to the effusion of all the
 noble bloude ad murtherynge vpp of the comi
 naltie/because he schulde be his defender.

An Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue, 1531

Transcription:

More "(M.) Wicliffe was the occasion of the utter subversion of the realm of Boheme, both in faith and good living, and of the loss of many a thousand lives."

Tyndale (T.) "The rule of their faith are Christ's promises, and the rule of their living God's law. And as for loss of lives, it is truth that the pope slew, I think, an hundred thousand of them, because of their faith, and that they would no longer serve him: as he slew in England many a thousand, and slew the true king and set up a false, unto the effusion of all the noble blood and murdering up of the commonalty, because he should be his defender."

Master Moyses thirde booke Fol. Lb.

xvi.

The messenger asketh hym / if there be an ol
 de lawfull trāllacion befoze wiclyffe's / how
 happeneth it y it is in so few mens handes / se-
 inge so many desyre it: He answereth the p^rin-
 ter dare not print it and then hange on a dout-
 ful triall / whether it were trālliated sens oꝝ befo-
 re. For if it were translated sens / it must be first
 approued.

An Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue, 1531

Transcription: "The messenger [a character in More's *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* who converses with More] asketh him [More], 'If there be an old lawful translation before Wicliffe's, how happeneth it that it is in so few men's hands, seeing so many desire it?' He [More] answereth, 'The printer dare not print it, and then hang on a doubtful trial, whether it were translated since or before; for if it were translated since, it must be first approved.'"

Gildas preached repētaunce vñ to y^e olde Britaynes that inhabited englōd: they repented not / & therfore God sent in theyr enemies vppō thē on euery side & destroyed thē vpp & gaue the lōd vñ to other nacōes. And greate Vengeaunce hath bene takē in that lande for synne sēns that tyme.

Wiclyffe preached repētaunce vñ to oure fathers not longe sēns: they repēted not for their hertes were indurat & theyr eyes blinded with their awne Pope holy right & wēsnesse wherwith they had made theyr soules gaye agēst the receauinge agayne of y^e wicked spirite that bringeth. vii. worse then hym selfe with him & maketh y^e later ende worse then the beginninge: for in open synnes there is hope of repētaunce / but in holy ypocrisie none at all. But what folowēd? they slew their true & right kinge and

Prologue to Jonah, 1531.

Transcription: “Gildas 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 hath been taken in that land for sin since that time.”

“Wiclyffe preached repentance unto our fathers not long since: they repented not for their hearts were indurate and their eyes blinded with their own pope holy righteousness wherewith they had made their souls gay against the receiving again of the wicked spirit that bringeth seven worse than himself

with him, and maketh the latter end worse than the beginning: for in open sins there is hope of repentance, but in holy hypocrisy none at all.”

These ypocrytes layed to wyclifes charge (and do yet) that his doctrine caused insurrection: but they/ to quenche the truthe of his preachinge/ slew the right kinge/ and set vp. iij. false kinges a rowe: by which mychebouse sedicion/ they caused halfe englonde to be slayne vp/ and brought the realme in to sicke ruyne and desolacion that. &c. . More coulde saye in his vtopia/ that

An Exposition Upon the First Epistle of John, 1531

Transcription: “These hypocrites laid to Wycliffe’s charge (and do yet) that his doctrine caused insurrection. But they, to quench the truth of his preaching, slew the right king, and set up three false kings a row: by which mischievous sedition they caused half England to be slain up, and brought the realm into such ruin and desolation . . .”

- The six mentions of Wycliffe by Tyndale indicate Tyndale’s knowledge of Wycliffe both in regards to his theological beliefs and even his Bible translation of the 1380s. The mention of Gildas in the 1531 prologue to Jonah is also significant. Gildas was a British monk of the fifth and sixth century whose work *De excidio Britanniae* portrays him as “Old Testament prophet, warning the Britons of their sinful behavior and God’s response to it. His history of Britain served to show the hand of God at work, and to warn the Britons of the consequences of their behavior” ([Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#), s.v. “Gildas”).

Tyndale’s Knowledge of the Wycliffe Bible and editing of Lollard Tracts

- In his various writings, Tyndale free-quotes verses from the Old Testament that he does not provide in a full translation elsewhere. Studying these quotations can provide us with possible insight into the influences that played a role in Tyndale’s translation. Furthermore, some of these quotations tell us that Tyndale in his younger years either heard a Wycliffe Bible preached or read

fragments of a Wycliffe Bible both of which contributed to his Scriptural understanding that would prove useful later.

- Tyndale's knowledge of the Wycliffe Bible is significant because the word of God is a book whose truths are meant to be preached and proclaimed publicly, even in the midst of opposition. Nehemiah 8:1-8 describes Ezra and others reading the book of the law of Moses before the congregation, giving the sense, causing the people to understand the reading. Nehemiah 13:1-3 shows the effect of proper preaching of the word of God, which is separation from error and understanding of the truth (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul boldly proclaimed to the superstitious Athenians at Mars' Hill the God that made the world and all things therein. There was certainly scoffing and rejection; however, there were some that believed (Acts 17:22-34). In his ministry, Paul held nothing back and sought to please God, not man (Acts 20:20; Gal. 1:10). Paul tells Timothy to preach the word and be instant in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2).
- When members of the body of Christ, who are committed with the task of preaching the gospel (2 Cor. 5:17-21), preach the gospel of the grace of God properly to lost people, it gives lost people the opportunity to hear the gospel, believe it, and trust it (Eph. 1:12-13). The word of God works effectually in them that believe (1 Thess. 2:13). The word of God must be preached and proclaimed and that is what Wycliffe and the Lollards did throughout the rural counties of England. Their work influenced people, including Tyndale. It is quite possible that through hearing a Wycliffe Bible preached, Tyndale heard the gospel, got saved, and as such the spirit of God was in Tyndale. One cannot separate the spirit of God from the word of God (Dt. 8:3; Mt. 22:29-32; Jn. 6:63; 1 Cor. 2:9-16; 2 Pt. 1:21). Thus, Tyndale got saved at a young age and over time grew into maturity when it came to the Scriptures.
- Tyndale's exposure to the Wycliffe Bible is also supported by manuscript evidence. Mary Dove in *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* mentions that there are 250 surviving Wycliffe Bible manuscripts. 20 of the 250 manuscripts are complete Bibles. Dove argues that given the large size of the complete Wycliffe Bibles she has studied, and the inclusion of lectionaries in some of them, Wycliffe Bibles were read aloud in public settings and studied privately (Dove, 17, 64-67).
- Consider Zechariah 13:7 quoted in *The Obedience of A Christian Man* compared with a Wycliffe Bible and other English Bibles of the Reformation-era:

de and schilde and defender: but now it shal
 goo as thou redest Zacharias. xij. I wil
smyte the sheperde and the shepe of the flo
ke shalbe scatered. Now shal my father leas

Transcription: “. . . but now it shall go as thou readest Zachariah 13. ‘I will smite the Shepard and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’”

- The red underlined portion is the latter half of Zechariah 13:7. It is interesting to note that the red underlined portion is identical to Zechariah 13:7 in the early and late versions of a Wycliffe Bible.

7 of hem that loueden me. Swerd, be
 thou reysid on my sheperd, and on the
 wall cleuyng to me, saith the Lord of
 oostis; smyte thou the sheperd, and the
sheep of the flocc shuln be scaterid. And
 8 Y shal turne my hond to the litil; and

these Y was woundid in the hous of hem
 that lonyden me. Swerd, be thou reysid
 on my scheepherde, and on a man cleu-
 yng to me, seith the Lord of oostis;
smyte thou the scheepherde, and scheep^l
of the flocc schulen be scaterid. And Y

[Early Version \(left\) and Late Version \(right\) of the Wycliffe Bible in Zechariah 13:7 \(Forshall and Madden, 763\)](#)

- No other Bible of the English Reformation reads the same way in Zechariah 13:7. The fact that they do not read the same is significant as it shows that Tyndale is unique in hearkening back to Wycliffe in his free-quoting of Scripture which shows the influences of Lollardy in his younger years.

DE, AND UPON THE PRINCE OF THE
 the LORDE of hostes: Smyte the shepherde
 and the shepe shal be scatred abroad, and so
 I will turne myne hande to the lytle ones.

[1535 Coverdale Bible BL \(H18\)](#)

“Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad”

Lorde of hostes: Smyte the shepherde, and
 the shepe shal be scatred abroad, and so will
 I turne myne hande to the lytle ones. And it

[1537 Matthew's Bible Folio BL \(H34\)](#)

“Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad”

the Lord of hostes. * Smyte the shepherde
 and the shepe shal be scatred abroad, and so
 will I turne myne hande to the lytle ones.

[1540 Great Bible Folio BL \(H52\)](#)

“Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad”

7 / ¶ Arise, o sworde, vpon my i shepherd,
 and vpon the man, *that is* my fellow, saith
 the Lord of hostes: smite the shepherd, &
 the shepe shalbe scattred: and I wil turne
 mine hand vpon the litle ones.

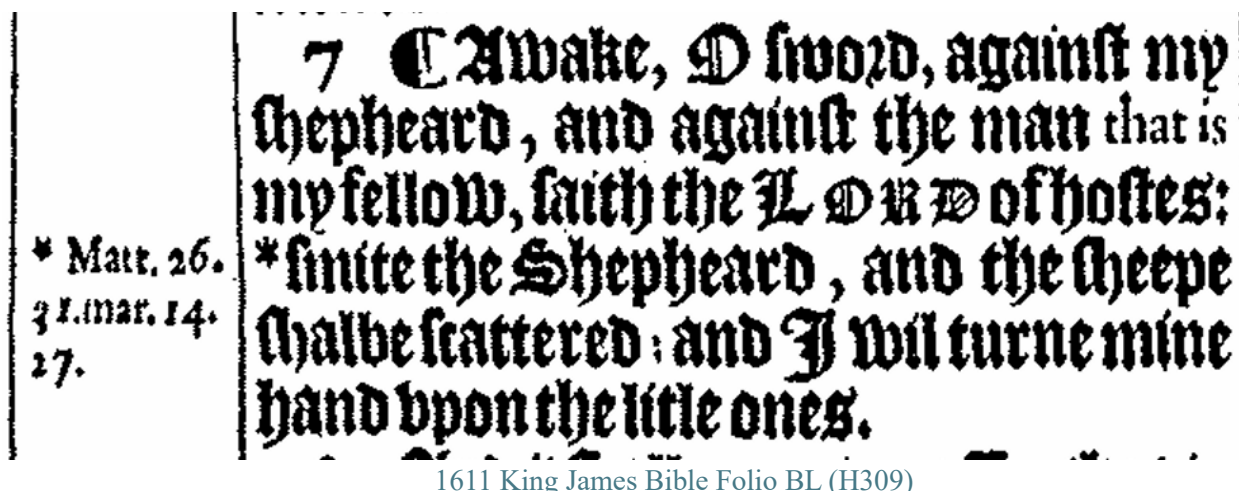
[1560 Geneva Bible Folio RF \(H107\)](#)

“Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered”

7 Arise O thou sworde vpon my shep-
 hearde, and vpon the man that is my
 fellow, saith the lord of hoastes: * smite
 the shepheard, & the sheepe shalbe scat-
 tred abroade: and so wyll I turne my
 hande to the litle ones.

[1568 Bishops Bible Folio BL \(H125\)](#)

“Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad”



[1611 King James Bible Folio BL \(H309\)](#)

“Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered”

- David Daniell in *The Bible in English* also acknowledges a connection between Tyndale and Wycliffe when Tyndale is free-quoting Scripture from memory. Daniell argues, using Tyndale’s 1525 Cologne Fragment prologue as an example, that:
 - “Tyndale’s first attempt at printing an English New Testament from Greek was begun in Cologne in 1525, and abandoned near the end of the first Gospel when the city authorities raided the printing shop. Sheets survived, and circulated in England, being the first printed ‘Lutheran’ tracts to arrive there. Tyndale had written for the edition a Prologue, which also circulated in England on its own (before being reissued by Tyndale later). These fourteen pages are an expansion of and alteration to, Luther’s *Vorrhede* to his first, 1522, New Testament in German from the Greek. There is in them a curious effect. When Tyndale has left Luther’s *Vorrhede* and is writing on his own, he makes whole passages out of Scripture, usually from the Epistles of Paul and John. The strong effect is of someone quoting Scripture from memory. Occasionally there is an exact parallel with Wycliffe LV, but most of the time there is no relation to any other version, including his own translation that he is now introducing. If Tyndale wrote these solid paragraphs of argument by quoting Scripture in an English version from memory—then memory of what? . . . We may for the moment postulate that one effect of solid preaching from Wycliffe’s Bibles, before the standardization that came with printed Bibles, was the creation of just such a common pool of English Bible phrases and passages in people’s memories” (Daniell, 88-89).
- Thus, it is not surprising to acknowledge that Tyndale was aware of the Wycliffe Bible in his youth. This is not to say that Tyndale copied the Latin Vulgate when it came to translating the Hebrew or the Greek nor that the Roman Catholic Church accepted the translation of the Bible

into English. Tyndale is not like Wycliffe as Tyndale translates the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek original source texts for the first time not the Latin Vulgate. Furthermore, there are plenty of records which show that in Tyndale's early life, the Roman Catholic Church would burn people at the stake for even possessing a fragment of the Scriptures in English. Rather, Tyndale's awareness and free-quoting of the Wycliffe Bible in parts of his writings demonstrates that Tyndale had in his mind the importance of the Bible and the power it had when the people had access to it and believed it.

- These mentions and translation influences prompt the following question: If Tyndale was Lutheran, why is he hearkening back to the Lollards and John Wycliffe to explain certain aspects of his beliefs? The evidence shows that Tyndale was influenced by Lollardy in the area of Gloucestershire.
- An additional piece of evidence that shows William Tyndale was influenced by Lollardy is in his editing of Lollard tracts. In 1530, a tract appeared from the press of Hans Luft titled *A Compendious Olde Treatyse Showing How that we Ought to Have the Scripture in English*. The tract dates to "a thousand four hundred" (1400). In a short preface before the tract, Tyndale is mentioned by name:

 Considerynge the malyciousnes of oure prelatz and theyr adherentes whiche so furiously barke ageynst the worde of God/ and speciallly the new testamēt translatyd and sett forth by Master Willia Tyndale/which they falsely p̄tēde to be sore corrupte. That ye may knowe that yt is not Tyndales translacyō ȳ moueth thē but only the inward malice whiche they haue neuer had ageynst the worde of God. I haue here put in prynte a treatyse wrytten aboute the yere of oure lorde a thousande foure hundryd. By which thou shalt playnly perceyue/that they wolde yett neuer from the begynnynge admytte any translatiō to the laye people/so that it is not ȳ corruptetrāslaciō that they withstonde. For yf that were true ȳ idle bellies wolde haue had leysur I nowgh to put forth a nother well trāslatyd. But yt is theyr owne myscheuous luyngē ȳ moueth thē accordyng as Chyste sayd Ihoñ. iij. Every man that worketh euyl hateth ȳ lyght/ner cometh to the lyght lest hys workes shulde be reprovēd. &c.

Transcription: “Considering the maliciousness of our prelates and their adherents which so furiously bark against the word of God, and specially the New Testament translated and set forth by master William Tyndale, which they falsely pretend to be sore corrupt. That ye may know that it is not Tyndale’s translation that moveth them but only the inward malice which they have ever had against the word of God. I have here put in print a treatise written about the year of our lord a thousand four hundred. By which thou shalt plainly perceive, that they would yet never from the beginning admit any translation to the lay people, so that it is not the corrupt translation that they withhold. For if that were true the idle bellies would have had leisure enough to put forth another well translated. But it is their own mischievous lying that moveth them according as Christ said (John 3). Every man that worketh evil hateth the light, nor cometh to the light lest his works should be reprovēd, etc.”

- Upon analyzing the contents of the tract, one finds a reference to the Apocrypha, specifically the book of 1 Maccabees:

For to make vpon Anticrist I take
 the figure of kynge Antioche of who
 me gods lawe speake the in y booke
 of 1 Maccabees / for right as kyn
 ge Antioche came in y ende well
 nygh of the olde lawe / and brent
 the booke of gods lawe / and compelled the peo
 ple to do maumentry. So now Anticrist y kynge

Transcription: “For to make upon Antichrist I take figure of king Antiochus of whom God’s law speaketh in the book of Maccabees. For right as king Antiochus came in the end well nigh of the old law, and brent the books of God’s law, and compelled the people to do maumentry.”

- Tyndale also makes a reference to the Apocrypha, although he references 2 Maccabees not 1 Maccabees, in *The Obedience of A Christian Man*:

Yf they be of mine annoited and beare my
marke disgresse the/ I wold saye disgradua
re the & (after þ exāple of noble Antiochus
ii. Mach. vii.) pare þ crounes & the fingers
of the &d tomiēte the craftily & for very pay
ne make them denye the trueth. But now

Transcription: "If they be of mine anointed, and bear my mark, disgrace them, (I would say, disgraduate them,) and (after the example of noble Antiochus 2 Macc. 7) pare the crowns and the fingers of them, and torment them craftily, and for very pain make them deny the truth."

- In *A Compendious Olde Treatyse*, the writer makes reference to King Antiochus Epiphanes who after going through Egypt sieged the city of Jerusalem. 1 Maccabees 1:55-64 describes the burning [brent] of the books of the law and the forced worship of idols [maumetry]. In 1528, Tyndale uses a similar trope from the Apocrypha by citing 2 Maccabees 7 which details the killing of a mother and her children for refusing to eat swine because it was against the law of God. The event also occurs under King Antiochus Epiphanes's reign. Tyndale, like the writer of *A Compendious Olde Treatyse*, uses King Antiochus Epiphanes as an example to explain the corrupt practices of the Roman Catholic Church. In *The Obedience of A Christian Man*, Tyndale references 2 Maccabees 7 not because it is inspired Scripture, but because it proves a point. It is also worth noting that before Tyndale translated the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament out of the original Greek and Hebrew source texts, the Latin Vulgate, and Wycliffe's translation of it, was the only vernacular Bible around. The Latin Vulgate contains the Apocrypha. That is why the Lollard tract cites it and it is through looking at this Lollard tract that Tyndale becomes aware of this reference. The Apocryphal books that the Roman Catholic Church calls inspired reveal an inconvenient truth that they are like King Antiochus Epiphanes, killing people who do not agree with their decrees and burning the word of God, replacing it with their man-made traditions. Given the similarity of both accounts, despite being from different Apocryphal books, it is clear that the trope goes back to Lollardy, at least in Tyndale's mind.
- In 1998, the academic journal *Reformation* published an article documenting new research into William Tyndale's editing of Lollard tracts. While searching the John Foxe papers at the British Library, researcher W.R. Cooper managed to find a fragment of writing that contained some of the words of *A Compendious Olde Treatyse*. Upon close comparison with the only handwritten

document from Tyndale ever known to exist, his letter from Vilvorde Castle, Cooper come to the conclusion that this fragment of writing that contained a portion of *A Compendious Olde Treatyse* was in the handwriting of William Tyndale. For more information see ["A Newly Identified Fragment in the Handwriting of William Tyndale."](#)

- Many claim that Lollardy was only a pre-cursor to the English Reformation and that it did not change the direction of the English Reformation. However, it is clear that the Lollards influenced William Tyndale. I argue, more so than Martin Luther, as Tyndale developed his desire for the translation of the Scriptures into English before he left for Germany. Furthermore, I do not believe that Tyndale attached himself to Lollardy to gain legitimacy to what he was doing, as some English Reformation historians argue. The desire to properly study the word of God and get it to other members of the body of Christ requires the spirit of God to be in a person. The desire for the things of the word of God come from the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:9-16). The reading and believing of God's word was the motivation for Tyndale to do what he did. He suffered infirmities, but gloried in them (2 Cor. 11:21-33) and he was willing to give his life, and ultimately did, to translate the New Testament into English. He embodied Philippians 1:21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Tyndale had to have the spirit of God in him to rejoice and continue on with what he was doing, especially in the midst of tense persecution (1 Cor. 13:4-7; Phil. 4:11-13). Bible doctrine is working in Tyndale to strengthen his inner-man. Thus, Tyndale did not follow Lollard material to legitimize his goal of Bible translation. The legitimization of Tyndale's goal came from God's word, which matters more than the word or approval of men. I believe Tyndale read Lollard material and sympathized with it because it was in accordance with the Scriptures and as such, he edited Lollard materials and Lollard ideas became a part of his thinking. Tyndale frequently affirms to prove all things by the Scriptures in his writings.

The Self-Education of Tyndale

- In his *An Answer Unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, Tyndale provides the following insights into how he learned and internalized information:
 - "And concerning outward teaching, we allege for us scripture, older than any church that was this fourteen hundred years, and old authentic stories which they had brought asleep, wherewith we confound their lies. Remember ye not how in our own time, of all that taught grammar in England, not one understood the Latin tongue? How came we then by the Latin tongue again? Not by them, though we learned certain rules and principles of them, by which we were moved and had an occasion to seek further; but out of the old authors. Even so we seek up old antiquities, out of which we learn, and not of our church; though we received many principles of our church at the beginning, but more falsehood among [them] than truth" (Tyndale, 3:55).

- The above quotation is incredibly telling about William Tyndale's early life. First, it reveals the state of education in the area of Gloucestershire in Tyndale's early life. Foster Watson in his *The Old Grammar Schools* published by Cambridge University Press in 1916, mentions the following regarding the state of teaching Latin in English grammar schools in the Medieval era:
 - "The study of Latin in the English medieval grammar schools was not of a literary or prevailingly grammatical character. Roman and Greek authors were not largely read. Instruction was oral and traditional. The Latin learned was decadent and 'barbarous.' It was often spoken by the men who had not had living intercourse with any good Latinists, and the grammar learned was such as would be of use for disputations—a type of Latin *sui generis*" (Watson, 7-8).
- Watson also notes the standard curriculum of the English grammar school:
 - "The curriculum of earlier education, at its fullest, consisted of the seven liberal arts, *i.e.* the trivium consisting of grammar, dialectic (or logic) and rhetoric, and the quadrivium, viz. arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. These seven arts were regarded as the intellectual equipment with which the theologian, the doctor and the lawyer might start out to solve by disputational processes the problems relating to professional practice. The Medieval Ages were dominated by authority—and in the period of Scholasticism regarded Aristotle as the final court of appeal. . . . It is essential to realise that the earlier medieval schools, even if they claimed to be grammar schools, did so usually in recognition of the Roman usage; for in ancient Rome the scholars had studied language and literature under the name of grammar. But the later medieval schools, with both the younger and the older pupils, laid their chief stress on the logic and dialectic which prepared the skilled student for metaphysical subtlety. Even the small amount of grammar studied was surrounded by 'glosses,' and belonged more to metaphysics than to linguistics" (Watson, 5-6).
- Watson thus argues that the proper terminology by which to call the grammar schools of Medieval England are "logic schools" rather than "grammar schools." Grammar schools were also connected to the Roman Catholic Church of the day and as such were established for the purpose of making their students successful for occupations in the church or as government officials. On this point, Watson explains that the result of this was the teaching of a Latin "which enabled its students to attain the proficiency suited to their future pursuits, *i.e.*, the medieval grammar schools gave a successful technical education" (Watson, 12). However, this "technical education" rarely included the teaching of classical Greco-Roman authors. The teaching of a humanistic style of Latin would start to take place in the early 1500s, which does include the early years of Tyndale's life.

- Throughout his writings, Tyndale makes mention of the fact that the Roman Catholic clergy did not understand the meaning of certain Greek, Hebrew, and Latin words and they preached against the teaching and use of the original languages behind their pulpits. Furthermore, Tyndale also notes times when Roman Catholic prelates purposefully mistranslate the Greek to prove their own points (i.e. Tyndale's interactions with John Fisher).
- Thus, Tyndale's statement in *An Answer Unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* shows that Tyndale was in his early years involved in the educational structures of his native Gloucestershire, that was run by the Roman Catholic Church to some extent and done for the purpose of training individuals to do the work of the Roman Catholic Church. However, Tyndale's statement also indicates that Tyndale was a self-learner. While Tyndale was surrounded by Roman Catholic influences in his early years, he did not succumb to them. By the time he became a student at Oxford University in the early 1500s, he understood the errors of Scholasticism and the importance of the Renaissance maxim of Ad Fontes. He realized that the New Testament translated into English would be the sole thing which would bring light to the spiritual darkness of his age, giving people Godly wisdom and discernment to understand and properly refute the errors of Rome.
- The 1531 quote also indicates Tyndale learned things from "old antiquities." Elsewhere in *An Answer Unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, Tyndale makes references to "old authentic stories" in the context of the writings of church fathers. Thus, it is possible that the "old antiquities" could be a reference to that. The "old antiquities" could also mean classical Greco-Roman authors, which is most likely what Tyndale is referring to given the state of education in the grammar schools at his young age. English grammar schools by the early 1500s were replacing Medieval Latin with the humanist Latin of the Renaissance. However, it is also worthy to consider the English sources Tyndale may have read while he was in grammar school. Given that Tyndale's birth home was close to Wotton-Under-Edge grammar school (founded by Lady Katherine Berkeley who was part of the prominent and wealthy Berkeley family) and makes references to several historical chronicles in his later 1530s works, this is a possibility that warrants consideration. One such example of a chronicle Tyndale might have been exposed to in his formative years is the *Polychronicon*.
- The work of Ralph S. Werrell has helped to shed some light on the circumstances of Tyndale's upbringing that led him to become the thinker and translator he was. In *The Roots of William Tyndale's Theology*, Werrell argues that Tyndale, as a boy, read the [*Polychronicon*](#) most likely at the Library of Berkeley Castle. Specifically, the version translated into English by John Trevisa (23).
- Concerning John Trevisa and the *Polychronicon*, David Daniell writes in *The Bible in English*:

- “Trevisa, a Cornishman as might be guessed from the ‘Tre-’ of his name was born in 1342, and after Oxford served as chaplain to Thomas, Lord Berkeley, whose ancient castle stands by the River Severn in Gloucestershire, clearly visible from Tyndale’s birthplace on the Cotswold slopes at North Nibley. . . . Trevisa was a translator into English, most famously of Ranulph Higden’s *Polychronicon*, written between 1327 and 1352. Recently described as ‘Wyclif’s favorite history book,’ *Polychronicon* is a universal history, which, like the *Cursor mundi*, divides it into the seven ages of the world, all with a strong base in the Bible, beginning with Genesis. In this it differs from Geoffrey of Monmouth and the expanded *Brut* chronicle, which starts with Aeneas and Troy. Trevisa translated Higden with vigour, adding his own notes and comments: he objected to some of the monk Ranulph’s assumptions. Trevisa also translated Bartholomeus’s *De Proprietatibus Rerum* and at least four other books as well. He prefaced his *Polychronicon* with two statements in which the theory of translation is discussed” (Daniell, 91).
- Comparing Trevisa’s “Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk” included in the frontmatter of the *Polychronicon* with a famous statement on Bible translation made by William Tyndale in *The Obedience of A Christian Man* reveals interesting parallels. Consider the following table [bolding and [#] indicate similarities between the passages]:

Trevisa—“Dialogue” late 1380s	Tyndale— <i>Obedience</i> (1528)
The Clerk: “The Latin is both good and fair, therefore it needeth not to have an English translation.” [1] The Lord: “The reason is worthy to be plunged in a puddle and laid in powder of lewdness and of shame. It might well be that thou makest only in mirth and in game” The Clerk: “The reason must stand but it be assoiled.” The Lord: “A blear-eyed man, but he were all blind of wit, might see the solution of this reason; and though he were blind he might grope the solution, but if his feeling him failed. For if this reason were aught worth, by such manner arguing men might prove that the three score and ten interpreters, and Aquilla, and Symmachus, and Theodosian, and Origenes were lewdly occupied when they translated holy writ out of Hebrew into Greek and also that Saint Jerome was lewdly occupied when he translated holy writ out of Hebrew into Latin, [2] for the Hebrew is both good and fair and y-written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and all these for their translations be highly praised of all Holy Church. Then the foresaid lewd reason is worthy to be powdered, laid a-water and y-soused. Also holy writ in Latin is both good and fair, and yet for to make a sermon of holy	“The sermons which thou readest in the Acts of the apostles, and all that the apostles preached, were no doubt preached in the mother tongue. Why then might they not be written in the mother tongue? As, if one of us preach a good sermon, why may it not be written? [3A, 3B] Saint Jerom also translated the bible into his mother tongue: why may not we also? [2] They will say it cannot be translated into our tongue, it is so rude. [1] It is not so rude as they are false liars. For the Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin. The manner of speaking is both one; so that in a thousand places thou needest not but to translate it into the English, word for word; when thou must seek a compass in the Latin, and yet shall have much work to translate it well-favouredly, so that it have the same grace and sweetness, sense and pure understanding with it in the Latin, and as it hath in the Hebrew. A thousand parts better may it be translated into the English, than into the Latin. Yea, and except my memory fail me, and that I have forgotten what I read when I was a child, thou shalt find in the English chronicle, how that king Adelston caused the holy scripture to be translated into the tongue that then was in England, [4]

writ all in Latin to make men that can English and no Latin, it were a lewd deed, for they be never the wiser for the Latin, but it be told them in English what the Latin is to mean; and it may not be told in English what the Latin is to mean without translation out of Latin into English. Then it needeth to have an English translation, and for **to keep it in mind that it be not forgotten, it is better that such a translation be made and written than said and not written.** [3A] And so this foresaid lewd reason should mean no man that hath any wit to leave the making of English translation. . . . **Also, King Alfred that founded the university of Oxford, translated the best laws into English tongue, and a great deal of the Psalter out of Latin into English [4]** . . . Then the gospel, and prophecy, and the right faith of holy church must be told them in English, and that is not done but by English translation, **for such English preaching is very translation, and such English preaching is good and needful; then English translation is good and needful** [3B]

(John Trevisa, “[Dialogue Between a Lord and a Clerk upon Translation](#)” in *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, 205-7).

and how the prelates exhorted him thereto” (Tyndale, 1:148-49).

- Notice the similarities. Tyndale writes “Saint Jerom also translated the Bible into his mother tongue: why may not we also?” Trevisa writes, “For if this reason were aught worth, by such manner arguing men might prove that the three score and ten interpreters and Aquilla, and Symmachus, and Theodosian, and Origenes were lewdly occupied when they translated holy writ out of Hebrew into Greek; and also that Saint Jerome was lewdly occupied when he translated holy writ out of Hebrew into Latin. . . .” The mention of King Adelston (most likely Alfred), Jerome, as well as the similar styles between Tyndale and Trevisa show that Tyndale was influenced by Lollard theology when it came to translating the Scriptures into the vernacular.
- In *The Roots of William Tyndale’s Theology* (2013), Ralph S. Werrell acknowledges the same parallels and argues this points towards Lollard influence on Tyndale:
 - “John Trevisa also makes a statement about the difficulties of translating Latin into English, and the grammatical changes which are needed in order to make the Latin text able to be translated into idiomatic English. Tyndale’s similar statement about translating Greek into English could have originated from his reading of Trevisa’s *Preface*. The fact that Latin and Greek need different grammatical changes to be made to translate them into English is essentially the only difference between their statements. . . . Another similarity between them

is seen where Trevisa wrote in reference to his translation of the *Polychronicon*, ‘If any man can make of the books of these Chronicles a better English translation, and one that is more help to the reader, let God enable him’. Did that remark inspire Tyndale to write, ‘And as I offered that to all men, to correct it, [the New Testament] whosoever could, even so do I this’.” (Werrell, 41).

- Writers before Werrell have also connected William Tyndale with John Trevisa and Lollardy. Henry Worsley in his *The Dawn of the English Reformation* (1892), writes,
 - “The county of Tyndale’s birth was in that age beyond measure benighted and priest-ridden. Yet, amidst dense darkness—darkness that might be felt—light, in God’s merciful providence, had been lifted up in the preceding century. The fifth baron, Thomas, Lord Berkeley, Wycliffe’s pupil, had as his own chaplain, and also as vicar of his parish church, John de Trevisa, who, at the request of his patron, to whom he was a compliant and, to quote his own phrase, ‘buxom’ servant, translated into English the ‘Polychronicon’ of Ranulph Higden, a Benedictine monk of St. Werburg, Chester, who flourished at the close of the thirteenth century” (Worsley, 59).
- There is also further testimony from Tyndale’s own writings that he was familiar with the *Polychronicon*:

Take an ensample of their practise out of our owne stories. King Herold exiled or banished Robert Archbis hope of Canterbury. For what cause the English polychronicon specifieth not. But Robert of the cause we are not sumwhat suspect, I canterbury. I thinke they wolde not haue passed it ouer with scyence. Thys Robert gat himme diately vnto kynge William the conqueror

Practice of Prelates, 1530

Transcription: “Take an ensample of their practice out of our own stories. King Herold exiled or banished Robert Archbishop of Canterbury, for what cause the English *Polychronicon* specifieth not.”

The Formal Education of William Tyndale

- In addition to the influence of the Lollards in Gloucestershire, Tyndale went to Oxford University. Robert Demaus, a Victorian era biographer of Tyndale, provides the following Latin entries of Tyndale's Oxford records and an English translation of them:

(1) 13 May, 1512, supplicat Willelmus Hychyns scholaris artium quatenus studium duorum (annorum) cum termino infra universitatem cum responsione uni bacillario in quadragesima cum creatione unius generalis et duabus variationibus in Parviso et oppositione et responsione racione officii collectoris in Parviso sufficiat etc. Hec est

B 2

concessa (ita) quod determinet proxima quadragesima et bis disputet preter formam.

[*Translation.*] "13 May, 1512, William Hychyns, scholar in arts, supplicates that a study of two years and a term within the University, together with a *responsion* to one bachelor in Lent, and the creation of one *general*¹ and with two *variations*² in the Parvise³, and an *opposition* and *responsion* under a Collector in the Parvise, may suffice him to be admitted to the degree of bachelor. This grace is granted on condition of his determining next Lent, and disputing twice out of the usual course."

(2) 4 July, 1512, admissus est ad lecturam alicuius libri decretalium [a mistake for *facultatis artium*, the admissions to read the Decretals occur previously] dominus Jo. Knygley dominus⁴ Willelmus Hychyns

[*Translation.*] "4 July, 1512, there was admitted to the reading of some book of the Decretals [a mistake for 'of the faculty of arts'] Sir [dominus] John Knygley Sir William Hychyns"

(3) Nomina determinatorum Feb. 1512 (i.e. 151 $\frac{2}{3}$) dominus Willelmus Hychens (53 names).

[*Translation.*] "Feb. 151 $\frac{2}{3}$ names of determiners Sir William Hychyns [53 names]."

(4) 26 June, 1515, licentati sunt in artibus dominus Willelmus Hychyns

[*Translation.*] "26 June, 1515, there were licensed in arts Sir William Hychyns"

(5) 2 July, 1515, creati sunt in artibus magistri quorum nomina sequuntur dominus Mr. Willelmus Hochyns (22 names).

[*Translation.*] "2 July, 1515, there were created Masters of Arts those whose names follow Mr. William Hochyns (22 names)."

Demaus, William Tyndale, 3-4.

- Before continuing further, it is important to explain some of the terms in the entries listed above to understand what Tyndale's Oxford records mean. It is beyond the scope of this lesson to provide a detailed structure of university life at Oxford during the Medieval era. Thus, I will only focus on the first entry (May 13, 1512) as it is key to understanding the rest of Tyndale's Oxford records.
- In volume 1 of *A History of the University of Oxford*, Charles Edward Mallet explains the following:
 - “When a candidate was ready to graduate and thought that he had studied enough for the purpose, he presented his *supplicat*, stating the terms he had kept, the lectures and exercises which he had attended, and asking for the other formalities to be dispensed with” (Mallet, 1:199-200).
- The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists a definition of “supplicate” as “In Oxford University, to present a formal petition for a degree or for incorporation” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, s.v. “Supplicate” no. 3, 17:253).
- Thus, the May 13, 1512 entry is important as it indicates the point in time in which William Tyndale submitted his *supplicat*, based on the coursework he had completed at that point, to graduate from Oxford University with his Bachelor of Arts (BA). The date of July 4, 1512 then must indicate the time when Tyndale graduated from Oxford University with his BA and the June and July 1515 dates indicate the time when Tyndale graduated with his Master of Arts (MA) from Oxford.
- One of the main issues Tyndale had with university life at Oxford was the presence of Scholasticism, the mixing of Aristotelian and Greek philosophy with the Scriptures. In *The Obedience of A Christian Man*, Tyndale provides the following critique of the Scholastic curriculum at Oxford:

The Obedience of A Christian Man (1528)

- “But now do ye clean contrary: ye drive them from God's word, and will let no man come thereto, until he have been two years master of art. First, they nosel them in sophistry, and in *benefundatum*. And there corrupt they their judgments with apparent arguments, and with alleging unto them texts of logic, of natural *philautia*, or metaphysic, and moral philosophy, and of all manner of books of Aristotle, and of all manner doctors which they yet never saw. . . . When they have thiswise brawled eight, ten, or twelve or more years, and after that their judgments are utterly corrupt, then they begin their divinity; not at the scripture, but every man taketh a sundry doctor; which doctors are as sundry and as divers, the one contrary unto the other, as there are divers fashions and

monstrous shapes, none like another, among our sects of religion. Every religion, every university, and almost every man, hath a sundry divinity. Now whatsoever opinions every man findeth with his doctor, that is his gospel, and that only is true with him; and that holdeth he all his life long: and every man, to maintain his doctor withal, corrupteth the scripture, and fashioneth it after his own imagination, as a potter doth his clay. Of what text provest hell, will another prove purgatory; another *limbo patrum*; and another the assumption of our lady: and another shall prove of the same text that an ape hath a tail. And of what text the gray friar proveth that our lady was without original sin, of the same shall the black friar prove that she was conceived in original sin” (Tyndale, 1:156-59).

- Throughout the corpus of his theological treatises, Tyndale makes references to the following Scholastic theologians, philosophers, and Greco-Roman writers that highlights the material he was exposed to in his Oxford days:
 - Thomas Aquinas
 - Bonaventura
 - Duns Scotus
 - Aristotle
 - Socrates
 - Plato
 - Ovid
 - Jerome
 - Appelles
 - Terrence
 - Virgil
 - Orestes
- David Daniell writes concerning the Oxford curriculum for the BA in *William Tyndale: A Biography* that:
 - “The set texts [for the Oxford curriculum], it seems, were traditional: for the BA, Priscian, Aristotle, Boethius, Euclid, Ptolemy, though there was a possibility of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* or Virgil’s poetry in the first year. For the MA, the three philosophies, natural, moral and metaphysical, were taught over eight terms, and were almost wholly dependent on Aristotle” (Daniell, 29).
- Melvyn Bragg in *William Tyndale: A Very Brief History* mentions:
 - “Throughout his life he was to criticize the Oxford curriculum. The insistence on drumming in a knowledge of Latin by way of classical authors at school and at university left what in Tyndale’s view was the crux of learning, the Scriptures, far too late. The

classical ‘pagan’ authors received far more attention than the Scriptures. . . . Oxford, he thought, wasted valuable time on Roman literature which was useful for fluency in Latin but irrelevant to the main purpose” (Bragg, 9).

- David Teems in *Tyndale: The Man Who Gave God An English Voice* writes,
 - “On completing his degree requirements, the university student came away with, first, a very refined knowledge of Latin. Latin was the *lingua franca* (common language) of the academic community, as it was the sacred language of the Church. . . . Second, the most important university subject outside Latin was logic. These two disciplines together armed the student for dispute, and disputation was the major emphasis of an academic degree program. The graduate was able to argue skillfully, and with the language skills to get it done. . . . A successful student would come out of it with much sharpness and mental agility, but little spiritual fire or reverence for truth. The course was an education in names rather than in things, a mental gymnastic rather than a cultural training” (Teems, 15-16).
- What Tyndale is against when it comes to Scholasticism was not necessarily the study of Latin or the study of logic. In fact, one could argue that he uses both of these very well against his opponents in his theological treatises. What Tyndale is against is the elevating of human wisdom above Godly wisdom. Oxford University had embraced the Scholasticism of the thirteenth century to the point where they disregarded the Bible and placed secular philosophy in its place.
- Andrew Miller in his *Church History* provides the following summation of the Scholasticism of the thirteenth century and how true Bible doctrine trumps it:
 - “One salutary lesson we may at least learn from the examples before us, and that is, the utter darkness and perplexity of the mind, however great the learning and study, when the word of God, in its divine simplicity, is not known and believed. One single text, ‘The just shall live by faith,’ [Rom. 1:17] when used of God in the hands of Luther, was sufficient to clear away the darkness of the middle ages, while the seventeen volumes folio of Thomas Aquinas, and all the other folios of all the great schoolmen, only deepened the gloom of ignorance and perplexity as to the knowledge of God and the way of salvation. The greatest development of the natural powers of the human mind leads no guilty sinner to the cross of Christ—to the precious blood which alone cleanseth from all sin. The enemy of souls, taking advantage of the growing celebrity of the Aristotelian philosophy, seduced the best of the doctors to believe that the most important work they could be engaged in, was the reconciling of the teaching of Christ with the decrees of the Greek philosopher, lest the scholars should think more highly of the latter than the former. Such was the miserable work of the best of the schoolmen at that time; but no doubt many of simpler minds, who were not blinded by the subtleties of logic, found the

way of truth and salvation amidst the darkness, though much perplexed and bewildered” (Miller, 628-29).

- Miller’s statement highlights the simplicity Tyndale is after. It is found in (Rom. 3:19-28, 4:4-5, 5:1-11; Gal. 2:16-21; Eph. 2:8-9). Making people understand the simplicity of justification by grace through faith and how a man can be made righteous before God is Tyndale’s goal. He wants the common Englishman to have the Scriptures in the vernacular to prove all things, and let the spirit of God teach him not the Scholastics.
- Tyndale is not against people reading other sources such as the church fathers. He mentions in *The Obedience of A Christian Man*, “What is the cause that we damn some of Origen’s works, and allow some? How know we that some is heresy and some not? By the scripture, I trow. How know we that St. Augustine (which is the best, or one of the best that ever wrote upon the scripture) wrote many things amiss at the beginning, as many other doctors do? Verily by the scriptures; as he himself well perceived afterward, when he looked more diligently upon them, and revoked many things again” (Tyndale, 1:154). Again, Tyndale desires for people to have access to the Scriptures so they can prove all things.
- In 1516, Erasmus published the first edition of his Greek New Testament. David Daniell in *The Bible in English*, writes,
 - “Erasmus, whose Oxford home some years before had been Magdalen College, and who until recently had been Lady Margaret’s Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, published in March 1516 in Basle the *Novum instrumentum*, his Latin translation of the New Testament, with the original Greek alongside. It is more than likely that it was from this influential volume that Tyndale led those private studies. Foxe states that Tyndale went on to Cambridge, but no records support this” (Daniell, 140-41).
- It is clear William Tyndale had access to Erasmus’s Greek New Testament as he instructs readers in *The Obedience of A Christian Man* to “read also Erasmus’s Annotations in the said places” concerning Mary and the fact that she was not sinless and should not be exalted above God (Tyndale, 1:316). Of course, based on prior points made about Lollardy in Tyndale’s area of birth, this is not surprising. Tyndale, from his youth, desired to translate the Scripture into English. Now, he finally had his chance.

William Tyndale at the Walsh Household and his Journey to London

- In the late 1510s and early 1520s, Tyndale returned to his birthplace of Gloucestershire, to serve as a tutor for the children of Sir John and Lady Walsh. David Daniell in *The Bible in English* provides the following account:

- “Tyndale went back to Gloucestershire, at an unknown date. He became tutor to the children of Sir John and Lady Walsh at Little Sodbury Manor, a dozen miles south of the district of his birth. Sir John, a county squire of importance, who had been at court with the young Henry VIII (he was later twice High Sheriff) had recently handed over the position of Crown Steward for the Berkeley estate to Edward Tyndale. Lady Walsh came from the Poyntz family, which closely had been connected to the Tudor court since the 1470s; Anne Walsh’s nephew Nicholas, their neighbor, was close to King Henry and Queen Anne. Tyndale’s duties at Little Sodbury cannot have been heavy. It is probable that he used his time to study, and even begin to translate into English, Erasmus’s Greek New Testament. For the Walshes he translated Erasmus’s *Enchiridion militis christiani* into English, a book which drew them more to the reformed position, a topic of debate in the house. It is likely that this translation is lost, and is not the version printed by Wynkyn de Worde in London in 1533, revised in 1534” (Daniell, 141).
- Given the high status of the Walshes, many prominent members of the clergy were invited to Little Sodbury Manor for banquets or the Walshes were invited to banquets. Tyndale frequently interacted with such clergy members and he answered every one of their points from the Scriptures. John Foxe records the following in his *Acts and Monuments*:
 - “Not long after this, it happened that certain of these great doctors had invited Master Welch and his wife to a banquet; where they had talk at will and pleasure, uttering their blindness and ignorance without any resistance or gainsaying. Then Master Welch and his wife, coming home, and calling for Master Tyndale, began to reason with him about those matters whereof the priests had talked before at their banquet. Master Tyndale, answering by the Scriptures, maintained the truth, and reproved their false opinions.” (Foxe, 5:115).
- It was also at this time that Tyndale uttered his famous ploughboy statement, “if God spared him life, ere many years he would cause a boy that driveth the plough, to know more of the Scripture than he did” (Foxe, 5:117).
- Needless to say, Tyndale was not welcomed in his native Gloucestershire and he desired to begin work on his translation of the Scriptures. Under the Oxford Constitutions of 1408, Tyndale had to receive permission of the church to do so. Thus, he left for London at around 1523-24 to seek the permission of Cuthbert Tunstall. The following biographical sketch provided by Tyndale in the general prologue titled “W.T. Unto the Reader” to his 1530 Pentateuch highlights the exchange:
 - “And even in the bishop of London’s house I intended to have done it. For when I was so turmoiled in the country where I was that I could no longer there dwell (the process whereof were too long here to rehearse) I this wise thought in myself, this I suffer because the priests of the country be unlearned, as God it knoweth there are a full ignorant sort which have seen no more Latin than that they read in their portesses and

missals which yet many of them can scarcely read, (except it be Albertus *de secretis mulierum* in which yet, though they be never so sorrily learned, they pore day and night, and make notes therein and all to teach the midwives as they say, and Linwode a book of constitutions to gather tithes, mortuaries, offerings, customs, and other pillage, which they call, not theirs, but God's part and the duty of holy church, to discharge their consciences withal: for they are bound that they shall not diminish, but increase all things unto the uttermost of their powers) and therefore (because they are thus unlearned, thought I) when they come together to the ale house, which is their preaching place, they affirm that my sayings are heresy. And besides that they add to of their own heads which I never spake, as the manner is to the prolong the tale to short the time withal, and accused me secretly to the chancellor and other the bishop's officers. And indeed, when I came before the chancellor, he threatened me grievously, and reviled me, and rated me as though I had been a dog, and laid to my charge whereof there could be none accuser brought forth, (as their manner is not to bring forth the accuser) and yet all the priests of the country were the same day there. As I this thought the bishop of London came to my remembrance whom Erasmus (whose tongue maketh of little gnats great elephants and lifteth up above the stars whosoever giveth him a little exhibition) praiseth exceedingly among other in his annotations the new testament for his great learning. Then thought I, if I might come to this man's service, I were happy. And so I gat me to London, and, through the acquaintance of my master came to sir Harry Gilford the king's grace's controller, and brought him an oration of Isocrates which I had translated out of Greek into English, and desired him to speak unto my lord of London for me, which he also did as he shewed me, and willed me to write an epistle to my lord, and to go to him myself which I also did, and delivered my epistle to a servant of his own, one William Hebilthwayte, a man of mine old acquaintance. But God which knoweth what is within hypocrites, saw that I was beguiled, and that that counsel was not the next way unto my purpose. And therefore he gat me no favor in my lord's sight."

- "Whereupon my lord answered me, his house was full, he had more than he could well find, and advised me to seek in London, where he said I could not lack a service. And so in London I abode almost a year, and marked the course of the world, and heard our praters, I would say our preachers how they boasted themselves and their high authority, and beheld the pomp of our prelates, and how busied they were as they yet are, to set peace and unity in the world (though it be not possible for them that walk in darkness to continue long in peace, for they cannot but either stumble or dash themselves at one thing or another that shall clean unquiet all together) and saw things whereof I defer to speak at this time and understood at the last not only that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the new Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England, as experience doth now openly declare" (Daniell, *Tyndale's Old Testament*, 4-5).

- After Cuthbert Tunstall's rejection of William Tyndale's offer to translate the Greek New Testament into English, Tyndale traveled to Germany where Lutheran sentiments would provide him with a better opportunity to do so.

Conclusion:

- William Tyndale's upbringing in Gloucestershire and his Oxford education is important to understanding not just his desire to translate the New Testament into English, and the way in which he translated the Greek into English, but also his theological beliefs.

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