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WILLIAM TYNDALE: CONTROVERSIALIST

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William Tyndale, whom his great opponent Thomas More called "the captain of our Englyshe heretikes," has been studied as a translator of the Bible and as an advocate of doctrinal and moral reformation.¹ The specific polemical techniques he employed in his criticism of the existing ecclesiastical system and in his demands for the establishment of what he believed to be God's truth have received no attention. It is, therefore, the purpose of this paper to examine some of Tyndale's techniques of religious controversy.

Since adequate studies of Tyndale's polemical use of history and of the scriptures would be of such a length as to put them beyond the confines of this paper, they have been excluded and reserved for separate treatment. The present investigation limits itself to a consideration of Tyndale's controversial techniques of language, reasoning, form, and general economy of treatment.

The subject of sixteenth century interest in language in general and eloquence in particular needs no elaboration here. That controversy was considered a whetstone for wit is evidenced by the

¹ See L. F. Gray, "William Tyndale: Translator, Scholar, and Martyr," *Hibbert Journal*, XXXV (October, 1936), 101-107; J. F. Mozley, *William Tyndale* (London, 1937); G. D. Bone, "Tyndale and the English Language," in S. L. Greenslade, ed. *The Work of William Tyndale* (Glasgow, 1938); W. E. Campbell, *Erasmus, Tyndale, and More* (London, 1949); E. Flesseman-van Leer, "The Controversy About Scripture and Tradition between Thomas More and William Tyndale," and "The Controversy about Ecclesiology between Thomas More and William Tyndale," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, New Series, XLIII (1959), iii, 143-165, XLIV (1960), ii, 65-86.

flytings staged for the entertainment of the English and Scottish courts at the beginning of the period and the popularity of the Marprelate and Nashe-Harvey controversies at its end.²

In his study at Oxford and Cambridge, Tyndale could not have escaped learning the art of rhetoric and disputation as taught from Aristotle, Cicero, and the fifteenth century Rudolphus Agricola.³ After he left Cambridge, Tyndale could have refreshed his memory of these subjects by reading Leonard Cox's *The arte or crafte of rhetoryke* (1524?). But, as we shall see, Tyndale disputed little "by the book"—much less so than his principal antagonist, Thomas More.⁴

The most striking feature of the language in Tyndale's polemical works is its sarcasm, the use of which is not specifically advocated by any of the rhetoric books Tyndale might have studied, but which he nevertheless employs continuously throughout his works of controversy.⁵ It is directed, for instance, against the clergy, who "do all thing of a good zeale . . . they love you so well, that they had rather burne you, than y^t you should haue fellowship w^t Christ."⁶ Here, as elsewhere, we shall find Tyndale using economy of technique, for he is not only questioning the professions of the clergy but also—almost incidentally, as it were—telling his readers that the clergy is persecuting the true followers of Christ. The immorality of the clergy is also a target for Tyndale's sarcasm: while many of them can scarcely read Latin, he observes, they all diligently study Albertus' *De Secretis Mulierum*, poring over the pages day and night while making notes, "& all to teach the mydwiues as they say . . ." (*Workes*, p. 2).

² *CHEL* (1950), IV, 321-322.

³ See W. G. Crane, *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New York, 1937), p. 49; W. J. Ong, *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 395; *CHEL*, III, 424.

⁴ See my forthcoming article "More vs. Tyndale: A Study in Controversial Technique," *Modern Language Quarterly*.

⁵ Cicero does not deal with sarcasm as such, but he does discuss various devices which could easily be considered as sarcasm; see *De Oratore*, ed. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackhaus (London, 1948), I, 415-419. Quintilian is not enthusiastic about the use of sarcasm; see *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, ed. H. E. Butler (London, 1953), II, 457. Cf. *CHEL*, III, 23.

⁶ *The Whole workes of W. Tyndall* (London, 1573), p. 60. Hereafter cited as *Workes*.

Some of Tyndale's sharpest sarcasm is at the expense of the belief in purgatory. The pope claims authority to bind and loose in purgatory, Tyndale points out. "That permit I vnto him: for it is a creature of his owne makynge. He also byndeth the aungels. For we read of Popes that haue commaunded the aungels to set diuers out of Purgatory. Howbeit I am not yet certified whether they obeyed or no."⁷ The clergy were not content to rule over the living, Tyndale explains, and so they created a purgatory that they might rule also over the dead "and to haue one kyngdome more then God him selfe hath" (*Workes*, p. 135). Purgatory is merely a money-making device invented by the clergy, concludes Tyndale: "Shew the Pope a litle money, and God is so mercifull that there is no Purgatory" (*Ibid.*, p. 307). Here again Tyndale's sarcasm fulfills a double function; it ridicules the concept of purgatory and implies that if they could, the clergy would like to extend their earthly tyranny to Heaven and subjugate God Himself.

Finally, Tyndale trains his sarcasm on Thomas More, whom he portrays as an abject servant of Wolsey, interested only in wealth and promotion. In his attempt to defend the practice of venerating images, More had explained that there were three kinds of worship, *doulia*, *hyperdoulia*, and *latria*, and that the last was never accorded to images but reserved for God.⁸ Tyndale brushes aside More's distinctions by saying, "I would fayne wete . . . whether the worship done to hys Lord the Cardinales hat were *doulia*, *hyperdoulia*, or *idolatria*" (*Workes*, p. 269). More has a fleshly concept of God, Tyndale maintains: "He thinketh of God, as he doth of hys Cardinall, that he is a monster, pleased when men flatter him . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 293).

Closely allied to sarcasm is irony, which is discussed in classical and Renaissance rhetorics,⁹ but which Tyndale uses less frequently as a polemical device than he uses sarcasm and much less frequently

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150. In his *Inspicientes*, the German controversialist Ulrich Von Hutten also ridicules the loosing and binding power claimed by the pope; see *Werke*, ed. Ernst Münch (Leipzig, 1822), I, 297.

⁸ Cf. John Skelton, *A replecion agaynst certayne yong scolers abiured of late in The Poetical Works of John Skelton*, ed. Rev. A. Dyce (London, 1843), I, 206-225.

⁹ See Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, ed. J. H. Freese (London, 1947), pp. 467, 469; Cicero, *De Oratore*, I, 395-396, 403-405; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, II, 475; cf. *CHEL*, III, 23.

than does More.¹⁰ The commonest use of irony to be found in Tyndale's polemical works is in his scrupulously polite references to the pope as "our most holy father" whenever he is recounting what he considers as the machinations of the papacy (e. g., *Workes*, pp. 116, 123, 125, 129). It is the living of the clergy which evokes what other irony there is in his works. The church is not only the spirituality, says Tyndale, "as they will be called for their diligent serving of God in the spirite, and so sore eschuing to meddle wyth temporall matters . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 250). Tyndale refers to the prelates who examined certain reformers as "so well learned, so holy and so indifferent [i. e., impartial]" (*Ibid.*, p. 318), and he remembers how when he was in London he "behelde the pompe of our Prelates, and how busie they were (as they yet are) to set peace and vnitie in the world . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 2).

While there is some humor in Tyndale's sarcasm and irony, Tyndale never made humor so important a polemical technique as did More.¹¹ Tyndale seems to have been much less fond of a joke than was his principal opponent, and he makes it clear that he sees nothing to laugh at in their controversy. More seems to think it amusing that the wild Irish and Welsh pray for success before they go out to steal, says Tyndale, but "I wonder that *M. More* can laugh at it and not rather weep for compassion, to see the soules for which Christ shed hys bloud to perish" (*Workes*, p. 300). However, there is a kind of humorous word-play in which Tyndale occasionally indulges at the expense of his opposition. For instance, when More cites Nicolas de Lira against him, Tyndale disposes of the matter by opining that "Nicolous de Lira delirat" (*Ibid.*, p. 303). He thinks that *Opera supererogationis* would be more appropriately called *Opera superarregantia* (*Ibid.*, p. 78). His opinion of Wolsey's pastoral care causes him to call the cardinal "Wolfsee," (*Ibid.*, p. 367), upon which name he plays such variations as "this wyly wolfe . . . and raging sea, and shipwracke of all England" (*Ibid.*, p. 368). The pope has been made into a god on earth, thinks Tyndale, "of the kinde (I suppose) of *Aarons calfe*. For he bringeth forth no other frute but Bulles" (*Ibid.*, p.

¹⁰ For More's use of irony as a polemical weapon, see my "Thomas More's Use of Humor As A Weapon Of Religious Controversy," *SP*, LVIII (April, 1961), 97-114.

¹¹ See fn. 10.

126), and he is convinced that the only purpose of purgatory is "to purge thy purse withall" (*Ibid.*, p. 165).

The slip-of-the-tongue device Tyndale occasionally uses is a combination of irony and word-play; it consists of an ostensibly inadvertent revelation of the truth, which is then immediately retracted to give place to a polite fiction.¹² Speaking of Bishop John Fisher, Tyndale refers to "the ende of his first destruction, I would say instruction" (*Workes*, pp. 129-130). When More tells Tyndale that the unwritten verities of the Church are as much to be believed as the Scriptures, Tyndale replies that in cases where the Scriptures are clearly against Church doctrine, "More must giue vs leue to beleue his vnwritten vanities (verities I should say) at laysure" (*Ibid.*, p. 461). When he was in London, Tyndale recalls, he "Heard our praters, I would say our Preachers" (*Ibid.*, p. 2), and he refers to certain clergy as "heretikes, I would say heremites" (*Ibid.*, p. 165). Tyndale's characterization of the scholastic method of interpreting Scripture as "chopologicall" (*Ibid.*, p. 166) instead of "tropological" may be regarded as an uncorrected slip of the tongue or a polemical malapropism.

Another important element in Tyndale's controversial technique is his use and abuse of reasoning. The study of logic and the art of reasoning generally was the third part of the *trivium* (along with grammar and rhetoric) in sixteenth century Oxford and Cambridge.¹³ But the art of disputation was not only a subject of study; it was also a method of instruction by which the disputants' minds were sharpened in a variety of subjects other than logic itself.¹⁴ When, therefore, Tyndale entered the field of religious controversy, he must have had considerable knowledge of formal syllogistic logic. However, while he does make some use of this knowledge, it is again apparent that he does so to a considerably lesser extent than does More.¹⁵ Tyndale's meager use of syllogistic

¹² This device appears *ad nauseam* throughout the nondramatic polemical works of John Bale. It serves a more sophisticated purpose in his polemical morality plays, as it does in other Protestant moralities, in which it is used to reveal the Catholic Vice's evil nature to the audience. See, for instance, *King Johan*, ed. J. H. P. Pafford (Oxford, 1931), ll. 305-306, 502-504.

¹³ See fn. 3.

¹⁴ See Mozley's *Tyndale*, p. 14; also H. Rashdall, *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1936), ch. 14.

¹⁵ See fn. 4.

logic probably can be partly accounted for by his general distrust of all learning except that of the Bible; ¹⁶ almost everything outside of the pages of Scripture he regarded as "poetry." And so, when Tyndale uses any kind of formal reasoning, he feels apologetic: "I will talke a worde or two after the worldly wisdome with them, and make an ende of this matter," he says in introduction to a passage in which he attempts to demonstrate the logical absurdity of the Church's view of the Eucharist (*Workes*, p. 157). One of his rare uses of formal logic occurs in a passage attempting to prove that the doctrine of the Church cannot be that of Christ (*Ibid.*, p. 200); on two occasions Tyndale does follow the recommendations of the treatises on the art of reasoning and uses his knowledge of the syllogism when he demands of More "by what rule hys argument holdeth" (*Ibid.*, p. 280) and asks "in what figure that silogismus is made." ¹⁷ That Tyndale remembered his university training in disputation, even if he did not make much use of syllogistic logic, is made clear by a passage in which he undertakes to deal with one of More's arguments "after an Oxford fashion, with *concedo consequentiam & consequens*" (*Ibid.*, p. 253).

While Tyndale makes little use of the formal syllogism, he does often attempt proof by analogy, one of the recognized textbook methods of reasoning. ¹⁸ In trying to explain that Christ did not forgive Mary Magdalene because she loved much but that Mary loved much because Christ forgave her, Tyndale draws an interesting analogy from the reasoning process itself and the errors attendant on it. Because of our poor understanding, he explains, we often reason from the effect to the cause. For instance, when we

¹⁶ See *Workes*, p. 176. In his *Dialogue*, More makes his interlocutor, supposedly a typical reformer, declare, "I take reason for playne enemye to faith" (More, *Workes* [1557], p. 148).

¹⁷ *Workes*, pp. 280, 288. A number of the techniques of religious controversy used by both Tyndale and More are discussed in Thomas Wilson's *The rule of reason* (1552) which, although published some years after the Tyndale-More controversy, is really the logic of Aristotle and Rudolphus Agricola illustrated from contemporary religious problems. Wilson's treatise on logic is thus an interesting source book for sixteenth century techniques of religious controversy. One of the techniques recommended by Wilson is challenging the form of the opposing argument (*Rule*, sig. R6r).

¹⁸ See Wilson, *Rule*, sig. Flr ff.

see that the moon is dark, we look for the cause and find that the earth's being between the sun and the moon is the cause of the darkness. Then we reason backwards, saying, the moon is dark; therefore the earth is directly between the sun and the moon. However, the darkness of the moon is not the cause of the earth's being between the sun and the moon, but the effect. Just so, Tyndale reasons, Mary's love was not the cause of her being forgiven, but the effect, and her story is no support for the doctrine of justification by works (*Workes*, p. 67).

Many of Tyndale's analogies are used to support his charges against the clergy. The clergy, he claims, refuse to be judged by the same laws and in the same courts as other Englishmen on the grounds that it is not fitting that they should be tried by laymen. But, counters Tyndale, "is the Maior of London no more one of the Citie, because he is the chiefe officer? Is the kyng no more of the realme because he is the head thereof?" (*Ibid.*, p. 137). Our clergy, claims Tyndale, are like the priests of Baal who cut themselves to please their god or the worshipers of Moloch who sacrificed their children: for our clergy too, with their vows of celibacy, think that the more they suffer the more God will hear them (*Ibid.*, p. 154).

Closely related to Tyndale's use of analogies is his use of illustrations from popular speech to support his arguments. Such illustrations served Tyndale in a double capacity: from the point of view of general strategy, it was effective polemics to illustrate arguments with the common sayings of the people to whom these arguments were directed; from the point of view of specific tactics, there was no better way of demonstrating the existence of clerical shortcomings than to show that these had become proverbial.

Consequently, when Tyndale wishes to impress his readers with the fact that while works do not justify a man, nevertheless they are an outward manifestation of an inward faith, he turns for illustration to the common speech of his day: "As y^e maner is to say," he writes, "do your charitie, shew your charitie, do a deede of charitie, shewe your mercy, do a deede of mercy, meanyng thereby, y^t our deedes declare how we loue our neighbour," so do our works proclaim our love of God (*Ibid.*, p. 77). "We say also," Tyndale continues, "he that loueth not my dogge loueth not me." That is, he explains, we love the dog because we love the master, and so we should love our neighbors, not because we hope thereby to merit

the favor of God, but as a manifestation of the love we bear to God (*Ibid.*, 78). Again, Tyndale uses the habits of contemporary speech in support of his contention that Christ did not give Peter more authority than any other disciple. As we call Tully chief of orators because of his eloquence, says Tyndale, and Virgil chief of poets because of his learning, and not because they had authority over other orators and poets, so we call Peter chief of the Apostles only because of his special energy and boldness (*Ibid.*, p. 128).

Tyndale tells his readers that the morality of the clergy is governed by the common lawyers' maxim "*si non caste tamen caute*, that is, if ye liue not chaste, see ye carry cleane, and play the knaue secretly" (*Ibid.*, p. 134). So far as the clergy's concern for souls is concerned, Tyndale comments, "it goeth after the common saying, no penny, no Pater noster" (*Ibid.*, p. 139) or "no peny no pardon" (*Ibid.*, p. 395). However, Tyndale points out, some of the proverbial sayings current among the laity demonstrate that the clergy's shortcomings have not passed entirely unnoticed. For when a matter is going badly, it is customary to say "the bishop hath blessed it, because that nothing spedeth well that they medle with all. If the porage be burned to, or the meate ouer rosted, we say, the Bishop hath put his foote in the pottle or the Bishop hath played the cooke, because the Bishops burne who they lust & whosoever displeaseth them. He is a potificall fellow, that is, proud and stately. . . . It is a pastime for a Prelate. It is a pleasure for a Pope. He would be free and yet will not haue his head shauen. He would that no man should smite him and yet hath not the Popes marke" (*Ibid.*, p. 166).

Reference to authority was another method of bolstering an argument recommended by those books treating of the art of reasoning (Wilson, F3^r). Tyndale's primary authority was, of course, the Bible. But second in number only to his Scriptural references are Tyndale's appeals to the authority of Erasmus, the foremost scholar of the day and the first to challenge the sanctity of ecclesiastical tradition with his Greek New Testament, which corrected many of the errors contained in the centuries-old Vulgate. But it was not only because of Erasmus' international scholarly reputation that Tyndale was so fond of appealing to his authority. Tyndale was well aware that the Dutch scholar was revered especially in England—and by those very men most active in opposing the reformers, such as Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, who

first commissioned More to write against Luther and Tyndale, and by More himself, Erasmus' *alter ego*.¹⁹ It is with particular relish that Tyndale opposes to the opinions of More those of More's "derelyng" Erasmus. In answer to More's criticism of certain translations in his English New Testament, Tyndale replies: "But how happeth it that *M. More* hath not contended in likewise against his derelyng *Erasmus* all this longe while. Doth not he chaunge this word *Ecclesia* into congregation and that not seldome in his new Testament?"²⁰ This thrust is all the keener because of the well-known fact that not only had More not "contended" against Erasmus' translation, but that he had actually expended a considerable amount of ink in its vehement defense.²¹ In the preface to the 1534 edition of his New Testament, Tyndale again appeals to the authority of Erasmus to support his translation of the Vulgate's *conuertere* by "to turne or be conuerted" instead of "to do penance" (sig. **1r). Tyndale also uses Erasmus' New Testament annotations to lend authority to his own theological views. So far as the intercessory power of Mary is concerned, Tyndale tells his readers, look at Erasmus' annotations on Matthew 12, II Corinthians 5, John 2, and Luke 2 (*Workes*, p. 172), and also see what Erasmus has to say about the correct interpretation of Matthew 16, "tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam."²² Tyndale also adduces Erasmus against More in support of his contention that the early fathers did not advocate auricular confession (*Workes*, p. 334), while implying very strongly that Erasmus and he are in agreement on many theological points.²³ It is Erasmus, according to Tyndale, who has exposed the clergy's attempt to pass off as genuine "many false bookes . . . fayned and put forth in the name of *S. Hierome, Augustine, Ciprian, Dionise* and of other," which supported their position.²⁴ As a postscript to this examination of Tyndale's polemi-

¹⁹ See R. W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London, 1935), p. 175.

²⁰ *Workes*, p. 251. Erasmus often translated the Greek "ecclesia" by the Latin "congregatio." See, for instance, II Corinthians i. 2 and Colossians iv. 16.

²¹ See his epistles to Edward Lee and to a monk in *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Elizabeth F. Rogers (Princeton, 1947), pp. 137 and 165.

²² New Testament (Cologne, 1525), sigs. G2v-G3r.

²³ *Workes*, p. 104. For Erasmus' influence on Tyndale, see Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale* (London, 1925), pp. 54 and 69.

²⁴ *Workes*, p. 304. Some works had been erroneously attributed to the

cal use of Erasmus—primarily against More—it is interesting to note that Tyndale also used More himself against his fellows as he had used Erasmus against More. The clergy have brought such ruin to England, says Tyndale in his *The exposition of the first Epistle of S. Iohn*, “that M. More could say in his *Vtopia*, that as Englishmen were wont to eate shepe, euen so their shepe now eate them vp by whole Parishes at once . . .” (*Workes*, p. 429).

Tyndale also makes use of *reductio ad absurdum* to demolish his opponents’ arguments and support his own. They tell us, says Tyndale, that every mass delivers one soul out of purgatory. If that were true, or if it even took ten masses to bring one soul out of purgatory, purgatory should long ago have been empty with the number of priests we have offering so many masses, Tyndale concludes (*Workes*, pp. 165-166). Most of Tyndale’s arguments by *reductio* are employed against the clergy’s appeals to authority. They refuse to reason with us, complains Tyndale, and think they have given us a sufficient answer when they say that a particular article has been condemned by the fathers. But the fathers of the Jews also condemned Christ and His doctrine, and so if this answer that the fathers have condemned something is sufficient, then the Jews today are correct, and all these years we have been in error (*Ibid.*, p. 177). Probably Tyndale’s most effective use of *reductio* is in ridicule of More’s assertion that when Peter denied Christ, he was saved because of Mary’s faith. Let us apply this interpretation to the Biblical account of the incident says Tyndale:

Christ sayth Luke .xxii. Symon, Symon, Sathan seketh you to sifte you as men sift whete: but I haue prayed for thee, that thy fayth shall not fayle, wherfore when thou art come vnto thy selfe agayne strenth thy brethren. Now put this wise glose thereto and see how they agree together. Symon, Sathan seketh to sift you as whete, but I haue prayed for thee, that my mothers fayth shall not fayle, wherfore when thou art come to thy selfe again, accordyng as my prayer hath obtained for thee, that my mothers fayth shall not fayle, strength thy brethren (*Ibid.*, p. 261).

By the simple process of accepting the disputed interpretation and reading it as if it were part of the scriptural narrative, Tyndale seeks to demonstrate its absurdity and that of other such scholastic glosses.

authors Tyndale mentions; see, for an instance of such incorrect attribution, Frederick Seeböhm, *The Oxford Reformers* (London, 1867), p. 54. However, Tyndale is stretching the point when he claims that such errors were deliberate deceptions on the part of the clergy.

Tyndale's method of argumentation reveals a strongly pragmatic, rather than a theoretical, approach. While his opponents, and especially More, argue about the theory of dogma, Tyndale concentrates on how that dogma is actually applied in contemporary practice. What is the point, asks Tyndale, of arguing whether or not the pope can err. Look at history and the present situation, Tyndale advises his readers, and judge "whether they haue erred, and not only whether they can" (*Ibid.*, p. 248). And what about these beliefs, he asks, to which they tell us we must subscribe because they cannot err—what about purgatory? "What am I the better for the beliefe in Purgatory? to feare men thou wilt say."²⁵ Christ and his Apostles thought hell inough. And yet . . . what great feare can there be of that terrible fire which thou mayst quench almost for three halfe pence?" (*Workes*, p. 256). And why should the Apostles teach anything orally which they would not write, as More maintains they did, Tyndale demands. More tells us, says Tyndale, that the apostles taught orally so that the heathen should not read their teaching and mock. But "what thing more to be mocked of the Heathen coulede they teach," asks Tyndale, focusing on the actual rather than the theoretical, "then the resurrection, and that Christ was God and man . . ." (*Ibid.*)? You say, says Tyndale to More, that we may bestow money on images and still give alms to the poor. "May or not may," answers Tyndale, "I see that the one most necessary of both, is not done" (*Ibid.*, pp. 271-272). And you say, Tyndale continues to More, that you have not taught that the church consists of the clergy exclusively but that it includes all Christians. I appeal to my readers' experience to judge whether or not you have taught this, Tyndale retorts; let them ask themselves and their friends what is usually understood by the word "church," whether it is all Christians or the clergy only.²⁶

Having examined Tyndale's use of various reasoning processes—analogy, illustration, appeal to authority, *reductio ad absurdum*, and emphasis on the factual—we should now consider what must be called his abuse of reasoning, that is, his polemical use of sophisms and specious reasoning. We cannot conclude that because Tyndale was alert to fallacies in his opponents' arguments, that fallacies in his own reasoning are necessarily conscious attempts

²⁵ See More, *Workes*, pp. 315-316.

²⁶ *Workes*, p. 250, Cf. "church," *OED*, B.

to deceive his opponents or his readers; it may simply be that Tyndale, in common with most people of his day as well as our own, could detect in another's work a fault he failed to notice in his own.²⁷ But whether Tyndale's use of specious reasoning is intentional or not, it constitutes a significant element in his controversial technique.

Begging the question, for instance, which Tyndale objects to on the part of his opponents (*Workes*, p. 420), is something he himself indulges in on a number of occasions, such as when he adduces as proof of the Roman clergy's alliance with Antichrist that the clergy "maketh it treason vnto the kyng, to be acquainted with Christe" (*Ibid.*, p. 60). This argument rests on the assumption that he and his followers are the only ones who wish to be "acquainted with Christe" and that consequently any legislation against the reformers is legislation against Christ. Again, Tyndale counters the pope's claim to be Peter's successor with the following argument: "For were they Simon Peters successours, they would preach Christ as he did, but they are Simon Magus his successours . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 96). That is, Tyndale uses the disputed question as to what constitutes correct preaching of Christ as the premise with which to prove that the pope cannot be Peter's successor. He uses the same kind of fallacious reasoning on this subject when he asserts that if the pope were the rock referred to in Matthew 16 (see p. 125), then the gates of hell could not prevail against him, "but the contrary see we in our Popes. For hell gates haue preuayled agaynst them many hundred years . . ." (*Workes*, p. 173). "And agayne," says Tyndale in another place, "if the Pope could not erre in his doctrine, he coulede not sinne of purpose and profession, abhominably and openly aboue the Turkes and all the heathen that euer were, and defend it so maliciously as he hath viij. hundred yeares long, and maketh them his Saintes and his defenders y^t sinne as he doth" (*Ibid.*, p. 308). Since Tyndale's key phrase in the argument is "of purpose," his implication seems to be that the popes secretly know that they are sinning not only in their actions but also in holding a doctrine different from Tyndale's.

Non sequiturs, too, can be found in some of Tyndale's arguments. Do not be discouraged, Tyndale comforts his readers, because you are being persecuted for reading the works of the reformers and the

²⁷ More also pointed out his opponents' fallacies while being guilty of specious reasoning himself; see fn. 4.

vernacular scriptures. For, argues Tyndale, the very fact that you are being persecuted is a proof that what you are reading is of God, since the scriptures make plain that the word of God has never been without persecution. And from this you can see, concludes Tyndale, that the pope's doctrine is not of God, since the world receives it so well (*Ibid.*, p. 97). The obvious comment such an argument demands is that it does not follow that because the word of God is always persecuted, everything which is persecuted must be the word of God, or that anything which is not persecuted cannot be the word of God. Again, when More says that he believes the doctrine of the Scriptures on the authority of the Church alone, because the Holy Spirit leads him to believe the Church, Tyndale concludes that "thus is *M. More* fallen vpon predestination and is compelled with violence of Scripture to confesse that which he hateth and studieth to make appeare false. . . ." ²⁸ After having come to this rather amazing conclusion and having shown how even against his will More has had to admit the correctness of the reformers' position, Tyndale even more amazingly grants that More said nothing to warrant a conclusion that he believes in predestination and that "thus we be as farre a sunder as euer we were . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 306).

Combining some of the aspects of Tyndale's techniques of language and reasoning is what I shall call his "modified dialogue" form. While the outward structure Tyndale uses for his controversial works is either that of the straight treatise, such as the *Obedience*, or the more or less point-by-point answer, such as the *Aunswere Vnto Syr Thomas Mores Dialogue*, within the frame of the latter work he has developed a kind of dialogue form which he uses as a very effective polemical weapon. This "modified dialogue" consists of the juxtaposition of a short and usually sarcastic comment to a short quotation from More. It is not unlikely that Tyndale was led to adopt this form from observing More's success with the reported dialogue of the *Dialogue concernynge heresies*.²⁹ His modifications of More's use of the form appear to have been made for the sake of maneuverability and to protect himself from such charges of manipulating the interlocutor as he himself made

²⁸ *Workes*, pp. 305-306. More uses almost the same language when he employs exactly the same kind of *non sequitur* against Tyndale. See More, *Workes*, pp. 564-565.

²⁹ See my "Thomas More's Use of the Dialogue Form As a Weapon of Religious Controversy," *Stud. Ren.*, VII (1960), 193-206.

against More (See *Workes*, pp. 253, 279, 330). For while More never abandons the form of the dialogue in his work, he often loses the spirit of that medium, in that he assigns speeches to himself of such a length that the reader is apt to forget he is reading a conversation rather than a treatise. Tyndale, by keeping both More's quotations and his own answers very short, avoids this pitfall and retains the flavor of debate. Also, by using More's actual words and thus making More himself the interlocutor, Tyndale leaves himself less open to the charge of distorting his opponent's viewpoint than did More. At the same time, however, Tyndale loses none of the polemical advantages of the medium he had observed More enjoying. For while he is committed to quoting More verbatim, he is not obliged to use everything More said on a particular point, nor is he restricted to introducing More's quotations in their original order or context; he can arrange the series of statements and answers to suit himself. From a polemical point of view, Tyndale's use of the dialogue seems to be more effective than his opponent's.

An examination of the following quotations from More will demonstrate that Tyndale certainly did not choose his adversary's strongest arguments to oppose to himself:

M. More. The Apostles and Saintes were prayed so when they were aliue and God not dishonoured. Tynd. What helpeth that your carnal purpose. I haue aunswered you vnto that & many thinges mo in the obedience and other places agaynst whiche ye reply not, but keepe your tune and vnto all thyng syng kokow, kokow, we be the church & can not erre (Ibid., p. 297).

The sarcasm of the above passage is characteristic of Tyndale's tone when he adopts the modified dialogue form and probably derives from his desire for brevity; he has to demolish his opponent's statement somehow, without engaging in extended argument. Also, the following quotations seem to indicate that it is just when Tyndale wishes to avoid extended argument that he uses the modified dialogue form:

More. The Church byndeth no man to chastitie. Tyndall. of a truth, for it geueth licence to who soeuer wil, to kepe whores, and permitteth to abuse mens wiues and suffereth sodomotrie, and doth but onely forbid matrimonie (Ibid., p. 314).

While there is no denying the wit of Tyndale's rejoinder, the conclusion is equally inescapable that he is here indulging in sophistry. For Tyndale has permitted himself to be witty by

ignoring More's context and, consequently, the meaning of his statement. More's point is that the rule of celibacy can hardly be characterized as the Church's imposition on an unwilling laity, since only priests have to vow celibacy and the Church forces no man to become a priest (More, *Workes*, p. 232). Another kind of selectivity is apparent in the choice of the following statement of More's:

Christes church hath the true doctrine already, and the selfe same that S. Paule woulde not geue an Angell audience vnto the contrary.

Tyndall. But the Popes Church will not heare that doctrine (*Ibid.*, p. 319).

Here Tyndale is begging the question; he has picked out a statement from More's work which permits him to juxtapose the terms "Christes church" and "the Popes Church," whose lack of identity he assumes in his rejoinder. Other examples in which Tyndale uses the modified dialogue to avoid lengthy discussion or to score easy points against his opponent are numerous (e. g., *Ibid.*, pp. 298, 323, 324).

Tyndale's use of the modified dialogue form is a major example of the economy of treatment which is the outstanding characteristic of all his polemical works. There is almost nothing in Tyndale's *Mammon* which does not have a bearing on the book's central theme of justification by faith. His *Obedience* contains very little not relative to its main thesis that the Scriptures ought to be in the vernacular and that the doctrine as well as the practice of the contemporary Church is at variance with the doctrine and practice prescribed in the New Testament. All of Tyndale's *Practice of Prelates* is an exposé of the alleged machinations of the clergy. The *Aunswere* to More emphasizes the identity and nature of the true church, as well as the correctness of Tyndale's New Testament translation, while relegating to brief treatment a number of secondary issues More had raised in his *Dialogue*. The same reluctance to be sidetracked from what he considers central issues is a salient feature of Tyndale's other polemical treatises.

A comparison of Tyndale's works to those of his principal opponent will reveal that the former's economy and brevity were by no means virtues characteristic of early sixteenth century controversy generally. More's *Dialogue*, for instance, one of his more compact works, besides discussing the doctrines of Luther and Tyndale, gives considerable space to a consideration of various

heresy cases, to an account of the Sack of Rome, to the question of whether Christians ought to fight against infidels, and to numerous and often lengthy "merry tales." More's *Supplication of soules*, written in answer to Simon Fish's small pamphlet attacking the clergy, is a considerable treatise divided into two books, while More's *Confutacion of Tyndales Avnsuvere* is nearly ten times the length of the work it seeks to confute.³⁰ More is unable or unwilling to adopt Tyndale's policy of concentrating on central issues and either ignoring secondary topics completely or treating them very briefly. Nothing is too minute for More to comment on; even the title of an opponent's book has to be criticized.³¹

The outcome of such a battle between Tyndale's pertinency and More's prolixity was as might be expected. While we know that Tyndale's works were being widely disseminated and read,³² More himself admits that the length of his works was proving a formidable barrier to readers (More, *Workes*, pp. 847, 931).

In his controversy with the established ecclesiastical system of his day, then, Tyndale relied on certain techniques of language, reasoning, form, and general economy of treatment. His principal techniques of language consisted of the use of sarcasm and irony, which served to ridicule the arguments of his opponents. The techniques of reasoning he chiefly employed to establish his own case were scriptural analogies, illustrations from popular speech, and reference to the authority of Erasmus; occasionally he intentionally or unintentionally used sophisms. For the sake of brevity and to utilize its tactical advantages, Tyndale made use of a modified dialogue form which combined some of the aspects of his techniques of language and reasoning. In his use of this form Tyndale displayed an economy of treatment which was the organizing principle governing his conduct of the entire controversy with the Catholic Church.

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³⁰ That longwindedness was not a Catholic monopoly can be ascertained by an examination of John Bale's works, which also sometimes run to lengths quite out of proportion to the lengths of the works they answer. See *A declaration of Edmonde Bonners articles*, *Yet a course at the Romysh Foxe*, and *A mysterye of iniquyte*.

³¹ See More, *Workes*, p. 932; cf. Bale, *Mysterye* (1545), sig. Blv.

³² See A. G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509-1558* (London, 1959), pp. 11-12.