

Ploughboys versus Prelates: Tyndale and More and the Politics of Biblical Translation

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William Tyndale made deft political use of his vernacular English translations of the Bible to win over the common people of Renaissance England to the Protestant cause. Comparison of Tyndale's translation of the Old Testament Book of Jonah and More's favored Douay-Rheims translation of the same with the original Hebrew text shows how these translations reflect their adherents' respective religious and political views.

IN 1529 A LONDON LEATHER-SELLER NAMED JOHN TEWKESBURY was arrested and brought before Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall for having read and assented to William Tyndale's New Testament translation "containing in the English tongue that pestiferous and most pernicious poison" of Protestantism. According to the martyrologist John Foxe in his *Acts and Monuments*, Tunstall "and all his learned men were ashamed that a leather-seller should so dispute with them, with such power of the Scriptures and heavenly wisdom, that they were not able to resist him."¹ Before his arrest, Tewkesbury had made a nuisance of himself by openly disputing points of Catholic doctrine in the bishop's own chapel at his palace. His polemical skills finally became unbearable for the bishop's circle, and he was threatened with death if he did not recant his heresies. Unwilling to heed this warning, Tewkesbury was taken to Sir Thomas More's house "to see whether he could turn him, and that he might accuse other."² More could not get him to recant, so he was sent to the Tower of London. That did the trick: Tewkesbury, having been racked until he was almost lame, openly abjured his beliefs before Saint Paul's Cross. Arrested again two years later for professing the beliefs he had abjured, Tewkesbury was taken before Sir Thomas More who tried his hand again at getting him to recant. Tewkesbury stood firm. The bishop decided he had had enough of him, so Tewkesbury was burned at the stake.

¹John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1965), 4: 689.

²*Ibid.*

Tewkesbury had passed unequivocal judgment on Tyndale's translation of the New Testament before his death. In reply to one of the bishop's frequent exhortations to recant, he said, "I pray you reform yourself, and if there be any error in the book, let it be reformed; I think it is good enough".³ Indeed Tyndale's verses were good enough for a painter named Edward Freese to embroider some of them on "certain cloths for the new inn at Colchester."⁴ This act got him arrested and tortured, and thrown in prison, where his wrists were manacled because "he would ever be writing on the walls with chalk or a coal."⁵ After long imprisonment he was released, insane.

These two accounts illustrate the power of articulate contention that Tyndale's Biblical translation had induced in the common man; it lifted him up alongside the courtiers and others of the elect in Tudor society. Tyndale's translation appealed to its adherents because it made more readily intelligible the mystical holy Word. It reformed, or refashioned, Scripture in the image of man.⁶ It defined the Reformation as "a summons to a fuller, more concrete translation of Christ's teachings both into daily speech and daily life."⁷ The philosophy behind the "summons" is carried by this manifesto of Tyndale:

I would desire that all women should reade the Gospell and Paul's epistles, and I wold to god they were translated in to the tonges of all men. So that they might not only be read and knowne of the scotes and yryshmen, But also of the Turkes and saracenes. Truly it is one degre to good livinge, yee the first (I had almost sayde the cheffe) to have a little sight in the scripture, though it be but a grosse knowledge. . . . I wold to god the plowman wold take a texte of the scripture at his plowbeme, and that the weaver wold use his lowme with this wold drive away the tediousness of tyme.⁸

George Steiner treats these words as the watershed in the history of theories of Biblical translation: "the view that translation is essential to man's spiritual progress passed from the religious to the secular domain."⁹ The democratization of the Bible is precisely what Tyndale was after. To show how closely Scripture adhered to popular speech, Tyndale illustrated the Protestant doctrine that faith produces deeds, not

³Ibid., 691.

⁴Ibid., 695.

⁵Ibid.

⁶I am indebted to Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), especially the chapter, "The Word of God in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," as the springboard for the topic of this essay.

⁷George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 245.

⁸Cited in Steiner, *After Babel*, 245.

⁹Steiner, *After Babel*, 245.

vice versa, with well-known phrases: "As the maner is to say, do your charitie, shew your charitie, do a deed of charitie, shewe your mercy, meanyng thereby, that our deedes declare how we love our neighbours, & how much we have compassion on them at their neede."¹⁰ Tyndale opened the door to a Scripture that could belong to Everyman, that could be fashioned and refashioned to suit mundane needs and wants. It was now possible to entertain the idea of the book as something other than monolithic granite, as something as pliable, and yet coherent, as mercury. A Word-to-person symmetry had been proposed, one that would put man on equal footing with his book, in contradistinction to the Book of the mother Church, a tome hidden away and for prelatical eyes only. Tyndale accepted none of the Church's arguments against a vernacular English translation:

They tell you that scripture ought not to be in the mother tongue, but that is only because they fear the light, and desire to lead you blindfold and in captivity. The Old Testament was in the mother tongue; yet those ages were in twilight, while we walk in the noonday: did Christ come to make the world more blind? At that rate he is not the light of the world, but its darkness. They say that scripture needs a pure and quiet mind, and that laymen are too cumbered with worldly business to understand it. This weapon strikes themselves: for who is so tangled with worldly matters as the prelates? They say that laymen would interpret it each after his own way. Why then do the curates not teach the people the right way? . . . If they will not let the layman have the word of God in his mother tongue, yet let the priests have it; which for a great part of them do understand no Latin at all, but sing and say and patter all day, with the lips only, that which the heart understandeth not.¹¹

Tyndale's Bible was not only catching the lilt and lisp of vernacular English, but also, more importantly, was fashioning a freemasonry of lay Bible interpreters who, as Tewkesbury and Freese illustrate, were taking on the prelates in their own territory. Thomas More was certain that Tyndale in collusion with Luther had set out to distort the Bible "from the good and wholesome doctrine of Christ to the devilish heresies of their own, that it was clean a contrary thing."¹² The revolutionary translator Tyndale was, in More's view, setting the charges of doctrinal corruption throughout England, thereby unleashing "the folk unlearned" into a wilderness of their own making, an anarchy leading to the rule of the Devil.

¹⁰Rainer Pineas, *Thomas More and Tudor Polemics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 47.

¹¹Cited in J. F. Mozley, *William Tyndale* (1937; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971), 135-36.

¹²Cited in W. Schwarz, *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 14.

The control of the Church was the only thing that stood between religious anarchy and "the folk unlearned," according to More.¹³ Only a Church-authorized translation of the Bible could withstand the shock and rattle of false prophets like Tyndale. But whereas More saw the purity of the Bible being debased and tainted by Tyndale's dangerous translation, Tyndale saw his project as one of removing the encrustations of centuries of turgid and stagnant religious doctrine, of freeing the original Hebrew prisoner-text from an expropriatory Church. In opposition to papal claims on Scripture, Tyndale offers the layman the true approach:

Forasmuch now as thou partly seest the falsehood of our prelates, how all their study is to deceive and to keep us in darkness, to sit as gods in our consciences, and handle us at their pleasure, and to lead us wither they lust; therefore I read thee, get thee to God's word, and thereby try all doctrine, and against that receive nothing; neither any exposition contrary unto the open texts, neither contrary to the general articles of the faith, neither contrary to the living and practising of Christ and his Apostles.¹⁴

This almost intimate appeal to the single reader, each and every one, went unmatched by anyone then representing the Catholic Church in England. No clergyman besides Tyndale saw fit to give the layman his due, to impress upon him his *personal* relation to Scripture, i.e., that it was indeed for *his* hands and eyes to hold and to interpret. Tyndale's cultivation of popular support is exemplified in the following passage in which he appeals with a friendliness of tone for support of his work as one man doing a hard, lonely job for the sake of his common brethren:

Consyder howe that I had no man to counterfet, nether was holpe with englysshe of eny that had interpreted the same, or soche lyke thinge in the scripture before tyme. . . . Count it as a thyng not havynge his full shape, but as it were borne afore hys tyme, even as a thing begunne rather then fynnesshed. In tyme to come (yf god have apoynted us there unto) we will geve it his full shape . . . and will enfoarce to brynge to compendeousness, that which is now translated at the lengthe, and to geve lyght where it is requyred, and to seke in certayne places more proper englysshe, and with a table to expounde the wordes which are nott commenly used, and shewe howe the scripture useth many wordes, which

¹³Schwarz, *Biblical Translation*, 14.

¹⁴Cited in C. H. Williams, *William Tyndale* (London: Nelson and Sons, 1969), 92. For the most recent work on Tyndale see Donald Smeeton's *Lollard Themes in Reformation Theology of William Tyndale* (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Publishers, 1986), which came to my attention after this essay was completed.

are wother wyse understonde of the commen people, and to helpe with a declaracion where one tonge taketh nott another.¹⁵

This appeal fits well with what Tyndale once boldly announced to a theologian: "If God spare me life, ere many years I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than you do."¹⁶ He considered the layman the true expositor of the church because he was the true expositor of Scripture. This argument was based on the premise that "the Church was made by the Scripture, not the Scripture by the Church."¹⁷ Scripture is the ultimate authority, whose great purpose is to teach truth to all people; what better way to teach them than in their mother tongue, Tyndale asks the prelates:

"If ye would teach, how could ye do it so well, and with so great profit, as when the lay-people have the scripture before them in their mother tongue? For then should they see, by order of the text, whether thou jugglest or not: and then would they believe it, because it is the scripture of God, though thy living be never so abominable. Where now, because your living and your preaching are so contrary, and because they grope out in every sermon your open and manifest lies, and smell your unsatiable covetousness, they believe you not when you preach truth."¹⁸

Tyndale's appeal to the layman is in keeping with his indictment that the Church had deserted the literal translation for the allegorical and the tropological ones. The Church's desertion of the layman is to Tyndale manifested by its refusal to make use of the vernacular which would provide the layman the spirit-lifting Biblical translation he so needs and deserves. The Church, in alienating the common man from the Bible, has, according to Tyndale, alienated itself from man. There is only one sense to Scripture, the literal:

and that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth whereunto if thou cleave thou canst never err or go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense thou canst not but go out of the way.¹⁹

Tyndale thought that this "literal sense" in the English vernacular would "abolish clerical monopoly on the Word of God and subject clerical conduct to the scrutiny of a laity for the first time able to use the exact

¹⁵Cited in A. C. Partridge, *English Biblical Translation* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973), 38-39.

¹⁶Cited in A. M. Kinghorn, *The Chorus of History: Literary-Historical Relations in Renaissance Britain* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), 164.

¹⁷Williams, *Tyndale*, 93.

¹⁸Cited in S. L. Greenslade, *The Work of William Tyndale* (London: Blackie & Son, 1938), 129.

¹⁹Cited in Williams, *Tyndale*, 91.

scriptural text as a standard by which to judge clerical behavior."²⁰ Indeed the laymen, not the Catholic prelates, were the true representatives of God's earthly church because they favored and used the English vernacular which, according to Tyndale, was closest in spirit to God's own tongue, Hebrew. Those who claimed that the English vernacular was too "rude" a language for translating the original Hebrew text of the Bible were labeled "false liars" by Tyndale because

the properties of the Hebrew tongue agree 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 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 as it hath in the Hebrew. A thousand parts better may it be translated into the English than into the Latin.²¹

Tyndale's "manner of speaking" and his promotion of vernacular English as proper to Biblical translation eventually culminated in a vernacular church service for the layman; it elevated and made available to him "the equivalent of a popular rhetorical style."²² This rhetorical power became the basis of a new kind of citizenship, one that included a utilitarian regard for the written and published word. A new breed of "the articulate citizen" took root in the vernacular soil, and it was not long before this new citizen was engaging in a "battle of books."²³

Contiguous to my argument but not to be discussed at length here are the psycholinguistic aspects of Tyndale's writings. His use of the

²⁰Pineas, *More and Tudor Polemics*, 51.

²¹Cited in G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 121.

²²Paul E. Corcoran, *Political Language and Rhetoric* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 129.

²³Arthur B. Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1965), 155. Ferguson tells of one such "public-spirited citizen," a London merchant named Clement Armstrong, who developed a lucrative business as a supplier of building materials and as a contractor of interior decoration. He was not especially well educated, but somehow managed to befriend the printer and propagandist John Rastell, whose services had been enlisted by Thomas Cromwell, the powerful political leader and adviser to King Henry VIII. Disturbed by England's economic problems, Armstrong wrote several pamphlets analyzing and promoting remedies for them. He did not lack confidence in his ideas, and promptly wrote to minister Cromwell in 1536:

Please it your Mastership to consider where I have been your servant in my mind this three years taking time labor and pain to help set forth the knowledge of the right order of common weal of all people in the realm, to the intent that ye should help the king to set it up to be ministered in exemplum to all other realms. (cited in Ferguson, *English Renaissance*, 154)

In addition to this, he was bold enough to suggest "that he could be of still more service to Cromwell if he were given a place in his household with a secretary to help him elaborate his counsel—and perhaps to render it into a more readable style. . . ." (Ibid.)

vernacular throughout his prologues and translations agitated for a newly articulate citizenry of laymen whose "ambition in English" would gradually displace the "veneration in Latin" in English Renaissance society.²⁴ The Church-directed conscience of the ordinary citizen was giving way to a social conscience which spoke the language of Tyndale's Scripture. And this Scripture was generous, not only because it spoke to the English people in their own language, but also because it gave them a kind of tailor's form upon which they could design a new rhetorical self. Whereas before Tyndale's translation the average man had been incommunicado with Scripture because it was considered classified information, now Scripture opened itself up to the individual's imagination, allowing him to define the text in the image of a socially conscious citizen. Scripture now spoke not only to the individual, but more importantly to the new *society* of individuals who were beginning to be united through their common access to Scripture in the vernacular. The Church was being edged out as the focal point, the common rallying ground, of man's ambition.

This ambition can be seen in Freudian terms as a maturity deriving from man's simultaneous repossession of his English mother tongue and renunciation of the Latin Father tongue. Perhaps the average man's preference of English to Latin in Tudor England as a result of Tyndale's translation can be viewed as the natural terminus of "the lifetime course of the Renaissance linguistic ego, circling back to its first object."²⁵ This lifetime course, according to William Kerrigan, "mirrors in broad outline . . . the course of the ego itself: a natural acquisition of the mother tongue, a formal and superego-dominated imitation of the male tongue, [and] a mature return to the matrix of mother English."²⁶ Identification with the father tongue of the Church is the holding pattern that sustains the linguistic ego of a nation until it is liberated into maturity by something linguistically grand, something on the order of Tyndale's Biblical translation. Keeping one's vernacular English *I* intact while enduring the forced identification with the foreign Latin *ego* is, as Kerrigan would have it, "the most arduous test of the reality principle."²⁷ Although he does not refer to it in Freudian terms, Stephen Greenblatt sees such a principle operating through Tyndale's work that is "powerful enough to uphold individuals in daring acts of dissent against overwhelming spiritual and political authority and to sustain these individuals during the sufferings that would follow such acts."²⁸

²⁴William Kerrigan uses these terms in his essay "The Articulation of the Ego in the English Renaissance," *Psychiatry and the Humanities* 4, ed. Joseph H. Smith, M.D. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 287.

²⁵Kerrigan, "Articulation of the Ego," 286.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 285.

²⁸Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, 93.

Tyndale sustains such political acts by an act of power of his own in his "Preface to the Five Books of Moses." He attempts to alert the layman-reader to what he considers the Church's insidiousness. Speaking of the prelates and priests, he points out that they

have yet now so narrowly looked on my translation, that there is not so much as one *i* therein, if it lack a tittle over his head, but they have noted it, and number it unto the ignorant people for an heresy. Finally, in this they be all agreed, to drive you from the knowledge of the scripture, and that ye shall not have the text thereof in the mother-tongue, and to keep the world still in darkness, to the intent they might sit in the consciences of the people, through vain superstition and false doctrine, to satisfy their filthy lusts, their proud ambition, and unsatiable convetousness, and to exalt their own honour above king and emperor, yea, and above God himself.²⁹

This utterance of Tyndale can be regarded as acting politically upon its readers in at least two ways, according to J. G. A. Pocock: (1) it informs them and so modifies their perceptions about themselves vis-à-vis the Church, and (2) it defines them and so modifies the perceptions that others reading the Preface form about them in relation to the Church.³⁰ Tyndale's direct address to his layman audience releases them from a "false" scripture while it simultaneously invites them to co-create a "proper" replacement, one that they can own and have a right to own because it is, in essence, a joint linguistic venture of man and God as true partners. Tyndale's implication here is that the Church, through its choice of Latin as *the* language of the Bible, has exalted itself "above God himself" because it has judged Latin superior to God's own Hebrew tongue and its closest non-Semitic linguistic "ally," vernacular English. Indeed Tyndale elsewhere asks, had God "not made the English tounge? Why forbidde ye hym to speake in the Englishe tounge then, as well as in the Latine?"³¹ The Church's forbidding a vernacular English translation of the Bible is, in Tyndale's view, tantamount to an act of heresy.

Tyndale also accused the Church of "juggling with the text, expounding it in such a sense as is impossible to gather of the text, if thou see the process, order, and meaning thereof,"³² but Thomas More in his

²⁹William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. for The Parker Society by Rev. Henry Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968), 393. This work hereafter referred to as *Treatises*.

³⁰J. G. A. Pocock, "Verbalizing a Political Act: Toward a Politics of Speech," *Language and Politics*, ed. Michael J. Shapiro (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 28.

³¹Cited in Pineas, *More and Tudor Polemics*, 51.

³²*Ibid.*, 394.

Dialogue Concerning Heresies defends the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible as not departing at all from the original. To More, the Church cannot be accused of juggling with the Word of God because translation and interpretation are inseparable, and the only true interpretation is the Church's.³³ And whereas Tyndale sees the controversy over his translation as a struggle between the Church and the Word, More sees it as a struggle between the Church and Luther.

Among Tyndale's biblical translations, the *Book of Jonah*, short as it is, attracted its own share of controversy.³⁴ Quite popular during the early sixteenth century in Europe, the Book was translated and published in many separate editions by Protestant reformers, including Luther who rendered it into German in 1526. The reformers considered it "a tract meet for the times,"³⁵ probably because they saw great similarity between their work in reforming Christianity and Jonah's in bringing about the reformation of the greatest city of his time, Nineveh.³⁶ In his prologue to the book, Tyndale instructs his readers to approach it "not as a poetic fable, which has to be allegorized, but as a true picture of God's dealing with the soul, 'an earnest penny given of God' that he will help us."³⁷ Further in the prologue Tyndale accuses the Church of treating "the lives, stories, and gests of men, which are contained in the bible, . . . as things no more pertaining unto them than a tale of Robin Hood. . . ."³⁸

The book of Jonah was inserted into the canon because "Jonas the sonne of Amithai" of its opening verse was identified with an eighth-century prophet of the same name mentioned in II Kings 14:25.³⁹ Although some theologians doubt the historicity of the story, they hold it belongs in the canon because the "historical features . . . incorporated in

³³Thomas More, *The Complete Works*, ed. Thomas M. C. Lawler et al (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 6: 2.522. The volumes of this edition of More's *Works*, which were edited by several hands and published in different years, will hereafter be referred to as *Works*, with volume, part (when applicable), and page numbers, first editors, and year of publication given in that order.

³⁴I have appended to the end of the essay the first chapter of Tyndale's *The Prophete Jonas*, as well as a chart comparing parts of Tyndale's translation of *Jonah* with the corresponding parts in the modern English *Jerusalem Bible*, ed. Alexander Jones (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), and in the Latin Vulgate translation of *The Holy Bible*, Douay-Rheims Edition (Douay, 1609; transl. into English under the imprimatur of James Cardinal Gibbons, 1899; reprint, Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books & Publishers, 1971). The verses are numbered according to the original Hebrew text and the Vulgate. In Tyndale's 1531 edition the verses are not numbered.

³⁵Mozley, *Tyndale*, 201.

³⁶These reformers believed that "the clergy are, like Jonah, enjoined to preach, 'not to take the regiment of governance of the commonwealth.'" (Cited in Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen*, 144, quoting John Hooper, *Early Writings*).

³⁷Cited in Mozley, *Tyndale*, 201-2.

³⁸Tyndale, *Treatises*, 450.

³⁹Edward P. Blair, *Abingdon Bible Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), 177-78.

the narrative" serve the canon well "in the role of an analogy" similar to the Parable of the Good Samaritan.⁴⁰

An analysis here of Tyndale's translation of the book of Jonah will show several points of biblical translation debated by Tyndale and More. About that translation More wrote:

Then have we Jonas made out by Tyndale, a book that whoso delight therein shall stand in peril that Jonas was never so swallowed up with the whale as, by the delight of that book a man's soul may be so swallowed up by the devil that he shall never have the grace to get out again.⁴¹

In the first verse of Chapter One of *Jonah*, the Hebrew name "Yona" is translated by Tyndale as "the prophete Jonas" and by the Latin Vulgate—More's favored translation—merely as "Jonas." Tyndale is apparently not translating from the original Hebrew when he inserts the word "prophete." By doing so, however, he seems to be canonizing Jonah as a legitimate prophet unto Protestantism, and thereby adding weight to his charge that the Church considers the tale of Jonah, as well as many other biblical stories, no more significant than "a tale of Robin Hood."

Tyndale again departs from the original Hebrew in translating God's command to Jonah to "preach unto them": the Hebrew says "preach unto her," and the Vulgate has it as "preach in it." Tyndale sees the city as "them," a congregation of individuals, whereas the Church sees the city as "it," a monolithic unit, indivisible before God. Although Tyndale does not use the word "congregation" here, he uses it often in his translation of the New Testament. More in his *Dialogue* objected to Tyndale's substitution "for several long-accepted theological terms words not normally used by theologians":⁴²

For prestys where so euer he speketh of the prestes of Crystes chyrche he neuer calleth them prestes but always senyours / the chyrche he calleth alway the congregacyon / & charyte he calleth alway loue. Nowe do these names in our englysshe tonge neyther expresse the thynges that be ment by them / and also there appereth (the cyrcumstaunces well consydered) that he had a myscheuous mynde in the chaunge.⁴³

More also objected to Tyndale's substituting "favor" for "grace," "knowledge" for "confession," and "repentance" instead of "penance."⁴⁴

⁴⁰Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 426.

⁴¹More, *Works*, 12: 9, ed. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley, 1976.

⁴²Williams, *Tyndale*, 76.

⁴³More, *Works*, 6: 1.286, ed. Lawler et al, 1981.

⁴⁴Williams, *Tyndale*, 76.

The issue of "repentance" versus "penance" is one of the most hotly debated points between More and Tyndale. More saw Tyndale's position this way:

For Tyndale is not angry wyth the worde but bycause of the mater. For this greueth Luther & hym / that by penaunce we vndrestande when we speke thereof so many good thynges therin / & not a bare repentyng or forthynkyng onely, but also euery parte of the sacrament of penaunce, confessyon of mouthe, contrycyon of herte, and satysfaccyon by good dedis.⁴⁵

Tyndale sees the matter differently, however:

Penance is a word of their own forging, to deceive us withal, as many others are. In the scripture we find *poenitentia*, "repentance:" *agite poenitentiam*, "do repent;" *poeniteat vos*, "let it repent you." . . . Of repentance they have made penance, to blind the people, and to make them think that they must take pains, and do some holy deeds, to make satisfaction for their sins; namely such as they enjoin them. As thou mayest see in the chronicles, when great kings and tyrants . . . came to themselves, and had conscience of their wicked deeds; then the bishops coupled them, not to Christ, but unto the pope, and preached the pope unto them; and made them to submit themselves, and also their realms, unto the holy father the pope, and to take penance, as they call it; that is to say, such injunctions as the pope and bishops would command them to do, to build abbeys, to endote them with livelihood, to be prayed for for ever; and to give them exemptions and privilege and licence to do what they lust unpunished.⁴⁶

The common man's penance, according to Tyndale, is exacted by the Church in a lesser, almost carnival atmosphere:

The mother church, and the high altar, must have somewhat in every testament. Offerings at priests' first masses. Item, no man is professed, of whatsoever religion it be, but he must bring somewhat. The hallowing, or rather conjuring of churches, chapels, altars, super-altars, chalice, vestments, and bells. Then book, bell, candlestick, organs, chalice, vestments, copes, altar-cloths, surplices, towels, basins, ewers, ship, censer, and all manner ornament, must be found them freely; they will not give a mite thereunto. Last of all, what swarms of begging friars are there! The parson sheareth, the vicar shaveth, the parish priest polleth, the friar scrapeth, and the pardoner pareth; we lack but a butcher to pull off the skin.⁴⁷

⁴⁵More, *Works*, 8: 1.212, ed. Louis A. Schuster et al, 1973.

⁴⁶Tyndale, *Treatises*, 260.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 238.

The doctrinal and stylistic aspects of Tyndale's writing mesh beautifully here in the fine, brisk effect of Tyndale's lists brimming with contempt for the notion that man is responsible to the Church first and to himself second. Tyndale's opposing belief—that man is responsible to himself first because in that way he shows responsibility to God—is borne out by several verse translations in *Jonah*. What William Kerrigan calls "the Renaissance fascination with reflexivity"⁴⁸ is supported by such of Tyndale's translations as "ryse and gett thee to Ninive"; "Jonas made him ready to flee"; "& gatt hym downe to Joppe"; "Jonas gatt him under the hatches"; "& layed him downe and slomberde"; and "sat him downe in ashes." The Hebrew text corresponding to these English translations does not use reflexive verbs.⁴⁹ Apparently Tyndale felt it important to show even in these details of translation his tenet of man's personal responsibility to himself and to his God with no need or desire for intercession by anyone on his behalf. Man pays his fare unto God as Jonah "payed his fare" for the boat to Niniveh; he does not pay "the fare therof," with the Vulgate's emphasis on the receiver rather than the giver. When the sea goes into a tempest, the ship's occupants cry "every man unto his god" (Tyndale), not as "men . . . to their god" (Vulgate). They pray as a federation of individual worshippers, not as a unit mass of indistinguishable souls.

Jonah scrutinizes his soul and tells us, according to Tyndale, that "in my tribulacion I called unto the lorde / and he answered me"—a direct, unmediated communication with God—(Tyndale), unlike the Vulgate's translation of "I cried out of my affliction to the Lord, and he heard me," i.e., the mediator passed it on and received acknowledgement merely that it was heard. The Hebrew original here supports the truly communicative "and he answered me" of Tyndale's translation. As to Jonah's "affliction," More sees it as similar to the sort the Ninevites engaged in: "wherfore dyd they faste? for to tame theyr flesshe as Tyndale sayth? Nay / they fasted and dyd penance for theyr synnes, & therwyth purchased pardon whych Tyndale wyll not perceyue."⁵⁰ Tyndale disagrees: Jonah's psyche is suffering here, and this condition is, according to Tyndale, best translated by the word "tribulacion" because it is a God-given sign of the true Christian,

a blessing that cometh of God, as witnesseth Christ: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Is not this a comfortable word? Who

⁴⁸Kerrigan, "Articulation of the Ego," 299.

⁴⁹Indeed the Vulgate translation of these phrases more accurately reflects the Hebrew than Tyndale's does. See Pineas, *More and Tudor Polemics*, 48–49, for a discussion of Tyndale's translations and interpretations not supported by the original text.

⁵⁰More, *Works*, 12: 70, ed. Martz and Manley, 1976.

ought not rather to choose, and desire to be blessed with Christ, in a little tribulation, than to be cursed perpetually with the world for a little pleasure?⁵¹

No two phrases in all of the book of Jonah reflect the theological difference between More and Tyndale more pointedly than these found in verses 7 and 8 in Chapter Three: the Vulgate's "Who can tell if God will turn, and forgive," versus Tyndale's "who can tell whether god will turne and repent;" and the Vulgate's "and God had mercy," versus Tyndale's "he repented on the evell." To More, God's forgiveness is transitive, an outward show of mercy witnessed and registered by men who are its recipients. To Tyndale, however, divine forgiveness is an internal "change of heart," intransitive, a "bare repentyng or for-thynkyng only" (as More defines Tyndale's meaning of "repentance" in his *Confutation*).⁵² Tyndale in his translation adheres here again to the Protestant doctrine that inner thought and faith produce good works, while More holds to the Catholic emphasis on good works as preliminary to inner faith.

While More chided Tyndale for giving the English people leave "to call any thyng in englyshe by what worde so euer englysh men by comen custume agre vppon. And therefore to make a chaung of the englyshe worde, as though that all Englande shold go to scole wyth [him] to lerne englyshe,"⁵³ Tyndale continued to sanction through his translations the fashioning of God and Scripture by the layman. What counted for Tyndale was being true to God's text and thereby being true to God himself. While he realized that the layman still needed guidance in his approach to Scripture—indeed Tyndale wrote many prologues and doctrinal treatises for this purpose—he nevertheless believed it was better to risk mistaken interpretations by the layman through providing him full access to the Bible than for him to rely on the hand-me-down, selective preachings of the Church that not only reserved the text for itself but also determined which parts of it were doctrinally suitable and which were not.

Both More's Vulgate and Tyndale's unauthorized biblical translation were consulted by the creators of the Kings James Version of 1611, although Tyndale's English won out by being chosen in large part as the language of the new version. Nevertheless, these two men, among the greatest controversialists of their day, were both executed for their beliefs in their respective churches.

Both Tyndale and More remained staunch in their opposing positions. Tyndale had forecast that More would die a horrible death be-

⁵¹Cited in Mozley, *Tyndale*, 135.

⁵²More, *Works*, 8: 1.212, ed. Schuster *et al*, 1973.

⁵³*Ibid*.

cause of his resistance to the truth. On this matter More answered him,

These be the truths that Tyndale preacheth. And because I call these truths heresies, therefore Tyndale calleth me Balaam, Judas and Paraoh and threateneth me sore with the vengeance of God and with an evil death. What death each man shall die, that hangeth in God's hands, and martyrs have died for God and heretics have died for the devil. But since I know it very well, and so doth Tyndale too, that the holy saints dead before these days, since Christ's time till our own, believed as I do and Tyndale's truth be stark devilish heresies; if God give me the grace to suffer for saying the same, I shall never in my right wit wish to die better.⁵⁴

More was beheaded at the Tower in 1535 for refusing to relax his religious views. A year later, Tyndale was executed in the Netherlands for his unrelenting work for the Protestant cause. Shortly before he was to be executed, Tyndale wrote a letter in Latin to the governor of his prison requesting that he be allowed to have the tools necessary for the continuation of the work for which he was condemned:

And [I ask] to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening: it is, indeed, dreary sitting alone in the dark. But most of all I beg and implore your clemency to impress on the commissary that he should allow me to have a Hebrew bible, a Hebrew grammar, and a Hebrew dictionary so that I might pass time in that study. Thus may you obtain your utmost wishes provided they are for the salvation of your soul. But if any other decision has been taken about me, to be carried out before the winter, I will be patient, awaiting the will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, may whose spirit ever guide your heart. Amen.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Christopher Hollis, *Thomas More* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1934), 165.

⁵⁵Cited in Williams, *Tyndale*, 58.

APPENDIX ONE

The Prophete Jonas by William Tyndale (1531), facsimile ed. and intro. by Francis Fry. London: Willis & Sotheran. Bristol: Lasbury 1863.

The First Chapter

The words of the lorde came un to the prophete Jonas the sonne of Amithai sayenge: ryse & gett thee to Ninive that greate citie & preach un to them / how that theyr wekednesse is come upp before me.

Und Jonas made him ready to flee to Tharsis from the presens of the lorde / & gatt hym downe to Joppe / and found there a sheppe ready to goo to Tharsis / & payed his fare / & went aborde / to goo with them to Tharsis from the presens of the lorde.

But the lorde hurled a greate winde in to the se / so that there was a myghtie tempest in the se: in so moch that the shepp was lyke to goo in peces. Und the mariners were afrayed & cried every man un to his god / & cast out the goodes that were in the sheppe in to the se / to lighten it of them. But Jonas gatt him under the hatches & layed him downe and slomberde. Und the master of the sheppe came to him & sayd un to him / why slomberest thou. upp / & call un to thy god / that God maye thinke on us / that we perish not.

Und they sayde one to a nother / come & lett us cast lottes / to know for whose cause we are thus troublede. Und they cast lottes. Und the lott fell uppon Jonas.

Then they sayde unto him / tel us for whose cause we are thus troublede: what is thine occupacion / whence comest thou / how is thy contre called / & of what nacion art thou?

Und he answered them / I am an Ebrue: & the lord God of heven which made both se and drie land / I feare. Then were the men exceedingly afrayd & sayd un to him / why diddest thou so. For they knew that he was fled from the presens of the lorde / because he had told them.

Then they sayd unto hym / what shall we doo unto thee / that the se maye cease from troublinge us. For the se wrought & was troublous. Und he answered them / take me and cast me in to the se / & so shall it lett you be in reste: for Jonas wotte / it is for my sake / that this greate tempest is come uppon you.

Neverthesse the men assayed wyth rowenge to bringe the sheppe to lande: but it wold not be / because the se so wrought & was so troublous agens them. Wherefore they cried un to the lorde & sayd: O lorde latt us not perish for this mans deeth / nether laye innocent bloud un to oure charge: for thou lorde even as thy pleasure was / so thou hast done.

Und then they toke Jonas / & cast him in to the se / & the se lefte ragynge. Und the men feared the lorde excedingly: & sacrificed sacrifice un to the lorde: and vowed vowes.

APPENDIX TWO

A Comparison of Translations of *The Book of Jonah* of the Latin Vulgate (Douai-Rheims Version), William Tyndale, and the modern *Jerusalem Bible*:

VULGATE	TYNDALE	THE JERUSALEM BIBLE
<i>Chapter 1</i>		
1. Jonas	the prophete Jonas	Jonah
2. Arise, and go to Ninive	ryse & gett thee to Ninive	'Up!' he said 'Go to Nineveh,
the great city	that great citie	the great city
and preach in it	& preach unto them	and inform them
for the wickedness thereof is come before me	how that theyr wekednesse is come upp before me	that their wickedness has become known to me.'
3. And Jonas rose up to flee	Und Jonas made him ready to flee	Jonah decided to run away
from the face of the Lord	from the presens of the lorde	from Yahweh
and he went down to Joppe	& gatt hym downe to Joppe	He went down to Joppa
and found a ship going to Tharsis	and found there a sheppe ready to goo to Tharsis	and found a ship bound for Tarshish
and he paid the fare thereof	& payed his fare	he paid his fare
and went down into it	& went aborde	and went aboard
4. But the lorde sent a great wind	But the lorde hurled a greате winde	But Yahweh unleashed a violent wind on the sea
and a great tempest was raised in the sea	so that there was a myghtie tempest in the se	and there was such a great storm at sea
and the ship was in danger to be broken	in so moch that the shepp was lyke to goo in peces	that the ship threatened to break up
5. and the men cried to their god	& cried every man unto his god	and each of them called on his own god
and Jonas went down into the inner part	But Jonas gatt him under the hatches	Jonah, however, had gone below
and fell into a deep	& layed him downe and slomberde	and lain down in the hold and fallen fast asleep

6.	Why art thou fast asleep? rise up, call upon thy God	why slomberest thou upp / & call unto thy god	What do you mean by sleeping? Get up! Call on your god
7.	And they said every one to his fellow that we may know why this evil is upon us	Und they sayde one to a nother to know for whose cause we are thus troublede	Then they said to each other to find out who is responsible for bringing this evil upon us
8.	what is thy business? of what country art thou? and wither goest thou? or of what people art thou?	what is thine occupacion / whence comest thou / how is thy contre called / & of what nacion art thou	What is your business? Where do you come from? What is your country? What is your nationality?
9.	And he said to them	Und he answered them	He replied
11.	that the sea may be calm to us for the sea flowed and swelled	that the se maye cease from troublinge us For the se wrought and was troublous	to make the sea grow calm for us For the sea was growing rougher and rougher
12.	and the sea shall be calm to you for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you	& so shall it lett you be in reste for Jonas wotte / it is for my sake / that this greате tempest is come uppon you	and then it will grow calm for you For I can see it is my fault this violent storm has happened to you
13.	And the men rowed hard to return to land, but they were not able: because the sea tossed and swelled upon them.	Nevertheless the men assayed wyth rowenge to bringe the sheppe to lande: but it wold not be / because the se so wrought & was so troublous agenst them.	The sailors rowed hard in an effort to reach the shore, but in vain, since the sea grew still rougher for them.
14.	And they cried to the lord O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life and lay not upon us innocent blood	Wherefore they cried unto the lorde O lorde latt us not perish for this mans deeth nether laye innocent bloud unto oure charge	They then called on Yahweh O Yahweh, do not let us perish for taking this man's life do not hold us guilty of innocent blood
15.	And they took Jonas and the sea ceased from raging	Und then they toke Jonas & the se lefte ragynge	And taking hold of Jonah and the sea grew calm again
16.	and sacrificed victims to the Lord, and made vows	& sacrificed sacrifice unto the lorde: and vowed vowes	they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows