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The Influence of Luther's September Testament on Tyndale's New Testament and on the Irish New Testament of 1602

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Introduction

The publication of Martin Luther's German translation of the New Testament in Wittenberg, in September 1522, proved to be a major event in the life of the church in German-speaking lands and very soon impacted neighbouring territories and much farther afield. While its influence on subsequent translations of the New Testament in German and in other languages, including English, is well recognised, the nature and extent of this influence on particular versions, notably William Tyndale's English version, remains debated. I will consider mainly the impact of Luther's translation on Tyndale's translation of 1525-26, but briefly also Luther's possible influence on the Irish New Testament of 1602.

Luther's September Testament

Martin Luther's first draft of his New Testament translation – produced in about eleven weeks, it is said – emerged during the five months spent in protective custody in the Wartburg, in Thuringia, and was revised

and corrected back in Wittenberg with help from Melanchthon, who had first prompted him to undertake the translation, and from his friend Georg Spalatin. The September Testament, as it came to be called, appeared in September 1522 in time for the Leipzig book fair and was an immediate success.[1] Bearing a Wittenberg imprint, but not naming its translator, it sold out in less than three months and necessitated the printing of a slightly revised and corrected second edition: the so-called December Testament.

Luther's translation would become a classic of German literature with an influence well beyond the borders of the German-speaking world. Its popularity led quickly to reprints and new editions, including those with dialectical variations printed in Basel, Strasbourg and Augsburg or the slightly revised version that appeared in Zurich in 1524.[2] Meanwhile, Low German versions appeared in 1523 in Hamburg and Wittenberg,[3] with further editions and reprints continuing to appear – some 85 of them by 1533, according to Darlow and Moule.[4] Although generally well received, Luther's translation and especially its marginal notes also met with strong criticism in Catholic circles in Germany. Hieronymus Emser, secretary of the Duke of Saxony, humanist scholar and friend of Erasmus, penned lengthy criticisms of Luther's translation.[5] Nevertheless, its undoubted influence on his and on another Catholic version that appeared soon afterwards, in

1. *Das newe Testament Deitzsch* (Wittenberg, 1522). See Euan Cameron, 'The Luther Bible', *The New Cambridge History of the Bible from 1450 to 1750,* vol. 3, ed. Euan Cameron (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 217-38; here p. 220.
2. *Das neuw Testament yetzund recht grüntlich teutscht* (Basel, 1522); *Das New Testament Deutsch* (Strasbourg, 1522/23); *Das Neü Testament* (Augsburg, 1523); *Das Neü Testament* (Zurich, 1524).
3. The first printed by the Hamburg printer Simon Corver, the second by Melchior Lotther.
4. Thomas H. Darlow and Horace F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 2 vols (London, 1903-11), vol. 2/i, p. 487.
5. See Hieronymus Emser, *Auss was grund vnnd ursach Luthers dolmatsschung uber das nawe testament dem gemeinē man billich vorbotten worden sey* (Leipzig, 1523); 2nd edition, *Annotationes Hieronymi Emser uber Luthers naw Testament gebeszert und emendirt* (Dresden, 1524).

Germany,[6] was itself a tribute to the work. Despite Emser's criticisms, it was in reality a revision of Luther's New Testament that he published, a year later, with changes made in light of the Vulgate and with his own glosses.[7] Although Bluhm makes much of occasions when Emser follows Luther rather than the Vulgate, a scholar of Emser's calibre – fully aware of the deficiencies of Jerome's Latin text, after centuries of manuscript transmission, and of Lorenzo Valla's 1505 work devoted to it – would be expected to act accordingly.[8] Luther was none too pleased with what he saw as Emser's appropriation of his work, although Emser's New Testament was to have much success in Catholic circles[9] and probably influenced later editions of Luther's New Testament also.[10] Luther's translation directly influenced translations of the New Testament into Dutch (1523), Danish (1524), Swedish (1526), Icelandic (1540), Finnish (1548), Sorbion/Wend (1548), Slovenian (1555-77) and Croatian (1562-63).[11] As for English translations of the New Testament, its particular impact would come through the work of William Tyndale.

Tyndale: from England to Germany

Quite soon after its publication, news of Luther's *September Testament* probably reached England through social and trade channels and thus Little Sodbury in Gloucestershire where, according to Foxe, William

6. *Das nüw Testament kurtz vnd grüntlich in ein ordnung vnd text die vier Euangelisten*, ed. Jakob Beringer (Strassburg, 1526); see Kenneth A. Strand, *Catholic Bibles of the Reformation Era* (Naples, 1982).
7. *Das naw testament* (Dresden, 1527); see Heinz Bluhm, 'Emser's "emendation" of Luther's New Testament: Galatians 1', *Modern Language Notes* 81 (1966), pp. 370-97, here pp. 370-71.
8. Lorenzo Valla, *In Latinam Novi Testamenti interpretationem*, ed. Desiderius Erasmus (Paris, 1505). On Valla (c.1405-57), see esp. Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 32-69.
9. Editions appeared in 1528, 1529 (three), 1530, 1531, 1532; see John L. Flood, 'Luther and Tyndale as Bible Translators: Achievement and Legacy', in Geraldine Horan *et al.* (eds), *Landmarks in the History of the German Language* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 35-56, here p. 41, n. 18. Johann Dietenberger's revised edition first appeared in 1529.
10. See Bluhm, 'Emser's "emendation"', pp. 375-76, 386.
11. See Fearghus Ó Fearghail, 'The Irish New Testament of 1602 in its European Context', *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 31 (2008), pp. 77-107, here pp. 80-84.

Tyndale was acting as tutor to the children of Sir Thomas Walsh.[12] Tyndale, then in his early thirties, had studied in Oxford (*c*.1510-16; BA 1512; MA 1515) and been ordained a priest in 1515.[13] His final year in Oxford may have been the period in which he instructed students and fellows in the Scriptures, as Foxe reported,[14] before returning to his native county not only as a tutor but perhaps serving as a chantry priest and assisting other clergy in the parish,[15] as well as preaching in and around Bristol.[16] However, in the preface to his translation of the Pentateuch (1530) Tyndale mentions being 'so turmoiled in the country' that he could no longer live there, writing of unlearned clergy who knew little Latin, frequented the alehouse, cast doubt on the orthodoxy of his preaching and brought unspecified accusations against him to the chancellor of the diocese.[17] In 1523 Tyndale translated the *Enchiridion militis Christiani* of Erasmus, presenting it to his employers.[18] Biblical quotations abound in the *Enchiridion* and study of the Scriptures is strongly counselled therein, evidencing Tyndale's own deep interest in Scripture and in its translation. If

12. Stephen R. Cattley (ed.), John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, 5 vols (London, 1838), vol. 5, p. 115. Foxe's work was first published in London in 1563, with a considerably expanded 2nd edition in 1570.
13. See Andrew J. Brown, *William Tyndale on Priests and Preachers: With New Light on his Early Career* (London, 1996), pp. 12-19, 26-36; Robert Demaus, *William Tyndale. A Biography*, ed. Richard Lovett (London. 1904; earlier editions 1871, 1886), pp. 38-39.
14. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments,* vol. 5, p. 115; David Daniell, *William Tyndale. A Biography* (New Haven and London, 1994), p. 39. Demaus, *Tyndale*, p. 37. Evidence is lacking for Foxe's suggestion that he spent time in Cambridge.
15. See Brian Buxton, 'William Tyndale in Gloucestershire', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 131 (2013), pp. 189-98, here pp. 194-97; Richard Rex, 'New Light on Tyndale and Lollardy', *Reformation* 8 (2003), pp. 143-71, here 148-57; Demaus, *Tyndale*, p. 78; Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, vol. 5, p. 115.
16. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, vol. 5, p. 117; Demaus, *Tyndale*, p. 78.
17. See Gervase B. Duffield (ed.), *The Work of William Tyndale* (Appleford, 1964), p. 32.
18. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, vol. 5, p. 117. See Brian Cummings, 'William Tyndale and Erasmus on How to Read the Bible: A Newly Discovered Manuscript of the English *Enchiridion*', *Reformation* 23 (2018), pp.29-52.

Foxe's anecdote about Tyndale and the Bible-reading ploughboy is to be believed, he was already familiar with the New Testament of Erasmus.[19] Thomas More wrote of him that before he left England he was well known as a man of 'ryght good lyuynge, studyouse & well lerned in scrypyure'.[20]

Also in 1523, Tyndale moved to London hoping, as he later wrote, for a position in the household of Cuthbert Tunstall, recently appointed Bishop of London. A classical scholar, educated at Oxford, Cambridge and Padua, a doctor of canon and civil law and a student of Hebrew, Tunstall was greatly esteemed in humanist circles, particularly by More and by Erasmus whom he helped with his second edition of the Greek New Testament.[21] In his preface to the Pentateuch, Tyndale wrote that he intended to make the translation of the New Testament in Bishop Tunstall's household: his presentation to the bishop of a translation of an oration of Isocrates may support this. However, evidence is lacking that he told Tunstall – whose permission he would need – of any intention to translate the New Testament into English, which would surely have caused a stir at the time. The only English Bible then available, which Tyndale probably knew well, was that of Wyclif, still the object of the 1408 synod of Oxford ban. Tyndale probably hoped to have access to Tunstall's extensive library;[22] but had Tunstall

19. See Erasmus, *Novum Instrumentum* (Basel, 1516), 'Paraclesis' (p. 3), and his image of the ploughman at his plough singing from the Gospels or Pauline epistles; Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, vol. 5, p. 117.
20. Thomas More, *A dyaloge of syr Thomas More knyghte* (London, 1529), p. iiiv.
21. See Margaret Clark, 'Cuthbert Tunstall, Tyndale's "Still Saturn"', *Reformation* 3 (1998), pp. 137-48; Charles Sturge, *Cuthbert Tunstal, Churchman, Scholar, Statesman, Administrator* (London, 1938), pp. 54-55; Duffield, *Work of William Tyndale*, p. 33; James F. Mozley, *William Tyndale* (London, 1937), p. 39. Tunstall was Lord Privy Seal from 1523 to 1530.
22. See Wyman H. Herendeen and Kenneth R. Bartlett, 'The Library of Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham (British Library Add. 40,676)', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 85 (1991), pp. 235-96; Sturge, *Tunstal*, pp. 392-95, who also notes that in 1528, before going as bishop to Durham, Tunstall left his copy of the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible* to Cambridge University Library; see Charles E. Sayle, *Annals of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1916), p. 42.

agreed to the Bible project, one wonders what help or encouragement Tyndale would have received or, more to the point, what kind of translation would have emerged. Given the bishop's view of Luther, Tyndale could hardly have spoken of using Luther's New Testament as a model and guide.[23] As it happened, Tunstall had no vacancy but expected that Tyndale would 'not lack a service' in London: this suggests a judgment unclouded by any mention of Luther.

Meantime, Tyndale had begun preaching in St Dunstan's, Fleet St., lodging for six months or more with Henry Monmouth. By now, he must have been well aware of the popularity and importance of Luther's work and perhaps entertained thoughts of doing, for English readers, what Luther had done for German readers. To use Luther's translation, or even read it intelligently, he would have to learn German well and become familiar with it. The obvious place was Germany itself, and specifically Wittenberg as the centre of the new movement for reform where Luther taught and where his translation of the New Testament had been published.

In April or May 1524, Tyndale sailed for Germany. He perhaps stayed for a time in Hamburg before reaching Wittenberg where, according to Cochlaeus (John Dobneck), he learned German.[24] At the time of his translation he was 'wyth Luther in wyttenberge',[25] where help with Greek and especially German was needed if he were to make proper use, for his own work, of Luther's version, prologues and notes. If Tyndale had access to Luther himself, he nowhere mentions this: but assuming that the entry in the university register 'Guillelmus Daltici ex Anglia 27 Maij 1524' refers to Tyndale, as has been suggested,[26] Luther's assistance and advice were probably available. In the university Tyndale most likely met William Roye, who matriculated there on 10 June 1525.

23. On Tunstall and his view of Luther, see Sturge, *Tunstal*, pp. 121-23, 132-33.
24. In his *An Expediat Laicis, legere novi Testamenti libros lingua Vernacula* (Dresden, 1533), A6, Cochlaeus describes Tyndale and William Roye as two apostates from England who had been taught German at Wittenberg and who had translated Luther's testament into English.
25. More, *Dyaloge*, p. lxxx.
26. See Preserved Smith, 'Englishmen at Wittenberg in the Sixteenth Century', *English Historical Review* 36 (1921), pp. 422-33, here p. 422 and n. 3, who suggests the possible reading Daltin for Daltici with the former an anagram for Tindal; also Mozley, *Tyndale*, p. 53.

Tyndale probably translated the New Testament into English in Wittenberg. Whether or not a Wittenberg imprint was judged too evocative of Luther, its printing by Peter Quentel in Cologne on the Rhine provided easier access to England. Tyndale and Roye arrived there around August 1525 and the plan was to print 6,000 copies and have them distributed in England; the printer, however, cut the print-run to 3,000. When Cochlaeus – no friend of Luther – found out, he had the printing stopped. How much had been printed is a matter of debate, since only Mt 1:1-22:12 (the 'Cologne fragment') has come to light.[27] Tyndale and Roye rescued the printed pages, retreated to Worms by ship, found a printer in Peter Schoeffer the Younger and, by the end of February 1526, had between 3,000 and 6,000 copies printed.[28]

Soon Tyndale's translation was being read in England and meeting with no little opposition: in October 1526, Tunstall himself preached against it at St Paul's Cross[29] and may even have bought up copies on the continent.[30] On Tunstall's invitation, More also attacked the translation in his *Dyaloge* of 1529, referring to it as 'Luther's Testament' and mentioning its burning.[31] More saw Lutheran leanings in Tyndale's translation of a number of terms: ἐκκλησία as 'congregation' rather than 'church' (Luther has 'gemeinde');[32] πρεσβύτερος as 'senior' rather

27. Cochlaeus was told that the printing had advanced to signature K but only A to H has been found; see Mozley, *Tyndale*, p. 59; Arne Dembek, *William Tyndale (1491-1536): Reformatorische Theologie als kontextuelle Schriftauslegung* (Tübingen, 2010), p. 55.
28. See Demaus, *Tyndale*, p. 146; Mombert, *English Versions*, p. 106; Dembek, *Tyndale*, p. 56. Three copies of the 1526 New Testament survive, in Bristol, London and Stuttgart, only the last of them intact: see Eberhard Zwink, 'Entdeckung und Vorgeschichte des einzigen vollständigen Exemplars von William Tyndales *New Testament* 1526 in der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek Stuttgart', *Philobiblon* 45 (2001), pp. 287-311.
29. Sturge, *Tunstal*, pp. 132-33.
30. Sturge, *Tunstal*, p. 135.
31. See *Dyaloge*, ch. 8. Tyndale replied to More in *An Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* (Antwerp, 1531), to which More responded with *The Confutation of Tyndale's answere made by syr Thomas More knygt* (London, 1532-33).
32. Erasmus frequently used 'congregatio' in his version; see Mozley, *Tyndale*, pp. 90-92. The Geneva Bible reverted to 'church' and the Irish NT of 1602 has the equivalent ('eagluis').

than 'priest' (changed later to 'elder'); and ἀγάπη as 'love' rather than 'charity'.[33] More also objected to translations of χάρις with 'favour' rather than 'grace', μετάνοια with 'repentance' rather than 'penance' and μετανοέω with 'repent' rather than 'do penance'.[34]

'Luther's Testament'?

Ever since More's description of Tyndale's translation as 'Luther's Testament', discussion of the relationship between the two versions has been ensured and can briefly be reviewed. For Westcott (1868), Tyndale was indebted to Luther's prologues and notes but original and independent in his translation that 'rendered the Greek text directly' – with Eph 2:13-22 demonstrating Tyndale's 'substantial independence' – while still consulting the Vulgate, Erasmus' Latin version or Luther's German.[35] Similarly, for Demaus (1871) Tyndale dealt with Luther's glosses as 'an independent scholar, thinking and judging for himself', while his 'genuine originality and independence' became 'conspicuous' in the actual translation.[36] For Mombert (1883), Tyndale's translation is 'independent throughout, [and] made direct from the Greek' with his use of Luther's translation or the Vulgate the legitimate use of a scholar.[37] Mombert identifies areas where Tyndale was 'clearly indebted' to Luther, listing texts where Luther's influence is 'unmistakable': the most convincing are Matt 1:1, 2:18, John 19:17, Acts 28:16, Rom 1:14 and 1 Cor 1:25 and 2:14.[38] Cheney (1883) examines

33. While love can function both as noun and verb, Tyndale may have disliked 'charity' because of its associations with alms and good deeds. He has 'kindness feast' in Jude 1:12, while in Rom 14:15 he has 'walkest thou not charitabyle' in contrast to Luther's 'wandelt … nach der Liebe' ('walk … according to love').
34. See Mozley, *Tyndale*, pp. 90-97. Luther has 'bessert euch' in Matt 3:2 and Mark 1:15 and 'thue busse' and variants in Acts 8:22; 17:30; 26:20; Rev 2:5.
35. Brooke Foss Westcott, *A General View of the History of the English Bible*, 3rd edition (London, 1905), pp. 133-35; he provides examples (p. 138) from the Cologne fragment 'where Luther's judgment has evidently swayed Tindale' (Matt 2:18; 6:25; 11:25; 15:9, 13; 21:15).
36. Demaus, *Tyndale*, pp. 155-56.
37. Mombert, *English Versions*, p. 88.
38. Mombert, *English Versions*, pp. 89-90; he lists (pp. 91-92) instances where Tyndale follows the Greek (Matt 6:1, 11; Luke 2:14; 23:39; Eph