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**Early Reformers and Reformation Controversy in Bristol and
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Early Reformers and Reformation Controversy in Bristol and South Gloucestershire

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Bristol possesses a wealth of late medieval records relating to its churches and the part they played in community life. Churchwardens' accounts of the 15th century provide a clear indication of the vitality of the religious and social life in each parish, and several parishes have inventories of church goods, deeds of church property, bequests, lists of benefactors, chantry accounts and building contracts.¹ Together these provide a vivid picture of the opulent furnishings of the churches and of the lively round of ceremonies, processions, festivals and celebrations which marked the passage of each year. Although such documentary records are lacking for south Gloucestershire, the existence of the Cistercian monastery at Kingswood, near Wotton-under-Edge, together with the evidence of lavish expenditure on the architecture and decoration of churches such as Yate, Almondsbury, Hawkesbury, Painswick and Slimbridge and the expensive work on the structure and furnishings of nearby Cotswold churches such as Cirencester and Fairford, provides a clear indication of the dominant position of the Church and the strength of popular support. The strong impression left by any study of the late medieval documentary or architectural evidence is of enthusiastic congregations contributing lavishly to the maintenance and enrichment of their churches and a lively parish life.

Beneath this apparently flourishing church life with active, well-endowed parish churches and a seemingly all-powerful Church hierarchy, however, there existed a strong undercurrent of dissent and dissatisfaction, and there was strong support for radical reforms and for attacks on many central tenets of Church doctrine. Numerous attempts have been made to examine these conflicting tendencies, and it is the purpose of this address to explore again the wealth of local evidence concerning the fierce religious controversies of the early 16th century and, in particular, the influences affecting William Tyndale, who was by far the most important and influential champion of reform to have been born in the region.

Any visitor to early 16th-century Bristol would immediately have been aware of the dominant position of the Church in the town. The religious houses and parish churches were the principal landmarks on the Bristol skyline; the town was surrounded by monastic foundations, notably the priory of St. James, four houses of friars, and the wealthy house of Augustinian canons whose church was to become the cathedral for the diocese created in 1542. Eighteen parish churches clustered in and around the town and there were numerous hospitals, almshouses and chapels.²

Many of the parish churches had been rebuilt or enlarged during the previous century and the splendour of their architecture was evident in all parts of the town. The fine towers, elaborate and costly decoration, rich furnishings and vestments, and the profusion of guild and chantry chapels all bore witness to the wealth and piety of the merchant community and to its attachment

to the Church. Evidence of the liveliness of the Bristol churches and their relevance to contemporary society is provided by the social, educational, charitable and cultural activities in which they were involved. A good indication of the variety of parish life and the colourful appearance of the churches is provided by the churchwardens' accounts of St. Ewen. These give details of bequests of jewels, vestments, banners, images, chalices and books by parishioners and show the care which was lavished on the church building and its furnishings. An inventory of 1455 reveals the magnificence of the church interior, with a carved alabaster reredos behind the high altar, gilded figures of the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles, as well as of St. Ewen, the patron saint. There were many different service books and quantities of vestments, altar hangings and plate, including a great processional cross of gold and silver weighing 116 ounces. The chapel of St. John the Baptist within St. Ewen's church was maintained by the Fraternity of Tailors and was enriched with paintings, screens and opulent furnishings. Similar evidence survives for All Saints', St. John's, St. Mary Redcliffe, St. Nicholas's and St. James's, showing that these churches were similarly rich in furnishings and equally involved in the life of the community.³

Civic occasions were centred on the churches. The annual round of feasts, fasts and festivals included processions at Corpus Christi and Rogationtide, the elaborate ceremonies of the Easter Sepulchre and the liturgical dramas of Holy Week, bonfires marking the feast of St. John at Midsummer, the ancient ceremony of the boy bishop on the feast of St. Nicholas, candles at Candlemas, ashes on Ash Wednesday, palms on Palm Sunday and holly at Christmas. The pattern of duties established by custom for the mayor of Bristol and carefully recorded by the town clerk, Robert Ricart, in 1500 emphasises the essential link between the civic authorities and the parish churches. From the time of his oath-taking in September the mayor embarked on an ordered round of visits to the parish churches. For example, at Michaelmas the mayor and council assembled at the High Cross and went in procession to St. Michael's church. On the feast of All Saints they attended All Saints' church and from there walked to the mayor's house for refreshments and wine. The next day, the feast of All Souls, they walked to St. Mary Redcliffe to enquire into the affairs of the chantries established there by William Canynges. Many of those who had founded chantries had been mayors themselves, and they imposed upon successive mayors the duty of auditing the accounts of their foundations and appointing the chantry chaplains. Regular church attendance, worship, the hearing of sermons, together with inaugural ceremonies, public processions and the taking of solemn oaths by all civic officials, helped to confer authority as well as set limits to the pursuit of their own interests. In Ricart's words these were 'laudable customs . . . to the honour and comen wele of this worshipful towne and all th'inhabitants of the same'.⁴

Critics of the Church

Notwithstanding all the evidence for the wealth, splendour and popular support which the parish churches enjoyed, there was another aspect to the religious situation. Undoubtedly many people in late medieval Bristol and south Gloucestershire actively desired reform. Evidence from the bishops' registers shows that during the later 15th century and the early part of the 16th century several people from the area were tried for heresy, and it is clear that Lollard beliefs continued to find favour with a significant number. Although it was an important town and port, Bristol did not have its own diocese or cathedral and did not become a city until 1542.⁵ Most of Bristol and the whole of south Gloucestershire were at the extreme end of the large diocese of Worcester and were therefore remote from episcopal supervision. Lollard opinions and desire for Church reform spread easily among the clothworkers and tradesmen of the area, and Bristol's trading links with Coventry and the west Midlands and with Oxford and the Chilterns made it easy for

Lollard sympathisers to maintain links with those in other parts of the country.⁶ The prevalence of Lollard opinions among the cloth-producing communities of the Wiltshire–Gloucestershire border and the links between those communities and clothworkers in Bristol, Salisbury, Berkshire and the Chilterns are evident from details of heretics tried before the bishop's court of the large diocese of Salisbury. Thomas Bikenore, a Lollard preacher tried in Salisbury in 1443, had been in Bristol and was in touch with Lollards from the Chilterns. Richard Lillington of Castle Combe (Wilts.) was accused of preaching heresy in the taverns of Devizes and Marlborough in 1491; he confessed that

I have wished that all the Churches within all Cristendome wer in the myddst of helle, and all that holdeth them, and also all persons that belevyth upon them.

John Gough was tried in 1499 for preaching heresy in Faringdon (Oxon.) and was described as 'late of Bristol'.⁷

The bishops' registers for Bath and Wells diocese also contain several references to people from Bristol being tried for heresy, especially clothworkers from the parishes of St. Thomas, Temple and Bedminster. Other tradesmen mentioned among the heretics included dyers, weavers, smiths, carpenters, a carpet-maker, a wire-drawer and a bow-maker.⁸ A few years later, Sir Thomas More was to declare that heretical books were freely available in Bristol and that they were

throwen in the strete and left at mennes dores by nyghte, that where they durst not offer theyr poyson to sell, they would of their charitie poyson men for nought.⁹

Further evidence of the religious controversies and discord in Bristol during the 1520s is provided by the sermons of Roger Edgeworth who became prior of the Guild of Kalendars in All Saints' church in 1525. He makes numerous references to religious differences. For example,

Here among you in this cite som will heare masse, som will have none . . . Som will be shriven, som will not, but for feare or els for shame, som wyll pay tithes and offerings, som wil not . . . Some wil praie for the dead, som wil not. I heare of muche suche dissension among you.

In another sermon he preached that

I have knowen manye in this towne, that studienge divinitie hath kylled a merchaunt, and some of other occupations by theyr busie labours in the scriptures, hath shut uppe the shoppe windowes.¹⁰

Even at Kingswood abbey the last prior wrote a pamphlet in support of the royal supremacy over the Church, and the abbot imprisoned a friar who in a sermon had upheld the claims of the pope.¹¹

A feature of Bristol and south Gloucestershire which aided the critics of the Church in spreading their ideas for reform was the existence of open-air pulpits. In Bristol the prominent pulpit on College Green, outside the Augustinian abbey, was the site of some of William Tyndale's preaching and another open-air pulpit near St. Mary Redcliffe was used by Roger Edgeworth and many other preachers. One such pulpit still exists in the churchyard at Iron Acton, where it was used by the reforming preacher John Erley, who was eventually imprisoned in 1533 for heresy. Erley, like William Tyndale, was befriended and supported by Sir John Walsh of Little Sodbury and by the Poyntz family of Iron Acton. It was at Iron Acton that Erley 'preached the word of God yn the churchye yarde by the consent of the vicar' and, significantly, the mayor of

Bristol, Clement Bays, together with the sheriff and other prominent citizens walked out from Bristol to hear Erley's sermons.

In 1533 it was Clement Bays who invited Hugh Latimer, then rector of West Kington, near Castle Combe, and already well-known as a fervent critic of many aspects of Church doctrine, to deliver three Lenten sermons in Bristol.¹² The fact that many people in Bristol actively favoured wholesale reform in the Church was evident from the reception given to Latimer's sermons. In the homely style for which he was later to become famous, Latimer made a comprehensive attack on many aspects of contemporary Church teaching and worship. In 1535 Latimer was to become bishop of Worcester. Another reforming preacher in Bristol was reported as saying that trust in monastic life and in the ceremonies of the Church could avail nothing for salvation could come only through faith, 'nor could a ship laden with friars' girdles or a dung cart full of monks' cowls help justification'.

Faced by the powerful oratory of Latimer and his followers in favour of reform, several conservative preachers in Bristol sprang to the defence of the established order in the Church. The rival sermons stirred up such great dissension that Bristol became the one town in England where the early stages of the Reformation were accompanied by a 'clash of pulpits'. Notable among the conservative preachers were John Hilsey, prior of the Dominican friars in Bristol, and William Hubberdyne, a prominent supporter of the older order in the Church and almost as popular a preacher as Latimer. Another conservative preacher was John Keene, vicar of Christ Church, who accused members of his congregation of being 'heretics and new-fangled fellows' and desired to see Latimer burnt for heresy. Speaking of the supporters of reform he said

They say they have brought in the light into the world; no, no, they have brought in damnable darkness and endless damnation. Choose ye to go hell as ye will, for I will not be your lodesman.

Later Keene was in trouble for preaching in Bristol in support of the northern rebels during the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. The religious controversy engendered 'infamy, strife and debate' such that Thomas Cromwell and the central government authorities, ever fearful of public disorder, appointed a commission of prominent townspeople headed by the abbot of St. Augustine's abbey to enquire into the matter. The commission was critical of both sides in the controversy and attacked Latimer for claiming that there were no fires in hell, that souls in purgatory had no need of prayers, that saints should not be honoured, and that the Blessed Virgin was not without sin. In the event, the deliberations of the commission were overtaken by the developments of 1534, especially by the Act of Parliament establishing royal supremacy over the Church in England, but it was against this background of fierce controversy that the first steps leading to the Reformation were taken in Bristol.¹³

During the next few years all the religious houses were suppressed and their wealth was confiscated by the Crown. The numerous chantries were dissolved and their property likewise appropriated. Soon afterwards the parish churches were stripped of their statues, paintings and treasures and the traditional Latin services were replaced by services in English. All this was accomplished without any outspoken protest, so thoroughly had the critics triumphed.

William Tyndale at Little Sodbury 1522-3

In his widely-read and influential book *Acts and Monuments*, commonly known as the 'Book of Martyrs' and first published in 1563, John Foxe devoted a considerable section to the life and achievements of William Tyndale. Foxe described in some detail Tyndale's period with the

family of Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury in the years 1522 and 1523, the hostility he encountered from the local clergy and Church authorities, and his preaching in the surrounding district 'and especially about the town of Bristol, and also in the said town in the common place called St. Austin's Green'.¹⁴ The impact of Tyndale's teaching and writing has been so profound that it is worth considering the people he is likely to have met at Little Sodbury and the influences he would have encountered during his time there.¹⁵

The basic details of Tyndale's life are well known. He was born *c.* 1491, the younger son of an affluent family of yeomen farmers with several branches settled in the adjacent parishes of Slimbridge, Stinchcombe and North Nibley. That part of the Vale of Berkeley was dependent upon agriculture and also on the production of woollen cloth. It was also a district with a tradition of religious dissent, reforming opinions and desire for changes in the Church. Perhaps it was also significant for Tyndale's robust English style that the local dialect of the area was enriched with numerous colourful phrases and proverbs.¹⁶ The patronage of Slimbridge was a possession of Magdalen college, Oxford, and it was no doubt that connection which enabled Tyndale to become a student at the college, in Magdalen Hall which was later to become independent as Hertford college. Tyndale frequently used the alternative surname of Hutchins or Hychyns, and a recently-published work has plausibly suggested that he was the William Hychyns who was ordained as subdeacon in the diocese of Hereford in June 1514 and as priest in London in 1515.¹⁷ In 1516 Tyndale left Oxford for Cambridge, possibly in order to improve his knowledge of Greek. In Cambridge he would have encountered a fierce debate about the state of the Church and sharp criticism of many of its beliefs and practices. Tyndale was already in favour of reform, and his sympathy with the reformers is likely to have been greatly strengthened at Cambridge. In 1522 Tyndale decided upon a bold change in the direction of his career and abandoned his scholarly surroundings at Cambridge to become tutor to the young children of Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury.¹⁸

It is likely that Tyndale's reasons for leaving all the facilities of a university to live in the remote seclusion of Little Sodbury were more than a wish to return to his relatives or his boyhood haunts and more than a desire for leisure to pursue his linguistic studies and translations. He came to a district with an unusual concentration of gentry families which actively supported reform in the Church and shared his views of the Church's shortcomings. Foremost among Tyndale's supporters was Sir John Walsh, lord of the manor of Little Sodbury and Elburton. A man of considerable wealth, Walsh was influential at Court and he had been the King's Champion at the coronation of Henry VIII. He was also steward of the large Berkeley estates in Gloucestershire and of the lands of Tewkesbury abbey, and he was twice sheriff of Gloucestershire. It was his support for reform in the Church that led him to maintain various preachers of whom Tyndale was the most notable.¹⁹ Just over four miles from Little Sodbury was the village of Iron Acton and the fine manor house of Sir Anthony Poyntz who was another wealthy supporter of Church reform. He was also influential at Court. He had been present at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520 and he was to entertain Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn for two nights at Acton Court in 1535. The king and queen were also to spend a night at Little Sodbury. Sir John Walsh's wife Anne was the daughter of Sir Robert Poyntz, the sister of Sir Anthony Poyntz and the aunt of Sir Nicholas Poyntz. The Poyntz family had numerous business and marriage links in the locality as well as in Bristol, where Sir Robert had rebuilt the beautiful Poyntz chapel in the Gaunt's hospital and founded a chantry there.²⁰ Sir Nicholas was steward of the lands of Kingswood abbey, and the Poyntz family was to acquire many of the abbey's buildings and estates at its dissolution in 1539. Both Sir Anthony and his son Sir Nicholas supported reforming preachers, some of whom expounded their views from the open-air pulpit at Iron Acton.²¹

At Sir John Walsh's hospitable table Tyndale is likely to have met members of the Kingston family of Painswick, notably Sir William Kingston, a ruthless opportunist and royal servant, who had risen in the king's favour through his skill at tournaments and jousting and his prowess as a military commander. In 1522 he was appointed constable of St. Briavels castle to oversee royal affairs and peace-keeping in the Forest of Dean; in 1530 he became constable of the Tower of London where he arranged the execution of Anne Boleyn in 1536. In 1537 he was granted the buildings and lands of Flaxley abbey.²² Tyndale is likely also to have met members of the Baynham family who were enthusiastic supporters of reform in the Church. The Baynham family possessed extensive estates in the Forest of Dean, including land in Mitcheldean, English Bicknor, Ruardean and Westbury-on-Severn. They were related by marriage to the Tracys of Toddington, and James Baynham married the widow of Simon Fish, the well-known pamphleteer and critic of the Church, whose violently anti-clerical *Supplication for Beggars* was published in 1528. James Baynham was himself a prominent writer of Protestant sympathies and was later described by John Foxe as 'an earnest reader of scriptures' and 'a great maintainer of the godly'. He was burnt as a heretic at Smithfield in 1531 for refusal to accept belief in purgatory and for possessing forbidden books, including those by Tyndale.²³

Perhaps the most notable of all the critics of the Church among the local gentry was William Tracy of Toddington, a prominent landowner who had been sheriff of Gloucestershire and who died in 1530. His will proclaiming his belief in salvation through faith alone brought him great posthumous notoriety. The first paragraph began

First, and before all other thing, I commit me unto God, and to his mercy, trusting without any doubt or mistrust, that by his grace and the merits of Jesus Christ, and by virtue of his passion, and of his resurrection, I have and shall have remission of my sins and resurrection of my body and soul . . .

Tracy pointedly left no bequests to the Church and asserted that he wished for no other mediator but Christ and for no one to pray for him after his death, his faith alone being sufficient to ensure salvation. Immediately after his death, and as soon as his will became public, Tracy was tried posthumously by the Church and condemned as a heretic; two years later his body was exhumed from his grave at Toddington and his remains burnt at the stake.²⁴ Although Tracy's residence and principal estates were at Toddington, in north Gloucestershire, he was a friend of Sir John Walsh, and it has often escaped notice that he was also lord of the manor of Doynton, which is only six miles from Little Sodbury. There can be little doubt that Tyndale met William Tracy, probably at Little Sodbury, for in 1535 Tyndale wrote a commentary on, and defence of, Tracy's will and declared that Tracy was 'a learned man, and better seen in the works of St. Austin twenty years before he died, than ever I knew doctor in England'.²⁵ William Tracy's son Richard, who was also related to the Baynham family, became a noted writer of Protestant pamphlets and he assisted Bishop Hugh Latimer in the destruction of the shrine of the Holy Blood at Hailes in 1538.²⁶

Other prosperous families in south Gloucestershire who were also supporters of reform in the Church included Tyndale's own family, especially his brother Edward, who in 1522 was living in Hurst in the parish of Slimbridge. His will dated 1546 is couched in Protestant terms and his bequests included several theological books. The Trotman family, who were clothiers at Dursley, and several other clothiers and prosperous Bristol merchants were also critical of the Church, its doctrines and practices. Richard Trotman possessed books by Luther, Bucer and Zwingli which had been given to him by John Dydon, the vicar of Coaley. This remarkable concentration of landowners, stewards, clothiers and merchants, all of whom held radical views,

made south Gloucestershire an eminently suitable place in which Tyndale might hope to find support, sanctuary and seclusion for his work.²⁷

Tyndale remained at Little Sodbury for more than a year. His light duties enabled him to preach at various places in the district including Bristol and gave him leisure to translate the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (Manual of a Christian Soldier) of Erasmus into English. This is a practical handbook of Christian conduct, suggesting defences which the Christian may use to prepare for the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Two features of the religious life of the district may well have affected Tyndale during his time at Little Sodbury and helped to strengthen his resolve to translate the Scriptures into English, whatever the personal cost.

One influence was the profusion of chantry foundations with which the district was provided and the multitude of priests employed to serve them. The Bristol churches were filled with chantries, many of them extremely wealthy foundations with lavish endowments. Churches such as Almondsbury, Thornbury and Chipping Sodbury also had numerous chantries founded both by individuals and by fraternities, while adjacent to Little Sodbury was a sumptuous chantry foundation at Tormarton. That had been founded in 1346 by Sir John de la Rivière and originally consisted of a warden, four chaplains, a deacon, a subdeacon and three choristers; it was also provided with a piece of wood from the Cross and a phial containing the milk of the Blessed Virgin. Although the original endowment had proved insufficient to support all of the grandiose schemes proposed by the founder, it remained far too elaborate for the small community in which it was established.²⁸ Like Erasmus, who strongly condemned scripturally-dubious practices such as the worship of saints, the veneration of images and devotion to relics, Tyndale was evidently distressed to see so many priests employed in this fashion, and he was especially concerned at their ignorance of the Bible. In the preface to his translation of the first part of the Old Testament in 1530 he recalled that

when I was so turmoiled in the country where I was that I could no longer there dwell . . . I this wise thought in myself, this I suffer because the priests of the country be unlearned, as God it knoweth there are a ful ignorant sort which have seen no more Latin than that they read in the portesses and missals which yet many of them can scarcely read . . .²⁹

The other feature of the district's religious life that may have influenced Tyndale during his sojourn at Little Sodbury was the procession of pilgrims going to religious shrines and paying devotion to spurious relics. In particular he must have seen the flocks of west-country pilgrims travelling along the Fosse Way to worship before the shrine of the Holy Blood at Hailes, the most popular resort of pilgrims in Gloucestershire. A few years later it was the sight of those pious pilgrims that strengthened the resolve of Hugh Latimer, then rector of West Kington, to preach so vigorously against all the unscriptural features of contemporary religious practice. In a well-known passage Latimer recounted his disgust at the way in which the Church exploited the simple faith of the laity.

I dwell within half a mile of the Fosse Way, and you would wonder to see how they come by flocks out of the west country to many images, but chiefly to the Blood of Hailes. And they believe verily that it was in Christ's body, shed upon the mount of Calvary for our salvation.³⁰

No doubt Tyndale's views were similarly affected by the same spectacle. Tyndale's preaching and discussions with local clergymen brought him into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities, and it was those controversies at Little Sodbury which further confirmed his resolve to translate the Scriptures into English. It was during an argument with an ignorant local cleric at Little Sodbury that Tyndale made a dramatic declaration.

And soon after, Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a learned man, and communing and disputing with him drove him to that issue that the learned man said, we were better be without God's law than the pope's: Master Tyndale hearing that, answered him, I defy the Pope and all his laws, and said if God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scriptures than thou dost.³¹

Later, in the preface to his translation of the first five books of the Old Testament in 1530, Tyndale wrote

which thing only moved me to translate the New Testament, because I perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to stablish the lay people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order and meaning of the text . . .

The evidence for Tyndale's harassment by the Church authorities in Gloucestershire rests largely on the account given by John Foxe. The latter obtained his information from Richard Webb of Chipping Sodbury, formerly a servant to Hugh Latimer. Living in Chipping Sodbury close to Little Sodbury, Webb's father had no doubt heard Tyndale preach and knew the details of his hostile reception by the local clergy.³² In the prologue to his translation of the Pentateuch Tyndale himself records how he was summoned before the chancellor of the diocese, John Bell, and was harshly accused of preaching heresy.

And indeed, when I came before the chancellor, he threatened me grievously, and reviled me, and rated me as though I had been a dog . . .³³

That Tyndale escaped with only a stern warning was no doubt due to the influence of his lay friends, especially his hosts, the Walshes, and their Poyntz relatives.

The rest of Tyndale's life can be summarised briefly. Harassed by the Church authorities, he left Little Sodbury in July 1523 hoping to receive support from the bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, for his project to translate the Bible into English. Following Tunstall's refusal to help him, he departed for the Continent in the spring of 1524 and spent the rest of his life in various towns of Germany and the Low Countries in constant danger of arrest. His translation of the New Testament was printed at Cologne and Worms in 1526. Smuggled into England, the pocket-sized volumes were assiduously confiscated and burnt by the Church, so that only one copy now survives in England. It belonged to the Baptist College in Bristol and in 1994 was purchased by the British Library for £1 million. It has been described as 'the greatest treasure of all English printed Bibles'.

Tyndale's translation of the first five books of the Old Testament was printed at Hamburg and Antwerp in 1530. His increasing fame and the eager reception of his translations in England meant that he was in constant danger of capture, and in May 1535 he was betrayed and arrested at Antwerp. Following sixteen months of imprisonment at Vilvorde castle near Brussels he was executed and burnt in October 1536. According to John Foxe, his last words were 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes'. His prayer was quickly answered, for in 1538 royal injunctions ordered that a complete Bible 'of the largest volume' should be publicly set up in every parish church. This Bible, known as Matthew's Bible, was almost entirely based on Tyndale's work. Tyndale's translations were so vivid that they were echoed and alluded to by Cranmer in the *Book of Common Prayer* and were adopted with only a few changes by the scholars brought together by James I to produce the Authorized Version of the Bible in 1611. Thus Tyndale's Gloucestershire idioms and direct speech underlie the two most influential books in the English

language and, heard regularly each Sunday in church, they have contributed many of the best-known texts and sayings which have shaped the national character.

Tyndale prefaced his translation of the New Testament with the following words:

Give diligence, reader, I exhort thee that thou come with a pure mind, and as the scripture saith, with a single eye, unto the words of health and of eternal life; by the which, if we repent and believe them, we are born anew, created afresh, and enjoy the fruits of the blood of Christ . . . The grace that cometh of Christ be with them the love him. Pray for us.

Notes

1. The records are listed in *Guide to the Parish Records of the City of Bristol and the County of Glos.* ed. I. Gray & E. Ralph (BGAS, 1963), 1–39.
2. The religious houses and parish churches of medieval Bristol are listed and described in J.F. Nicholls & J. Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present 2* (1881) and also in *V.C.H. Glos. 2* (1907), 74–119.
3. *The Church Book of St. Ewen's, Bristol, 1454–1584*, ed. B.R. Masters & E. Ralph (BGAS, 1967); *The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints, Bristol*, ed. C. Burgess (Bristol Rec. Soc. 46, 1995). The records of St. Nicholas's parish were destroyed by bombing during the Second World War, but details are given in E.G.C.F. Atchley, 'The Medieval Parish Records of the Church of St. Nicholas, Bristol', *Trans. St. Paul's Ecclesiological Soc.* 6 (1906), 35–67. For accounts from St. John's parish, Bristol Record Office, P/St JB/Chw 1A.
4. *The maire of Bristowe is kalendar*, by Robert Ricart, ed. L.T. Smith (Camden Soc. new series 5, 1872). See also J.H. Bettey, *Church and Community in Bristol during the Sixteenth Cent.* (Bristol Rec. Soc. 1983).
5. The diocese of Gloucester was created in 1541.
6. J.A.F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414–1520* (1965); A.D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late-Medieval England; The Diocese of Salisbury 1250–1550* (1995); A. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (1988), 447, 457–8. For references to heretics in the Forest of Dean and especially in Lydney, Aylburton and Woolaston, *Registrum Johannis Stanbury, Episcopi Herefordensis, 1453–74*, ed. A.T. Bannister (Cant. & York Soc. 1919), 118–21; *Registrum Ricardi Mayew, Episcopi Herefordensis, 1504–16*, ed. A.T. Bannister (Cant. & York Soc. 1921), 65–7, 109–10.
7. *The Register of Thomas Langton, Bishop of Salisbury, 1485–93*, ed. D.P. Wright (Cant. & York Soc. 1985), 419–20, 459–60, 484–504.
8. *Registers of Oliver King, 1496–1503, and Hadrian de Castello, 1503–18*, ed. Sir H.C. Maxwell-Lyte (Somerset Rec. Soc. 54, 1939), 34, 38–41, 42–3, 56–7; K.G. Powell, 'The Beginnings of Protestantism in Glos.' *TBGAS* 90, 141–57.
9. Thomas More, *English Works* (1557), 727–8.
10. Janet Wilson (ed.), *Sermons Very Fruitful, Godly and Learned by Roger Edgeworth; Preaching in the Reformation c. 1535–53* (1993).
11. *V.C.H. Glos. 2*, 101.
12. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII* 6, no. 1192; Powell, 'Beginnings of Protestantism in Glos.' 143; M.C. Skeeters, *Community and Clergy, Bristol and the Reformation c. 1530–70* (1993), 34–56.
13. For a succinct account of these events, G.R. Elton, *Policy and Police* (Cambridge, 1972), 112–20. See also *Letters and Papers* 6, nos. 246–7, 572; 14(1), nos. 184, 1095; Gloucester Public Library, Hockaday Abstracts 425.
14. John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1838), v. 117. 'St. Austin's Green' in front of the Augustinian abbey is now called College Green.
15. For a magisterial account of Tyndale's life and work, D. Daniell, *William Tyndale* (1994). For the Tyndale family, J.H. Cooke, 'The Tyndales in Glos.' *TBGAS* 2, 29–46.
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