Tyndale's *The Practyse of Prelates*: Reformation Doctrine and the Royal Supremacy

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What makes Tyndale's *The Practyse of Prelates* unique in the literature of the Henrician divorce is nothing less than its entire polemical orientation.¹ At a time when the intellects of Europe were rapidly gathering into two distinct camps on the divorce issue, Tyndale sought common cause with no one. Not only did he – as was to be expected – continue to fulminate against the party of Rome, but he decisively withheld his allegiance from the Henrician group, despite the general support Henry was finding amongst English Lutherans.² Throughout the King's great matter, upon which all Englishmen sooner or later had to take a stand, Tyndale remained unswayed by considerations of political expediency and English nationalism. Instead, he stood courageously alone in his position on the divorce, opposing the Henricians in their quarrel with the Pope, and opposing the Pope in everything.

In doing so, he promoted a radically simplified approach to the exegetical questions raised by the divorce issue, an approach that was entirely in keeping with his own emphasis upon the literal sense of scripture, and that proved highly unwelcome to Catholics and Henricians alike. For, despite their manifest hostility, these two parties agreed upon one thing: the nature of the problem presented by the divorce. To be sure, Catholics and Henricians had their separate and incompatible ways of resolving that problem, yet they were of a piece in regarding Henry's difficulties as having arisen from the apparent inconsistencies of scripture itself.³ It was upon this common ground that Tyndale attacked both parties to the divorce case, and it is for this reason that Tyndale's book is unlike any of the other tracts occasioned by the divorce.

In brief, Henry contended that his marriage to Catherine of Aragon was in fact no marriage, inasmuch as she had been previously betrothed to his brother Arthur (Henry claimed that this previous betrothal had been consummated, while Catherine insisted vehemently that it had not). This prior union, Henry argued, had generated a marital impediment within

the first degree of collateral affinity, an impediment from which the Pope was not empowered to dispense (or, as Henry was at first disposed to claim, from which the Pope had simply failed to dispense properly in Henry's particular case). It was ultimately upon the source of the affinal impediment in scripture that the arguments of both parties came to rest, for scripture adopts two seemingly contradictory positions on the subject. The concept of affinity itself as a marital impediment derives most specifically from Leviticus 20:21, which expressly forbids sexual union between in-laws: "Yf a mā take his brothers wife, it is an unclene thinge, he hath uncovered his brothers secrettes, they shalbe childlesse therfore."⁴ From this command (and its analogue at Genesis 2:23) arose the canonical view of affinity – relation by sexual union – as a diriment impediment to matrimony equal in force to that generated by consanguinity (relation by birth).⁵ Yet Deuteronomy 25:5, providing for the custom of levirate marriage (from the Hebrew *levir*, brother-in-law), seems to fly in the face of the Levitical prohibition: "When brethern dwell together and one of them dye ād have no childe, the wyfe of the deed shall not be geven out unto a straunger: but hir brotherlawe shall goo in unto her and take her to wife and marie her. And the eldest sonne which she beareth, shall stonde up in the name of his brother which is deed, that his name be not put out in Israel." Very simply put, it was Henry's contention that of these opposing texts, Deuteronomy was of no force except as a sign to be interpreted in the New Testament; as *A Glasse of the Truthe* (1530) put it, the levirate

should nat be but in the misticall sense observed by us christen men: . . . Everye precher of the worde of god is bounde so to laboure in the gospell, that he styre up sede to his brother departed, that is to Christ . . . : and the sede so suscytate must have the name of him deyped, that is of Christ.⁶

Catherine's adherents responded that it was papal prerogative to dispense with the Levitical impediment, especially in cases – like Henry's – that specifically met the provisions of the levirate.

The resultant controversy was indeed complex, and developed along lines that I suspect Tyndale found theologically abhorrent. Catholic commentary upon the divorce emphasizes the levirate character of Henry's marriage to Catherine and seeks to promote that marriage to the status of a divine necessity.⁶ Henry's partisans, on the other hand, respond by calling into question the papal interpretation of scripture, charging the Pope with having made a general rule out of what was, in effect, an exception to the scriptural prohibition of incest.⁸ Against the vast literature evoked by this controversy, Tyndale opposed the perspicuous word of God as interpreted by the individual conscience; and in doing so, he effectively cut the ground out from under both the Catholic and Henrician positions.

Why should he have taken such a course? It seems to me that if one is to understand the contribution Tyndale made to the religious and political thinking of his time, one must first answer this question fully and directly. Yet satisfactory answers have not been forthcoming. Tyndale, we are told, in exile from England and out of contact with Henry's supporters, believed the move for divorce to have originated entirely with Wolsey, and to have been imposed upon the King by clerical wiles.⁹ Hence the violent denunciation of Wolsey in Tyndale's book, which thus becomes a pious offering made to the abused king by a dutiful subject. Yet while it is true that much of the *Practyse* is a diatribe against Wolsey, and that Tyndale finds it expedient to claim Wolsey as the originator of the entire divorce scheme,¹⁰ we are hardly justified in concluding from this that Tyndale believed Henry himself to oppose the divorce. Tyndale was never one to have ingenuous faith in the goodness of princes; in 1528 he had already written that

With kynges for the most parte we have none accoyntaunce nether promise. They be also most comenly mercylesse. Moare over yf they promyse/ they are yet men as uncōstante as are other people ād as untrue.¹¹

Are we to believe that the man who wrote these words could, two years later, wholeheartedly assert Henry to be a pure and virtuous prince in the grips of evil counsellors? Far likelier is the explanation that Tyndale hit at Wolsey because he was an easier mark than Henry, and because an attack on prelacy was more congenial to Tyndale's politics than was open sedition.¹²

In fact, Tyndale's brave stand on the divorce issue would seem to have arisen from several motives. Perhaps he did still retain a certain cautious hope that Henry could be dissuaded from his purpose. Certainly he possessed a staggering sense of intellectual integrity – as is only fitting of More's greatest adversary – and thus could not consent to a divorce case built upon tendentious reasoning, physical coercion, and falsified references.¹³ And even beyond these considerations, I suspect he undercut the arguments of both Church and King because he found both to be based upon an objectionable premise: that the word of God should be subject to the final arbitrament of a single man. In the hands of the prelates, this assumption had already borne the fruit of Catholic tyranny; and by 1530, Henry had already given ample indication that he was no more accommodating a theologian than the Pope himself. For Tyndale, Church and King were Charybdis and Scylla, and he steered his way between the two in a manner already suggested by his own early writings.

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My argument, then, is that the *Practyse* stands to Tyndale's early works as does praxis to theory, that the invective Henry would find so offensive in it

was already present *in potentia* within the pages of *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* and *The Obediēce of a Christen Man*. Yet here the major obstacle to interpretation has been placed by Henry himself, who, upon reading the *Obediēce*, reportedly declared that "This is a book for me and all kings to read."¹⁴ Indeed, it has long been popular to credit Tyndale with laying the groundwork for the Royal Supremacy;¹⁵ even Stephen Greenblatt's recent and masterly study of the *Obediēce* asserts that "Where in his later career More exalts the existing institution of the Catholic Church and identifies heresy as the alien force that must be destroyed, Tyndale, for his part, exalts the monarchy as the essential, saving secular institution and defines the Catholic Church as the demonic other."¹⁶ Yet that essential, saving secular institution receives short shrift, as we shall see, in the *Practyse*; it was not necessary that Tyndale encourage Henry's doctrines merely because his earlier work had suggested them. The *Obediēce* itself, like the *Practyse*, is not a treatise in favour of the Royal Supremacy; at points it runs entirely contrary to later Henrician doctrine. But the distinctions put forth in Tyndale's political arguments are delicate, of precisely the sort that evaporate most readily in the heat of controversy, and thus it would have taken little wrenching for Henry to turn the *Obediēce* into a treatise on caesaropapism.

Indeed, Henry and Tyndale did agree on one point: kings held their thrones, for better or worse, by the grace and authority of God. Tyndale was quick in rendering unto Caesar what was Caesar's:

All bodyly service must be done to man in gods stede. We must give obedience/ honoure/ tolle/ tribute/ custome/ and rente unto whom they belong. (*Obediēce*, sig. T7^v)

Here is the common foundation for all positive law, and Tyndale stands on common ground not only with Henry VIII and James I, but also with Hooker and Anglican doctrine in general in arguing for the king's presence as an extension of God's own.¹⁷ And individual duty is thus essentially clear-cut for Tyndale:

Let every soule submit hī sylfe unto the auctorite of the higher powers. There is no power but of God. The powers y^t be are ordeyned off God. Whosoever therfore resisteth y^e power resisteth y^e ordinaūce of God. They y^t resist/ shall recea [sic] to thē silfe dānaciō. (*Obediēce*, sig. D5^r)

In Tyndale's system, as in Henry's, secular authority derives *de facto* from God's proper design and created order, and of secular authorities the king occupies the supreme position, serving as a virtual placeholder for God himself:

God therefore hath gevē lawes unto all naciōs & in all lōdes hath put kiges
[sic]/ governors ād rulers in his awne stede/ to rule the worlde thorow thē.
(*Obediēce*, sig. D6^r)

Yet the *Obediēce* does not remain faithful to Henry's position. Instead, it insists upon an explicit and strict separation of church and state, precisely the kind of separation against which Henry was set to rebel. Even the passages in which Tyndale argues most cogently for submission to royal authority are pervaded with the importance of keeping church and secular government apart:

Peter/ Paul and . . . all the other Apostles . . . both obeyed all worldly auctorite & power usurpinge none to thēselves/ and taught all other to feare the kinges and rulers and to obeie them in all things not contrary to the commaundement of God/ and not to resiste them/ though they toke away lyfe and goodes wrongfully. (*Obediēce*, sig. L5^v)

In no case may we resist temporal authority, we are told, and in all things we must obey it, except – and it is an enormous “except” – when the claims of temporal authority conflict with those of scripture. Underlying the entire train of logic here is the assumption of church and state as separate regiments, distinct entities with individual – and usually discrete – spheres of influence.

Nor is the king himself God's vicar, Tyndale continues, except in those limited instances in which he assumes the administrative responsibilities of the kingship:

The most despised person in his realm is the kynges brother and fellow mēbre with him and equall with him in the kyndome of God and of Christe. . . . Though that the kyng in the temporall regimente be in the rowme of God and representeth God himselfe . . . : yet let him putt of that and become a brother. . . . Whē a cause y^t requireth execuciō is brought before him thē only lett him take the parson of God on him. (*Obediēce*, sigs. G3^v-G4^r)

Thus the Henrician equation is modified almost at once. The king's body is viewed as distinct from the king's office, and only the latter is sanctified by divine law; Tyndale's position could not have been less flattering to Henry's vanity or less acceptable to his dynastic ambitions.

Clearly the Reformer never encouraged utter and indiscriminate submission to royal prerogative; rather he counselled civil obedience only in temporal matters, those in which royal authority was indisputable. In the marginal cases that involved obedience to both temporal and spiritual authority, submission both to king and to scripture, the latter was always to take precedence. And when king and scripture demanded incompatible

obedience, it was always scripture that would have greater claim on an individual's allegiance:

I shewed you of the auctorite of princes/ how they are in Gods stede and how they may not be resisted do they never so evell/ they must be resarved unto the wrath of God. Never the later yf they commaunde to doo evell we must then disobey and saye we are other wise commaundet of God: but not to ryse agenste them. (*Obediēce*, sig. T8^r)

Here is the very principle of passive disobedience that More would invoke by refusing to take the Oath of Succession, and that Henry would find so infuriating. Yet for Tyndale, passive disobedience was a more pressing and strenuous duty than it would ever be for More; it required not merely that the individual refuse to do evil himself, but also that he openly and immediately denounce the evil-doing of others. More, seeking to slip silently through the net of Henrician tyranny, only declaring his opinion of the divorce when forced to do so and when that opinion was no longer of practical value for the cause he supported, was in Tyndale's eyes a traitor to Christian duty; and it is typical that More himself, so terribly courageous compared to most of his contemporaries, should be found wanting in the balance by Tyndale.

For Tyndale the way to active opposition is blocked, but it is blocked by the militant pacifism of scripture, and not by the inherent sacrality of the king's person. And here again we return to what was for Tyndale the ultimate arbiter of ethics: the word of God as revealed in scripture. Over and above all ordained authorities stood God's word, demanding ultimate obedience. Yet by what authority might we interpret God's word? By the individual conscience, Tyndale responds, illuminated with the wisdom of the Holy Ghost:¹⁸

[The scriptures] came not by the will of man so maye they not be drawn or expound after the will of man: but as they came by the holy goost/ so must they be expounde and understonde by the holy goost. . . . The scriptures springe out of God and flow unto Christe/ and were geven to leade * us to Christ. (*Obediēce*, sigs. S4^{r-v})

For, as Tyndale continues, it is only in Christ that the conscience may find peace: "Thou shalt never have reste in thy soule nether shall the worme of conscience ever cease to gnaw thyne herte tyll thou come at Christ" (*Obediēce*, sig. T6^r). What conscience requires, then, is that one preach the gospel, even if the word of God stands in direct opposition to the decrees of the magistrate: "Yf Christe had not rebuked the pharases because they taught the people beleve in their tradicions and holynes . . . he mighte have be uncrucified unto this day" (*Obediēce*, sig. L7^v). Certainly this is a far cry from the submission of body and soul to temporal authority that Tyndale is sometimes credited with having taught.¹⁹

Doubtless the point here, as Tyndale repeated again and again, is that in opposing the Pope the Reformers saw themselves attacking a temporal institution with a false claim to spiritual authority. Indeed, *any* institution – whether it be ecclesiastical or royal – that seeks to combine temporal and spiritual jurisdictions is fallacious for Tyndale, and to be denounced in a manner carefully dictated by scripture. Thus we find that Tyndale's political philosophy, superficially so congenial to the Henricians, diverges from their views at four important points. First, it denies the sanctity of the royal person as distinct from the royal office. Second, it forbids conflation of spiritual and temporal jurisdictions. Third, it authorizes passive resistance to royal decrees that enlightened scriptural interpretation has concluded are sinful. And finally, it elevates such resistance to the status of a Christian duty.²⁰ It is in discharge of just this duty that Tyndale explains he has written the *Practyse of Prelates*:

I considered the falsehed of our spiritualtye how that it is but their old practyse and a commune custome/ yee and a sporte to separate matrimonye/ for to make division where soch marriage made unite and peace. Wherefore I coude not but declare my minde to discharge by cōsciēce with all/which thinge I had done long sence/ if I coude have brought it to pass.²¹

Tyndale is writing the *Practyse* not because he can, but because he must. We have come to the matter of Henry's divorce.

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The *Practyse of Prelates* is unique among Henrician divorce tracts in being singularly unconcerned with the canon law governing the divorce. Less than a fifth of Tyndale's book deals in a direct way with the details of Henry's growing controversy, and when Tyndale does come to the matter of papal dispensations from affinity, he brushes it aside contemptuously. The entire problem of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, we are invited to believe, can only be solved if it is first arranged in a wholly new form; and to introduce the correct perspective, Tyndale embarks upon a lengthy historical analysis of the evils of prelacy. When the central issue at hand – the matter of affinity as it may or may not have tainted Henry's marriage to Catherine – reappears, it does so in the context of the radical interpretation of history already advanced: it is, in effect, no longer the central issue. Henry's supporters recognized early that the massive Catholic machinery of Biblical exegesis worked to their favor, for it allowed them to obfuscate the central point of controversy, to scurry down one interpretive alley after another in search of conciliar decrees and patristic arguments that merely generated more decrees and arguments. Catherine's representatives, themselves subject to the same scholastic conventions, generally replied in kind, with the result that the surviving literature on the divorce is

substantial in length, complexity and dreariness. Tyndale discarded both the scholastic method and its fruits, however,²² ignoring the opinions of church fathers, popes and councils, and making the grand assumption that the scriptural crux upon which the divorce case rested was in fact no crux at all, that scripture was and would remain clear and unproblematic in its literal sense. The immediate result of this treatment is that the question of impediments and dispensations in Henry's case tends to vanish; it takes up relatively little space in the *Practyse* because in Tyndale's scheme of things it is a peripheral and obfuscatory issue. J. F. Mozley is right to declare that the divorce problem was the main cause of Tyndale's writing the *Practyse*;²³ but the divorce problem dealt with in the *Practyse* is not the same one addressed in the tracts of Fisher and Abell and Cajetan, nor is it the same one recognized by Henry's defenders. For Tyndale, the problem is far less one of theory, and much more – as the title of his work suggests – one of praxis; and thus historical incident vanquishes and displaces hermeneutics within the text of his book.

Tyndale's historical discursus in the *Practyse* mainly extends the principles of the *Obediēce*; prelacy remains the root of all evil, yet if prelacy is the root, papacy and tyranny are branch and bloom.²⁴ Temporal and spiritual authority remain distinct; papacy is the encroachment of the latter upon the former, and tyranny the encroachment of the former upon the latter. Throughout his book Tyndale maintains that "To be good to the comen welthe is to be hurtfull to the spiritualtye/ seyng the one is the others praye as the lambe is the wolves" (*Practyse*, sig. F5^v). Within such a context, Tyndale's analysis becomes particularly pointed. Its polemical purpose is to illustrate the evils of papacy and tyranny, and its thesis is that those evils exist in a delicate equilibrium regulated by the institution of prelacy, which profits from the occasional discomfiture of both its bad children:

The Popes have put doune manye good Emperoures by help off bisshopes. . . . And contrarye wise the Emperours have now and then deposed diverse Popes at the request of the Cardinalles and other greate prelates/ by whose helpe only they were able to do it. (*Practyse*, sig. F6^r)

The early church, we are told, was perverted to prelacy after deacons were given control of church coffers; from that beginning, prelacy expanded to encompass the entire ecclesiastical system, gradually usurping greater and greater temporal powers. Thus, given the church's massive wealth and growing importance in international polictics, it was only natural that a particularly brutal and depraved ruler should aspire to empire through a pact with the Pope. For Tyndale, Charlemagne was just such a one, and he receives prolonged and scathing treatment in the *Practyse*, very much as Wolsey does in later pages:

Charles was a great conqueroure that is to saye a greate tyraunte/ and overcame many nacyons with the swerde/ and as the Turcke compelleth unto his fayth/ so he compelled them with violence unto y^e fayth of Christ saye the storyes. But (alas) Christes faith where unto the holy gost only draweth mennes hartes . . . he knewe not. (*Practyse*, sig. C3^v)

In this passage – drawn, like much of what follows, from fairly reliable sources²⁵ – the first Holy Roman Emperor appears as the perfect temporal counterpart of the Pope himself, not content to let God work on men's souls through the Holy Spirit, but intent on employing scripture against its own teaching, as a rationale for bloodletting.

Tyndale had often argued that it was improper for spiritual authority to lay claim to temporal sway; with the references to Charles, however, it becomes clear that he thought the pursuit of spiritual powers by temporal authority equally abominable. Pope Leo III, he observes in disgust,

called Charles the most Christen kinge/ because of his good servyce: which tytle the kinges of Fraunce use unto this daye though manye of them be never so unchrystened: As the laste Leo called oure kynge the defender of the faith. (*Practyse*, sig. C3^r)

This reference to kingly titles is Tyndale's first overt comparison between Henry VIII and Charles the emperor-tyrant, yet the pattern of parallels in Tyndale's prose has been building steadily, and continues to do so. The result will be that Henry's matter is prejudged before its introduction; the theological niceties of the Henricians are nullified by historical precedent.

Having dismissed the emperor's pretensions to Christianity (and hence to justice), Tyndale next examines his personal behavior. His marital conduct, we are told, was contemptible:

At the requeste and greate desyre of his mother/ he maryed the doughter of Desyderius kynge of Lombardye/ but after one yere unto the greate dyspleasure of his mother he put hir awaye agayne: but not with oute the false sotyltye of the Pope thou mayst be sure nether with oute his dispensacyon. (*Practyse*, sigs. C3^v – C4^r)

Yet further, Tyndale continues, Charles was an incestuous adulterer:

He kepte also .iiii. concubynes/ and laye with two of his awne doughters therto. And though he wist howe that it was not unknowne/ yet his lustes beyng greater thē greate Charles/ he wold not wete nor yet refrayne. (*Practyse*, sig. C4^r)

This is Tyndale's first reference to incest in a tract ostensibly dealing with one of its forms, and here we can already observe the radical change in

perception involved in Tyndale's unique appraisal of the divorce problem. Although it was Catherine's representatives who would charge, again and again, that Henry was committing incest by ignoring the Pope's prohibition of marriage to Anne Boleyn,²⁶ here the incest arises from a kind of spiritual degradation implicit in tyranny itself, a tyranny capable of commanding both Pope and laymen. The farther Charles isolates himself from the rule of scripture, the more depraved he becomes; and may we not see this pattern reenacted in Henry's marital matters?

The section on Charlemagne concludes with a particularly scurrilous tale, designed to illustrate the depths of spiritual degradation to which the emperor had fallen in his subservience to prelatical ideals. As Charlemagne grew older, we are told,

the sayenge is that . . . a hore had so bewitched him with a ringe & a perle in it ad I wotte not what ymagerye graven therein that he went a saute after her as a dogge after a bitche/ and the dotedhed was besyde himselfe and hole oute of his mynde: in so moche that when the hore was deed he coude not departe from the deed corps . . . tyll at the last his lordes . . . went unto the [woman's] cophyne and opened it and sought and founde this ryng on hir finger: whiche one of the lordes tooke of and put it on his awne finger. When the ringe was of/ he [Charles] commaunded to burye hir/ regardinge her no longer. Nevertheless he cast a phantasye unto this lorde and began to dote as fast on him/ so that he might never be oute of syghte. (*Practyse*, sigs. C4^{r-v})

This peculiarly nauseating passage depicts the very ecstasy of abject servitude, and Charles appears not so much as the direct prisoner of Pope or clergy as slave to his own debased instincts, instincts that grow more corrupt the more he aspires to political supremacy.

The story of Charlemagne comprises the largest single episode of Tyndale's book that has to do with non-English events, and it deals with the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire at precisely the time when Henry was growing more inclined to claim imperial prerogative for himself in his great matter.²⁷ Certainly Tyndale was invoking the figure of Charlemagne as a cautionary example for Henry; but did he expect Henry to see this example also as a personal rebuke? I suspect so, for not only does Tyndale draw explicit comparisons between Charlemagne and Henry (as we have already seen in the matter of their respective titles), but he also uses the history of Charlemagne to introduce a series of associations that will be redeployed, when the time comes, within his discussion of the Henrician problem. When Tyndale finally gives us Henry, it is only after a long historical preamble and pages of bitter invective against Wolsey. Indeed, it is against the figure of Wolsey that Henry himself appears, in terms strongly reminiscent of the treatment of Charlemagne:

As I harde it spoken of diverse/ he [Wolsey] made by craft of necromancye
graven ymagerye to beare uppon him wherwith he bewitched the kynges
mynd ād made the kyng to dote uppon him more then ever he did on any
ladye or gentylwoman/ so that now the kynges grace folowed him as he
before folowed the kyng. (*Practyse*, sigs. G4^v-G5^r)

The similarities between this passage and the anecdote of Charlemagne and the ring are numerous. Not only is Wolsey described as bewitching Henry just as Charles was bewitched by his whore, but the very wording of the two passages, with emphasis upon "graven ymagerye" and dotage and sexual abasement, is substantially the same. Tyndale has aimed a heavy blow at Henry himself through repetition of imagery and diction; he has employed his own graven imagery, that of the book, to oppose the witcheries of Wolsey and the high prelates; and why should he do so, were it not that for him Henry and Charlemagne and pope, kingship and empire and prelacy, were already inseparably united?

Nor do the associations cease here. Tyndale proceeds, at long last, to the matter of the divorce itself, and – with the sarcastic deference so typical of his polemic²⁸ – offers Henry advice:

If the kinges most noble grace will neades have a nother wyfe/ then let hī
serch the lawes of god/ whether it be lawfull or not/ for as moch as he him
silk is baptized to kepe the lawes of god and hath professed them and hath
sworne them. Yf the lawe of god suffre it/ then let his grace put forth a little
treatyse in prynte and even in the english tongue that all mē maye se it/ for
his excuse and the defence of his deade and say: Loo by the auctorite of this
goddess worde I do this. (*Practyse*, sig. H7^r)

This done, Tyndale concludes, Henry need not fear the emperor or his associates. Among the multiple ironies of this passage is the disparaging implication that Henry fears the emperor. There is the hint that, although Henry has been baptized to "kepe the laws of god," he has so far done no such thing. Further comes the stinging suggestion that Henry publish a treatise in justification of his act – surely an oblique reference to the *Assertio*, Henry's treatise in service of another cause. And again, there is the recommendation that this treatise be composed "in the english tongue that all mē maye se it," a proposal that Henry must have found particularly obnoxious, coming as it did from the heresiarch who was flooding his kingdom with English New Testaments.

Yet it is the preceding description of Charlemagne that casts perhaps the most uncomplimentary shadow over this passage, for we are drawn to consider Henry's divorce action as a mere repetition of the emperor's earlier one, in which he put away the daughter of Desiderius "not with oute the false sotyltye of the Pope . . . nether with oute his dispensacyon." The parallels between emperor and king have multiplied: both have been

bewitched with graven imagery, both have sought marriage annulments through papal dispensation, both have received honorific titles of the Pope. Tyndale dwells on these last two points in his lecture to Henry; in the matter of Martin Luther's marriage, Tyndale acidly remarks that "for lacke of auctorite of goddes worde Martē must be condemned by y^e auctorite of y^e kinge" (*Practyse*, sig. K5^v), the very king who is now seeking the Pope's authority for his own remarriage! Tyndale then proceeds to read the King a stern moral lesson:

Let his grace remēbre how he īveyeth agēst Martēs wedlocke and feare lest he god to avenge wilfull blindnesse/ tangle his grace with matrimonye . . . moch more dishonourable then his grace thinketh Martens shamful. His grace promysed to kepe his wedlocke as well as Marten did his chastite: ād his graces vowe hath auctorite of god & Martens not/ but is dāned by the worde of god as he did vowe/ & as the ypocrites do yet teach to vowe. (*Practyse*, sigs. K5^v-K6^r)

Charlemagne's successors, we have been told, hold jealously to his title of Most Christian King, "though manye of them be never so unchrystened"; it is by this same irony that Henry has gained his own title of the Pope. He has asserted his authority where it has no place: in a spiritual matter, the issue of clerical chastity. The result is his own marital difficulty, God's revenge for Henry's "wilfull blindnesse."

Nor is Henry at fault only in this single instance, according to Tyndale. Rather he has been a consistent and prominent defender of prelacy, so much so that he is guilty of the very sins and abuses that Tyndale has earlier laid to the charge of pope, cardinals, and bishops:

Nowe I appele to the consciences of the kynges grace and of his lordes. What answer will they geve when they come before Christ in the last iudgement/ for theyr robberyng of so manye soules in so many parishes of goddes worde with holdynge everye man so manye chappellaynes in theyr houses with pluralytes of benefyces/ ād for the robberyng of so many poore and neadye of their due and dayly fode whose neade for lacke of succoure crieth to god continually for vengeance agenst them/ whiche we se daylye by a thousande misfortunes faulle on them and on their wyves and children. Let them reade Exodi and Deuteronomye and se what they fynd there. (*Practyse*, sig. K3^r)

Again Tyndale has touched upon the theme of divine vengeance for royal misdeeds; Henry is implicitly compared to Pharaoh through the reference to Exodus, and thus once more the entire divorce controversy can be viewed as heaven-sent punishment for the King's supineness of conscience in supporting prelacy. It is Henry himself, at last, who is the object of Tyndale's attack in the *Practyse*, and Tyndale leaves no doubt of this fact when he reviews the ground his tract has covered and asks of the divorce controversy itself,

Whence cometh all this mischief? Verelye it is the hand of god/ to avenge
the wantonnesse of greate men which will walke withoute the feare of god/
folowinge the steppes of the hye prelates contrary unto their profession.
(*Practyse*, sig. K4^v)

Indeed Henry has forsaken his proper profession, that of temporal rule, to meddle in spiritual affairs, and hence he has become one of the prelates' party. This is the substance of Tyndale's astonishing rebuke.

* * *

Tyndale's polemical strategy has brought him full circle. Starting with a strict theory of the proper separation of spiritual and temporal estates, he has denied the spiritual's authority in dispensing from impediments to marriage. Like virtually all continental Reformers, Tyndale denied the sacramentality of wedlock,²⁹ and with this denial comes a view of the divorce problem that once again removes it from the forum of theological debate. Little wonder that Tyndale's views exasperated Catholic and Henrician alike; the power of dispensation, he argued, does not properly exist except with God, and only the enlightened individual conscience is qualified to determine the acceptability or unacceptability of a given marriage. Incest – whether affinal or consanguine – is forbidden not by all-encompassing spiritual decree, but by what is essentially a species of political expediency. Beginning as a prerogative of the spiritual, jurisdiction over marriage has ended as most purely a temporal privilege. Tyndale elaborates as follows:

The greatest cause to send the doughter out is unite and peace betwene
diverse kinredes.

Wherefore if greater peace and unite mighte be made with kep̄ge hir at
home/ I durst dispenche with it. As if the kinge of englonde had a sonne by
one wife heyre to englond & a doughter by a nother heyre to Wales: thē
because of the greate warre that was ever wont to be betwene those two
countrees/ I wold not feare to marye them together/ for the makynge of a
perpetuall unite. (*Practyse*, sig. I7^v)

For Tyndale, the marital contract has been marked out as the proper province of the temporal ruler, precisely because of its nature as a contract, made like all contracts before God but executed by two individuals upon earth.³⁰ Cargill Thompson has perceptively noted that in Tyndale's thought "coercive authority belongs to secular rulers only. The authority of the clergy is purely spiritual: to them belongs the ministry of the Word, the duty of admonition,"³¹ and Tyndale has defied traditional thought by removing the marriage contract from the province of ecclesiastical adjudication. In his scheme of things the spiritual simply is not empowered to

ratify and enforce contracts between individuals; its duty is purely that of sanctifying the acts of individuals before God or, conversely, of rebuking those whose acts are unclean. The arrangement of the initial marriage contract is still assigned, as in the *Obediēce*, to the fathers of the bride and groom;³² and the upholding of scriptural marriage provisions (e.g., those for the levirate, or those against adultery) is entrusted in analogous fashion to the head of state. The clerical role, in any case, is a purely passive one: either to assent and confirm the contract before God, or to denounce the contract as conscience demands.³³

We have returned to the question of separation of church and state first dealt with in the *Obediēce*, but this time by a different route. And once again, Tyndale's arguments may almost be taken as buttressing the King's position. If marriage is primarily a civil arrangement, defined by the parties to the contract itself and only then formalized by holy ceremony, is it not properly subject to royal fiat? Would not Henry be perfectly justified in acting on his own to sever the relationship with Catherine and then marry Anne? Tyndale's advice to the King first to "serch the lawes of god/ whether it be lawfull or not" and then to "put forth a litle treatyse" to defend his action would seem to imply just such an attitude. And indeed, given a compliant clergy – a clergy of the sort understood and accepted by Henry and the Pope – that would be the case. Yet, for Tyndale, the preacher of God's word does have an office whose jurisdiction extends over the King himself: he must declare the gospel and law according to his own conscience and denounce those who offend against them. He may not actively oppose the King; his duty is to the word, rather than to the sword; yet he is equally bound by conscience not to transgress God's law, and faith should lend him enough strength to remain upright in his acts.³⁴ Tyndale himself makes it plain in the *Practyse* that he disapproves of the contemplated annulment; I would like here to suggest finally that for Tyndale the *Practyse* was literally the execution, in a specific instance, of the cleric's office. Called as he is, he must pronounce his opinion of the divorce, despite exile and isolation, despite the fact that his opinion has not been requested, and despite the fact that it can be of no possible profit to him. Warham, Tunstall, and most of the English clergy would submit to Henry on the grounds that *ira principis mors est*;³⁵ More would seek to evade the issue; but for Tyndale the theory established in scripture and enunciated in the *Obediēce* would require constant, vocal, and often unwelcome involvement in issues like that of the King's divorce. In Tyndale's ideal scheme, Henry might indeed decide to violate Old Testament law by putting away Catherine; yet there would be no conscientious cleric to recognize the divorce, and certainly no one to perform a new wedding ceremony. It is the kind of theory that loses most in translation to real life, for it relies upon perhaps the most fragile and intangible – and noble – of human traits: the

capacity for faith. It was a theory from which Tyndale, at least, did not flinch.

* * *

J.F. Mozley has called the *Practyse* "that work of Tyndale which we could most readily spare";³⁶ yet it is clear from Tyndale's own words that he, at least, felt it to be a wondrous necessary book, and it was so, I have argued, because for Tyndale words were the most proper and requisite of Christian acts. The preacher of the gospel has one weapon and one only against the compulsive powers of the state: the word of scripture. It is this word that Tyndale promotes in the *Practyse*, despite the severe reaction that could be expected both from the Pope, who claimed authority as final interpreter of scripture, and from the King, who threatened to overwhelm the passive dissent of God's servants with the active tyranny of the magistrate. In this sense Stephen Greenblatt is very right to remark that for Tyndale "absorption of the book at once provides a way of being in the world and shapes the reader's inner life; Christian obedience is simultaneously a form of action and an internal state."³⁷

The Royal Supremacy did not have to emerge in its final form for Tyndale to denounce it. In principle it was merely another version of the papacy to which he was so fiercely opposed, for it sought to consolidate the coercive rule of the temporal and the admonitory rule of the spiritual under one head. And while it is true that there is danger in reading Tyndale's works too much in light of future events,³⁸ it is only reasonable to assess them in terms of what had already happened. Here the record is clear. Henry himself had undertaken to refute the Reformers in his *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*; Tyndale's New Testament had been burnt by English authorities, along with other books of the new faith; as late as 1530, Tyndale's and Frith's works were being denounced as heretical by the English clergy, and royal edicts were being issued to forbid further importation of such writings into England;³⁹ Wolsey had stepped down from his high place, but only to be replaced by More, a man as grievous to Tyndale's cause as any proper prelate.

Early in his career, in *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, Tyndale put forth a definition of antichrist that holds for all his works:

Antichrist is not an outwarde thiȝe that is to saye a man that shuld sodenli appere with wonders as our fathers talked of him. Ne verily for Antichriste is a spirituall thiȝe. And is as moch to say as agaynst Christ/ that is one that preacheth false doctrine cōtrarye to Christ. Antichrist was in the old Testament and fought with the Prophets/ he was also in the tyme of Christ and the Apostles. . . . Antichrist is now ād shall (I dout not) endure till the worldes ende.⁴⁰

This passage, though often quoted, seems seldom to have been taken to heart. Even in recent criticism, we may read that Tyndale “believed emphatically that the pope was antichrist”;⁴¹ yet clearly to confine Tyndale’s definition to a single individual – even by implication – is to do it injustice. For Tyndale, More embodied antichrist too, as did Henry, so long as they opposed the true teaching of scripture. Against such an antichrist, the true believer could only buckle on the armor of faith and do battle with the word. *The Practyse of Prelates* was, for its author, the practice of being a Christian, and it stood before him as his joyous – and terrible – duty.

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Notes

- 1 G.E. Duffield, in the headnote to his edition of excerpts from the *Practyse*, declares it to be “one of Tyndale’s most polemical works. . . . It is chiefly remembered for the line the author takes over the divorce of Catherine of Aragon, concerning which he differs from nearly every other Reformer” (*The Works of William Tyndale*, ed. G. E. Duffield [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965], p. 381). J. F. Mozley similarly comments that “the verdict which Tyndale pronounces [on Henry’s divorce] at least shows his independence. . . . Tyndale agrees with neither [Catholics nor Henricians]: the marriage (he pronounces) was lawful, and cannot be set aside without great wrong” (*William Tyndale* [New York: Macmillan, 1937], pp. 163–164).
- 2 Cranmer is most prominent here and also earliest; see Theodore Maynard, *Life of Thomas Cranmer* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1936), pp. 41 ff., for a discussion of his involvement in the divorce. Allan Chester (*Hugh Latimer: Apostle to the English* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954], p. 53) traces Latimer’s support for Henry to early 1530. But more important than such individual supporters was the influence Anne Boleyn exercised for the furtherance of English Lutheranism, an influence recognized by Chapuys, the imperial ambassador to the English court, when in 1534 he wrote to Charles V that “Lutheranism spreads fast, and the king calculates that it will make the people stand by him” on the divorce matter (J. A. Froude, *The Divorce of Catherine of Aragon: The Story as Told by the Imperial Ambassadors Resident at the Court of Henry VIII* [New York: AMS Press, 1970; rpt. of 1891 ed.], p. 280).
- 3 Of the origin and development of Henry’s campaign for the annulment of his first marriage I cannot treat here in detail. J. J. Scarisbrick (*Henry VIII* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968], pp. 163–240) offers the fullest overview of the case’s canonical complexities, and A. F. Pollard (*Henry VIII* [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1934], pp. 173–248) provides useful commentary upon its political implications.
- 4 *The Firste Boke of Moses Called Genesis* [The Pentateuch], trans. W[illiam] T[yndale] ([Antwerp], 1534), Leviticus 20:21. Further scriptural citations will be to this text.
- 5 See the Declaratio Affinitatis in the *Corpus Juris Canonici* (ed. Emil Ludwig Richter [Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1839], Decretalium D. Gregorii Papae IX, p. 1238): “Affinitas secundum canones est personarum proximitas ex coitu proveniens, omni carens parentela. Et dicitur affinitas, quasi duorum ad unum finem unitas, eo quod duae cognationes diversae per nuptias secundum leges, vel per coitum secundum canones copulantur, et alter ad alterius cognationis finem accedit. . . . Scias autem, quod affinitas est perpetuum impedimentum, quod durat etiam mortua persona, qua mediante contrahitur.”
- 6 *A Glasse of the Truthe* (London, 1530), sig. B4^v.
- 7 Nicholas Harpsfield, writing after the divorce controversy was already settled, crystallized the Catholic position by making Henry’s matter a test case for the validity of papal authority: “Where and by whom is this question [of the binding nature of the Levitical incest prohibition] to

- be determined? By the Universities? Nay, but by Christ his own vicar, whose determination, once promulged, bindeth as well the Universities as all other" (*A Treatise of the Pretended Divorce between Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon*, ed. Nicholas Pocock [London: The Camden Society, 1878], p. 109). Thomas Abell similarly claimed that "Ye Pope may dispence with al psons in mariage excepte ye father with ye doughter/ & ye sone with ye moth" (*Invicta Veritas* [Lüneburg, 1532], sig. P2^v). Fisher agreed: "Pertinet . . . ad Romanem Pontificem, declarare dubia, & interpretari circa ea, quae fidei sunt, sive iuris naturalis et divinae" (*De Causa Matrimonii Serenissimi Regis Angliae Liber* [Alcalà, 1530], sig. f1^r).
- 8 The pro-Henrician *Determinations of the Moste Famous and Mooste Excellent Universities of Italy and Fraunce* (London, 1531) put the King's position uncompromisingly: "Nature doth abhorre/ that one & the same selfe flesshe/ that is to sey the fader and the son/ shuld have to do with one womā" (sig. C8^r). An anonymous Henrician tract in John Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials* ([Oxford: Calrendon Press, 1822], vol. I, pt. II, p. 153) entitled *An liceat cuiquam ducere uxorem fratris sui vita defuncti absque liberis* claims similarly that "Levitica vero lex moralis est et universalis, ut prius ostensum quia lex naturae extendit se ad omnes."
 - 9 C. H. Williams thus argues (*William Tyndale* [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1969], p. 96) that Tyndale's "analysis of events falls very short of the truth" because "he had been out of England since 1522," and that "his decision on the rights and wrongs of the divorce question . . . was largely the result of a grievous misreading of history." Rainer Pineas (*Thomas More and Tudor Polemics* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968], pp. 64-65) asserts similarly that Tyndale's charges of collusion between More and Wolsey "are a result of false information about English affairs reaching Tyndale in Germany."
 - 10 This claim is indeed sometimes taken as proof of Tyndale's isolation from English affairs. Yet it was so commonly believed in England that Wolsey was the originator of the divorce scheme that Henry himself was forced to make a public declaration to the contrary (see Scarisbrick, p. 153). And in fact, from a strictly technical point of view, Wolsey was the originator of the divorce, having begun the procedure on May 17, 1528, by officially summoning Henry to explain his cohabitation with Catherine (see Pollard, p. 198).
 - 11 William Tyndale, *The Obediēce of a Christen Man* ([Antwerp], 1528), sig. P7^v. Further citations will be to this edition.
 - 12 In this respect it is also worthwhile to note that any English attack on clerical abuses in 1530 would stand a good chance of making prominent reference to Wolsey. As A. F. Pollard has pointed out, Wolsey "personified in himself most of the clerical abuses of the age" (p. 117); nor, he adds, were men like Tyndale alone in denouncing the cardinal: "[Wolsey's] arrogance does not rest merely on the testimony of personal enemies . . . , who wrote when vilification of Wolsey pleased both king and people, but on the despatches of diplomatists with whom he had to deal, and on the reports of observers who narrowly watched his demeanour" (p. 111).
 - 13 J. J. Scarisbrick (pp. 165-197) supplies the most comprehensive analysis of Henry's arguments, noting several points (see, e.g., p. 174 and p. 180) at which the Henricians misrepresented evidence in order to strengthen their case.
 - 14 See Strype, vol. I, pt. I, p. 172. The entire passage, seldom quoted at length, deserves to be reproduced here: "And in a little time the King, by the help of this virtuous lady [Anne Boleyn], by the means aforesaid [i.e., by reading the *Obediēce* at Anne's recommendation], had his eyes opened to the truth, to advance God's religion and glory, to abhor the Pope's doctrine, his lies, his pomp and pride, to deliver his subjects out of the Egyptian darkness, the Babylonian bonds, that the Pope had brought him and his subjects under."
 - 15 Thus A. G. Dickens (*The English Reformation* [London: B. T. Batsford, 1964], p. 73) claims that Tyndale's "political thought represents a link between Lutheran theory and the English Schism as effected by Henry VIII." Again, John K. Yost ("William Tyndale and the Renaissance Humanist Origins of the English *Via Media*," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, n.s. 51 [1971], p. 168) argues that Tyndale and "the early Reformers [were] forerunners of the religious reform policy that was shaped by . . . the Cromwell administration from 1535-1540." Rainer Pineas ("William Tyndale's Use of History as a Weapon of Religious Controversy," *Harvard Theological Review* 55 [1962], pp. 338-339) argues more cautiously that "while Henry would

- probably have broken off in any case with a pope who refused to sanction his marital wishes, the climate facilitating the break with Rome was prepared by polemicists such as Tyndale."
- 16 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 88.
 - 17 Hooker argues (*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* [New York: Burt Franklin, 1970; rpt. of 1888 ed.], bk. VIII, ch. ii.5; vol. III, p. 344) that "we must acknowledge both their [kings'] lawful choice to be approved of God, and themselves to be God's lieutenants, and confess their power his." James similarly opens his *Basilicon Doron* (*The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince James* [London, 1616], vol. I, sig. N2^v) with the observation that the king is "a little GOD to sit on his [God's] Throne, and rule over other men."
 - 18 Terminology on this point is unstable, and for good reason. Pincas (*Thomas More*, p. 45), for instance, asserts that "the precondition of any attempt at [scriptural] interpretation is, according to Tyndale, 'right fayth' and regeneration, with its consequent indwelling of the Holy Spirit." Again (*Thomas More*, p. 45), Pincas claims that "spiritual insight" is Tyndale's *sine qua non* of scriptural exegesis. These varying terms – and others, too – were employed by Reformers to cover an undeniable problem of Protestant doctrine: that of referring scriptural interpretation to the individual while nonetheless maintaining an external standard of interpretative authority. Suffice it for our purpose that both "right fayth" and "spiritual insight" generally presupposed active conscience.
 - 19 See Scarisbrick, p. 247, for this opinion.
 - 20 On these last two points see W. D. J. Cargill Thompson, "The Two Regiments: The Continental Setting of William Tyndale's Political Thought," in Derek Baker, ed., *Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent, c.1500-c.1750* (Oxford: Benjamin Blackwell, 1979), pp. 16-33.
 - 21 William Tyndale, *The Practyse of Prelates* ([Antwerp], 1530), sig. I7^v. Further citations will be to this edition.
 - 22 Thus Peter Aukst ("So Rude and Simple Style": William Tyndale's Polemical Prose," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 8 [1978], pp. 241-242) remarks that Tyndale's "obvious literary skills are not pressed into the service of a polemic as orthodox as that of More or Fisher. For him, polemic is not intricate debate over dogmatic subtleties nor is it sequeaceous dialectic." Similarly, John K. Yost ("Tyndale's Use of the Fathers: A Note on his Connection to Northern Humanism," *Moreana* 21 [1969], p. 5) notes that "there are relatively few direct references to the fathers in Tyndale's writings."
 - 23 Thus Mozley (p. 163) notes that "The title-page [of the *Practyse*] bears also a second heading: *Whether the king's grace may be separated from his queen, because she was his brother's wife; and though this question occupys only a few pages towards the end of the book, it was the main cause of his writing.*"
 - 24 In this spirit C. S. Lewis observes (*English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954], p. 183) that kings are, "according to Tyndale, cradled into tyranny by bishops who murmur 'Your grace shall take your pleasure.'"
 - 25 Despite the proverbially vague way in which Tyndale makes use of historical sources, much of his account of Charlemagne is drawn accurately from earlier chronicles. Charlemagne's zeal for the enforcement of Christian worship upon pagan peoples is recorded in Einhard's brief life, which notes that one condition of the final peace between Charlemagne and the Saxons was that the latter "were to give up their devil worship and the malpractices inherited from their forefathers; and then, once they had adopted the sacraments of the Christian faith and religion, they were to be united with the Franks and become one people with them" (Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, trans. Lewis Thorpe [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969], p. 63). Einhard also makes reference to Tyndale's story of Charlemagne and Desiderius' daughter, although in a most nebulous fashion: "At the bidding of his mother, [Charlemagne] married the daughter of Desiderius, the King of the Longobards. Nobody knows why, but he dismissed this wife after one year" (p. 73). The Monk of Saint Gall supplies a fuller account of this incident, however, one that again coincides well with Tyndale's version: "For security's sake and to stop them ever again seceding from Frankish rule or doing harm to the territories of Saint Peter, Charlemagne married the daughter of Desiderius, King of the

Longobards. Some short time afterwards, since she was bedridden and unable to bear a child, she was, by the advice of his devout clergy, put on one side as if already dead" (p. 162). Tyndale's reference to Charles' four concubines seems to have been drawn directly from Einhard, who states that "After [his wife] Luitgard's death, [Charlemagne] took four concubines: Madelgard . . . , Gersvinda . . . , Regina . . . , and Adallinda" (p. 73). Very shortly thereafter, Einhard mentions Charles' great fondness for his daughters, as well as his distress at their sexual misbehavior: "These girls were extraordinarily beautiful and loved by their father. It is a remarkable fact that, as a result of this, he kept them with him in his household until the very day of his death, instead of giving them in marriage to his own men or to foreigners, maintaining that he could not live without them. The consequence was that he had a number of unfortunate experiences, he who had been so lucky in all else that he undertook" (p. 75). It is at least possible that this proximity in Einhard suggested to Tyndale the allusion to Charles' incest. As for the tale of the whore and the ring, the references to disinterment in it may owe something to the description in the *Chronicon Novaliciense* (III.32) of Otto III's visit to Charlemagne's tomb in the year 1000: [Charles] was crowned with a golden crown; he held his sceptre in his hands, and his hands were covered with gloves, through which his nails had forced a passage. . . . When we came to the grave we broke a hole into it and entered, and entering, were aware of a very strong odour. At once we fell upon our knees and worshipped him, and the Emperor Otto . . . took a single tooth from his mouth, and so built up the vault, and departed" (Einhard and the Monk of St. Gall, *Early Lives of Charlemagne*, trans. A. J. Grant [London: Chatto and Windus, 1925], p. 169).

- 26 Bishop Fisher, who was among the first to take this line of attack, delivered a speech on June 28, 1529 to the legatine court of Wolsey and Campeius, in which he compared himself to John the Baptist and Henry, implicitly, to the incestuous Herod (cf. Scarisbrick, p. 225).
- 27 Pollard remarks that "Notwithstanding the absence of 'Empire' and 'Emperor' from the various titles which Henry VIII possessed or assumed, he has more than one claim to be reputed the father of modern imperialism" (p. 362). Scarisbrick (pp. 261-262) traces the origins of Henry's claim to total national (i.e. imperial) sovereignty to the summer of 1530, six months before the publication of the *Practyse*.
- 28 Cf. Pineas (*Thomas More*, p. 70): "The commonest use of irony to be found in Tyndale's polemical works is in his scrupulously polite references to the Pope as our most holy father' whenever he is recounting what he considers to be the unholy machinations of the papacy."
- 29 Cf. *Obediēce*, sigs. M2^{r-v}.
- 30 Thus William Clebsch (*England's Earliest Protestants* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964], p. 152) observes that "Tyndale's trenchant attack upon the existing Church in England arose from the notion . . . that the church was no specific order of society as were magistracy, marriage, and the market place."
- 31 Gargill Thompson, p. 26.
- 32 Cf. *Obediēce*, sig. D2^r: "The marying also of the children perteyneth unto their elders."
- 33 Leonard J. Trinterud ("The Origins of Puritanism," *Church History* 20 [1951], p. 41) elaborates a similar concept with respect to Tyndale's political thought: "The relationship between the ruler and the subject is contractual, based primarily upon natural law which, in turn, is applied by positive law which declares its meaning in specific instances."
- 34 To this effect Clebsch (p. 168) remarks that for Tyndale "the Christian life consisted in adhering to a moral system that looked to the Bible for a sufficient guide to all ethical decisions; the true Christian society was a commonwealth of saints, living singly and together according to scripture."
- 35 Cf. Pollard, pp. 270-271.
- 36 Mozley, p. 169.
- 37 Greenblatt, p. 84.
- 38 Thus Thompson (p. 20) remarks that "though there are certain parallels, and though some of Tyndale's ideas anticipate anti-papal arguments of later Henrician propagandists, it is misleading to think that he would necessarily have approved of the royal supremacy as it emerged in the mid 1530s."

- 39 See Williams, p. 45, for a summary of the resolutions passed in England against Tyndale and his associates during early 1530.
- 40 William Tyndale, *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* ([Antwerp], 15270, sig. A3^v).
- 41 Thompson, p. 19. Similarly Yost ("*Via Media*", p. 177) seems not to have accepted Tyndale's diffuse definition of antichrist: "Finally, when the kingdom of antichrist developed, the pope usurped the realm [of England] by means of violence and gained the prerogative to release whomever he wanted from purgatory."