'In the Twinkling of an Eye': The English of Scripture before Tyndale

Richard Marsden

New versions of the Bible in English continue to appear at an astonishing rate, perpetuating a tradition which has lasted for well over a thousand years.[1] None, however, has yet achieved the success and esteem enjoyed by the King James Version of 1611, whose star may now be waning but whose linguistic influence not even the most radically 'new' English Bibles can completely escape. Whole passages of its text are still instantly recognisable to readers of the older generation, especially in the gospels, certain epistles, and the Old Testament books of law, and many phrases and figures, or simply memorable cadences, are now embedded in the English language, their biblical origin largely forgotten. The following examples will illustrate my point: 'In the twinkling of an eye', 'Eat, drink, and be merry', 'Am I my brother's keeper?', 'It rained fire and brimstone from heaven', 'If the blind lead the blind', 'Death, where is thy sting?', 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour', 'I stand at the door and knock'. We know that in fact a high proportion of the KJV's text was derived from the work of William Tyndale, albeit via a succession of intermediate sixteenth-century versions. About 76 per cent of the KJV's Old Testament and 84 per cent of its New Testament is Tyndale's work, according to a recent study.[2] His was the first of the great English Bibles of the Reformation, and he was put to death for his pains in 1536, even as the tide of official opposition to vernacular translation was decisively turning.[3] Tyndale has rightly been celebrated as a pioneer, and an historian of the Bible as literature has described him as being compelled in his translation to 'invent his own appropriate English'.[4] All the above examples of familiar 'KJV' scriptural idiom were in his version, and several are among those that have been cited by successive scholars of Tyndale precisely as examples of what we owe to the martyr's pen.[5]

Yet I am uneasy with what verges on a *tabula rasa* approach to the subject of Tyndale's biblical English. Translators are as much appropriators as creators. Their

task is to convey the essence of the original as directly and lucidly as they can, and the best way to do that is often by means of the familiar. Imaginative selection, sensitive manipulation, bold re-working: these are the skills (and certainly they are creative skills, possessed in abundance by Tyndale) which are required of the translator. In this paper my aim is to emphasize this aspect of the translation process by showing that Tyndale, more often than has been acknowledged, may have appropriated rather than invented when producing the words and phrasing of his biblical English, including that of many of the best known passages in his version. To this end, the selection of examples from his work which I gave above was not made entirely at random. Each of them, along with others which I give below, appears to have been in use, at least in substance and often word for word, long before the Reformation, and some as early as the thirteenth century.

The source of them, however, was not established continuous translations of scripture. A complete English Bible did already exist, of course, in the form of the late fifteenth-century 'Wycliffite' Bible, still so called although the direct involvement of the scholar John Wyclif himself in the project is unlikely.[6] It was based on the Latin Vulgate and the many surviving manuscripts fall more or less into two groups, representing respectively an earlier version, often opaquely literal, and a later one revised to present a rather more idiomatic and therefore comprehensible English text.[7] The Wycliffite Bible has sometimes been suggested as a source for Tyndale,[8] but there is no reason to demur from the conclusion reached sixty years ago by J. F. Mozley that we should accept Tyndale's own avowal, in the prologue to his second edition of the New Testament, that he translated 'without an ensample'.[9] Mozley conceded that Tyndale might have carried some Wycliffite phrases in his mind and used them unwittingly but he listed a three-point three explanation for most of the coincidences between the Wycliffite Bible and Tyndale's version: first, mere chance; second, the influence of the Vulgate on both versions (so that, for instance, both use 'pinnacle' for 'pinnaculum' in Mt 4.5); and third, Tyndale's using a phrase 'that was already current in the middle ages'.[10] The importance of Mozley's analysis has become all the more evident recently, with the finding by Jon Nielson and Royal Skousen that as much as 58 or 59 per cent of the language of the Wycliffite translators is shared by Tyndale, despite the fact that the former were translating exclusively from the Latin Vulgate, the latter with reference to the original scriptural languages, Hebrew and Greek.[11] The central explanation appears to be the coincidences which are inevitable when two translators, albeit sometimes working generations apart, translate the same basic text (even when mediated through another language) in the most direct way. I shall return to this point later, but will note here that, as Pamela Gradon has shown,

there is no convincing evidence that even Wycliffite preachers or writers used the Wycliffite Bible as a source book, despite its wide dissemination.[12] When they wished to cite passages of scripture in English, they made their own translations from the Latin lection 'at the same time as the sermon was written, straight from the Vulgate, and to suit the convenience of the preacher', and in general the sermon writers were less stringent than the translators in their fidelity to the Vulgate text.[13] The third of Mozley's points – suggesting, in effect, a natural continuity of established idiom – seems to me the most interesting but at the same time the most neglected. It forms the basis of my argument here, though I extend the idea beyond that of the general currency of particular idioms in the English language to their currency in a specifically biblical context.

For the sake of completeness, we may note that there were other translations of parts of the Bible made shortly before or contemporaneously with the Wycliffite versions. They include a version of Acts and the Catholic Epistles, probably made at the request of a female religious, and a version of the Pauline Epistles, with commentary.[14] The translations in these versions resemble that of the earlier Wycliffite version in their literalness, and their influence on later translators is just as unlikely. Before the age of Wyclif, we have to go right back to the pre-Conquest period to find a limited amount of continuous Bible translation in (Old) English. The psalms, the gospels and parts of the Old Testament were translated, and some of these versions were still being copied and used well into the twelfth century.[15] It is even possible to demonstrate some linguistic continuities between the Anglo-Saxon and later periods. Stella Brooks has traced some clear semantic connections, for instance, between Old English glossed psalters and Coverdale's sixteenth-century psalms versions,[16] and I myself have suggested the influence of Abbot Ælfric's translation of Genesis (c. 1000) on some details of later scriptural English.[17] In general, however, the huge changes in lexis and syntax which occurred in the language between the Old and Middle English periods render any search for large-scale continuity between the earlier translations and the later ones, in terms of specific words and phrasing, unproductive.[18]

Yet the lack of any previous widely used English Bible should not lead automatically to the conclusion that Tyndale developed his scriptural English from scratch. It is a paradox of the history of scripture in English that during the very period of several centuries during which ordinary English men and women had no access to large-scale versions of the Bible in their own language, they were nevertheless being exposed more than ever before, and perhaps more than ever since, to its words in that language. The vehicle of its transmission was a diffuse, but none

the less pervasive, one – the dissemination of essential scripture in the mouths, and from the pens, of preachers and teachers. Two parallel and to some extent competitive influences were at work to stimulate this process. First, the spiritual movement associated with the Dominicans and Franciscans had reached England early in the thirteenth century, and the great weapon of the friars in carrying religion to the masses was preaching, in which they were skilful and relentless. Second, a growing agitation for ecclesiastical reform in western Christendom had culminated in the promulgations of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which among other things imposed confession to a parish priest as an annual duty for every Christian. A prerequisite for this was a minimum of level of instruction (not least for the priests themselves) in the basic tenets of the faith, including the meaning of the sacrament of penance. The English bishops responded by setting out their own regulations for the teaching of the people in the vernacular and the preparation of the parish clergy, whose ignorance was proverbial. The regulations were formulated on a national scale in the Constitutions issued in 1281 by the new Archbishop of Canterbury, John Peckham.

It was, then, the forces of the preaching tradition and the requirements of Christian teaching, to both the clergy and, through them, the laity, which catalyzed the explosion of didactic, homiletic, penitential, confessional, regulatory, and devotional literature in the vernacular which spread through the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. It is witnessed in hundreds of surviving manuscripts. All these works of course owe their existence to, and derive their authority from, scripture, which they cite freely and frequently. And it is here that the modern reader will again and again stumble on the familiar – that is, on such sentences and phrases from the KJV (derived from Tyndale) as I have already highlighted.

The Source Literature

The numerous and diverse creators of the source literature were not constrained by the demands of neat genre division, and a clear chronological presentation of it is difficult, for many works as we have them are derivatives of earlier works (which may or may not survive) or versions in English of works which were originally written in Latin or French (or in both these languages).[19] A large proportion of the works has been edited for the Early English Text Society, and perusal of the Society's catalogue (ignoring the minority of pre-Conquest titles) will give some idea of the range and sheer volume of the relevant material in print. Some, however, has yet to be published. Here I do no more than cite a number of

representative works in several loose groupings. Many of these works are well known by name but are rarely read, because they fall outside the received canon of 'literary' medieval texts.

(a) *Homily and sermon.* Several twelfth-century collections of homilies survive, illustrating a continuity between Anglo-Saxon England and the period under consideration. There are notable manuscripts in Trinity College, Cambridge, and the Lambeth Palace Library.[20] Some of the Lambeth homilies are based on the work of Ælfric, but others appear to be original twelfth-century compositions, albeit perhaps based on pre-Conquest sources. A small number of Kentish sermons survive from the end of the thirteenth century, translated from French originals.[21] By the fourteenth century, 'the classic age of preaching in medieval England', sermons were especially abundant.[22] A series of fifty-one, for instance, collected c. 1400 and arranged for the church year, is in British Library Royal 18 B. xxiii; three of them are by John Mirk, an Augustinian canon from Shropshire, and he was also responsible for another important series of sermons intended for festivals of the saints and known as his *Festial*.[23] The end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth was the era of Lollardy; the series of Wycliffite sermons recently re-edited in five volumes by Pamela Gradon and Anne Hudson has 294 items.[24]

(b) *Religious and moral treatises.* The origins of *The Lay Folks' Catechism* serve as a useful paradigm of the processes involved in the production of such works.[25] In 1357, Archbishop John Thoresby of York issued 'Instructions' for parish priests in Latin, to be expounded by them (in English) to their congregations in the province of York. Thoresby's Instructions were based on Archbishop Peckham's Constitutions. He then got a Benedictine monk called John Gaytrick to make an expanded version in English verse. This is the work now known as *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, though it is in fact more a treatise than a true catechism, dealing as it does in the staple fare offered by so many medieval treatises: the fourteen articles of belief, the ten commandments, the seven sacraments, and so on. Later still, a version of the work was made with Lollard interpolations.[26]

John Mirk, too, issued some 'Instructions for Parish priests' in English verse, c. 1400; over half of the work is devoted to confession.[27] Verse seems to have been the preferred medium for vernacular religious and moral treatises in the earlier part of our period. From the end of the twelfth century comes the massive (yet incomplete) *Ormulum*, produced perhaps in northern Lincolnshire and providing exegesis of the gospels and Acts based on the *Glossa ordinaria*.[28] A little later, in the East Midlands, four thousand lines of four-stressed couplets were produced to tell the story of *Genesis and Exodus* (and parts of Numbers and Deuteronomy), drawing heavily on

Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica.*[29] Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the huge *Cursor Mundi* was written in the north of England, paraphrasing scripture in 30,000 lines (mostly of rhymed octosyllabics) and again using Comestor as its exegetical base.[30] Another poetical work, the *Pricke of Conscience*, is notable, if only because it appears to have been the most popular of the didactic poems, with more than one hundred manuscripts surviving, though its attractions are not obvious to us today. Its 5000 couplets were composed anonymously in the mid-fourteenth century in both Latin and English versions and deal with the wretched state of man and the world.[31] In 1303, Robert Mannyng produced his *Handlyng Synne*, a verse translation of the *Manuel des péchés*, which had been composed c. 1260 by an Englishman, perhaps William of Waddington, in Anglo-Norman verse.[32] The English version is slightly longer (with 12, 628 lines) than the original, with some material omitted but some amplified too, especially in the area of entertaining exempla. A prose version of *Handlyng Synne* was made c. 1350, probably in the London area.

Among other prose tracts is the *Ayenbite of Inwit*, a translation of a French work, the *Somme le Roi* (1279), written in the Kentish dialect by a monk of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, in 1340.[33] Though treating many of the same themes as Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* (the ten commandments, the twelve articles of the creed, the seven sins), this work is far more elaborately structured and is scholastic in tone. A further translation of *Somme le Roi*, made some thirty years later by an unknown writer, is known as the *Book of Vices and Virtues.*[34] The prose *Mirror of Holy Church* by St Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1240), has as its major theme the three degrees of knowledge of God by contemplation and provides us with another example of multilingualism in didactic works.[35] It was probably composed originally in French, of which version there survive eighteen manuscripts, but there are also no fewer than twenty-eight of the Latin version, alongside a mere dozen of the English. Later there were other English versions of all or part of this work.

(c) *Regulatory texts.* One of the most well known of such texts in Middle English is the *Ancrene Wisse* (or *Ancrene Riwle*, as it is known in a few earlier manuscripts of the work). For R. W. Chambers, this work occupied 'a vital position in the history of English prose', and formed the centrepiece in his argument for the continuity of an English prose tradition from the Anglo-Saxon period up until the time of Thomas More.[36] The earliest surviving English version dates probably from c. 1200, after which numerous others copies were made, and the work was translated into both French and Latin. In language and style, the *Ancrene Wisse* has been associated with the so-called 'Katherine group' of works: lives of Saints Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana, a tract on *Holy Maidenhood*, and the allegory *Sawles Warde.*[37]

Chambers identified the needs of female religious who lacked Latin as the inspiration for such works, and thus also as a key impulse in the development and survival of English prose during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He cited 'female' versions of the *Benedictine Rule* as another important landmark. Few today would share Chambers's high claims for the *Ancrene Wisse*, and he no doubt overestimated the competence of male religious in the reading of Latin compared with their spiritual sisters. Nevertheless, he rightly recognized the significance of religious works in the continuity of the English prose tradition.

(d) *Devotional and mystical literature*. Works of this type are on the whole better known than the more technical and didactic works I have listed so far. Centred usually on the passion of Christ, they originated in the eleventh century with the likes of John of Fécamp and St Anselm and were associated particularly with St Bernard and the Victorines in the twelfth century. Richard Rolle is the most prominent and prolific of the known exponents, and was clearly one of the most popular. He wrote in both Latin and English and, curiously, where he did versions of a work in both languages (such as his commentary on the psalter)[38], it is the Latin which survive in the greater number; but his English *The Form of Living* is extant in thirty-eight manuscripts.[39] Other writers in this mystical-devotional group are known mostly for single works and include Walter Hilton (d. 1396), with his *Ladder of Perfection*, Julian of Norwich, with her *Revelation of Divine Love* (c.1373), and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.[40]

(e) *Poetry and drama*. We should note finally that scriptural quotation was not confined to the homiletic, didactic, regulatory, and mystical works which I have briefly surveyed. There is also frequent quotation in the works of writers from the 'literary' canon of Middle English – including Gower, Langland, the Gawain-poet, and Chaucer. Medieval drama, too, in its presentation of the whole cycle of biblical history in popular form, provides an obvious rich source of scriptural allusion and citation.

Some Evidence

It is, then, in the numerous Middle English sermons, homilies, handbooks, treatises, poetic paraphrases, devotional tracts, and other literature of the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries that evidence of the continuity of biblical idiom is to be looked for. No attempt to catalogue the scriptural citations in Middle English literature has been made since 1911, when Mary W. Smyth published her *Biblical Quotations in Middle English Literature before 1350*. Smyth sought to do

for Middle English what her mentor and teacher, A. S. Cook, had done for Old English literature.[41] She had available to her only a fraction of the editions which now confound the researcher, but she had already noticed some obvious continuities between the medieval period and the KJV and compiled her own short list of 'words and phrases common to Middle English works before Wyclif and the Authorized Version'.[42] This list has been a great stimulus for my own research, and several of Smyth's examples are included among mine.[43]

In selecting the sixteen examples of 'continuity' which follow, I aim merely to give a taste of the sort of results which a more systematic and thorough search might provide. More than half of my examples (nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15, and 16) have been included deliberately because they, or the idioms which are at the heart of them, have been cited by various writers on Tyndale as distinctly 'his'. Rather than restrict my evidence to precise word-for-word parallels, I have included a number of examples in which there are slight differences between the Middle English version or versions and that of Tyndale. In two interesting cases (nos. 8 and 9), the evidence points only to the possibility (though a distinct one, in my view) that certain idioms or familiar forms were not original to Tyndale. I have not given all occurrences for each example; citations from the more familiar parts of the gospels and epistles are especially numerous in homiletic works and treatises and are remarkably consistent in their forms. My examples are presented in biblical order and Tyndale's version in each case is given in the headings. For the Pentateuch, this is the version of 1530;[44] for the New Testament, it is Tyndale's revision of 1534 (though, in my examples, there is no significant modification of the 1526 version).[45] Differences from the KJV are merely orthographical, except in one case (no. 12), where I have used a passage in which the KJV revisers adopted a different verb. Citations from the earlier or later Wycliffite Bibles are indicated by 'WB1' and 'WB2', respectively, but when the differences between the two versions are merely orthographical, I cite as 'WB', using WB2's spelling.[46] In citations from all sources I retain the punctuation provided by the various editors, except where it has seemed confusing.

1. 'am I my brothers keper?' (Gen 4.9)

I have not come across the full question asked by Abel in precisely this form in any Middle English writings, but the key phrase 'my brother's keeper' may have been well known. It is found in one of the 'N-town' mystery plays, where an unpleasantly verbose Abel is given these words:

> My brothers kepere ho made me?

Syn whan was I his kepyng-knyght?
I kannot telle wher þat he be;
To kepe hym was I nevyr dyght.[47]

'Keeper' is a translation of Vulgate *custos* (itself a good rendering of the Hebrew), and it is used in WB, too, though in both versions the cumbersome syntax weakens the effect; thus WB1: 'I wote neuere; whether am I the keper of my brother?' and WB2: 'Y woot not; whether Y am the kepere of my brother?' (cf. Vulgate 'nescio num custos fratris mei sum').

2. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lorde thy God in vayne . . . Honoure thi father and thi mother . . . Thou shalt not beare false witnesse agenst thy neghboure' (Dt 5.11, 16, 20)[48]

The decalogue is rehearsed routinely in medieval tracts and treatises. There is some variation in the wording of the individual commandments, but often it coincides very closely, and even exactly, with Tyndale's version. In the second half of the fourteenth century, for example, readers of the *Lay Folks' Catechism* found the second commandment expressed thus: 'Thou schalt not take þe name of þy lord þy god in vayn'[49] (Vulgate: 'non usurpabis nomen Domini Dei frustra'; cf. WB2: 'Thou schalt not mystake the name of thi Lord God in veyn'). For the fourth and eighth commandments, Richard Rolle (c. 1330) wrote: 'Honoure thy fadyre and þi modyre . . . Thou sall noghte bere false wyttnes agaynes thi neghtebour.'[50] The Vulgate version of the eighth commandment uses the idiom of 'speaking', rather than 'bearing', false witness: 'Non loqueris contra proximum tuum falsum testimonium'; I shall return to this in my discussion below. Rolle's version of the second commandment uses a shorter reference to the deity than that of the *Lay Folks' Catechism*: 'Þou sall noghte take þe name of God in vayne'. The latter, on the other hand, uses 'worship' instead of 'honour' in the fourth commandment (as do several other versions of the period): 'worschipe þy fadyr and modyr'.[51] 'Honour' literally translates Latin 'honora', and the same word is used in WB: 'Onoure thi fadir and thi modir'.

3. 'ye are the salt of the erthe' (Mt 5.13)

These words of Christ to his disciples have been attributed to Tyndale but were already proverbial in the fourteenth century. We need look no further than Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*, where they are used by the lord in his address to the hypocritical friar: 'Ye been the salt of the erthe and the sauour'.[52] And Tyndale's great enemy Sir Thomas More used the phrase in his *Heresyes*: 'Ye be the salt of the earth'.[53] The

version used in WB is the same as Tyndale's, except for the omission of the definite article before the first noun: 'ȝe ben salt of the erthe', but the article is usually included when the words are cited, as they often are, in contemporary Wycliffite writings, such as the sermon of William Taylor (1406): 'Also þe clergie shulde be þe salt of þe erþe as Crist seiþ'.[54]

4. 'O oure father which arte in heven, halowed by thy name . . . And leade vs not into temptacion, but delyver vs from evell' (Mt 6.9, 13)

Citations of the Pater Noster, from Mt 6 or Lk 11, are of course numerous in devotional and instructional literature, and much of the familiar wording seems to have been established long before Tyndale's time. In the *Lay Folks' Catechism* we read: 'Our fadyr þat art in heuyn: halwyd be þy name . . . lede vs nat in temptacioun . . . But gracius fadyr delyuere vs fro euyl'.[55] A (non-Wycliffite) sermon manuscript of the late fourteenth century follows suit: 'Halowed be þi name . . . And lede vs not into temptacioun. But delyuer vs from euyll',[56] but so also does WB: 'Oure fadir that art in heuenes, halewid be thi name . . . and lede vs not into temptacioun but delyuere vs fro yuel'. As for the wording of other parts of the prayer, the only point at which earlier versions differ notably from Tyndale's is in the rendering of Mt 6.12, 'and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us'.[57] A typical early rendering, treating the Vulgate words literally ('et dimitte nobis debita nostra sicut et nos dimisimus debitoribus nostris'), is that of the thirteenth-century *The Mirror of Saint Edmund*: 'and forgyffe vs oure dettis als we forgyffe oure dettours'.[58] Another common medieval way of presenting the ideas here was with the noun 'misdeed' and its associated verb; thus, in the *Book of Vices and Virtues* we read: '(þat he wole) forȝeue vs oure mysdedes, as we forȝeueþ hem þat han mysdo to vs'.[59] But at least one writer, a Lollard, found the idea of 'trespass' more appropriate, though he retains an agent noun rather than a verbal periphrasis in the second part of the sentence: 'Forȝeue to vs oure trespaces, as we don to ure trespasouris'.[60]

5. 'Axe and it shalbe geven you. Seke and ye shall fynd. knocke and it shalbe opened vnto you' (Mt 7.7)

Medieval versions of this passage are to be found which are almost identical with that of Tyndale, the only differences being a preference in the older texts for imperative-plus-pronoun and the simple preposition 'to', rather than 'into'. This is another case where Tyndale hardly differs from WB, which has: 'Axe ȝe, and it schal be gouun to ȝou; seke ȝe, and ȝe schulen fynde; knocke ȝe, and it schal be openyd to ȝou'. In some manuscripts of WB, the imperative without pronoun is found. A Wycliffite

sermon cites the verse similarly, and again there is manuscript variation giving the imperative without pronoun.[61] A little later (c. 1443), in ch. 14 of Pecock's *The Reuele of Crysten Religioun*, we read: 'Axe ȝe and it schal be ȝouen to you, seke ȝe and ȝe schulen fynde, knocke ȝe and it schal be opened to ȝou'.[62]

6. 'If the blynde leede the blynde, boothe shall fall in to the dyche' (Mt 15.14)

A Lollard sermon-writer of the early fifteenth century writes: 'If þe blynde lede þe blynde, þei fallen boþe in þe diche'.[63] 'Ditch' translates Latin 'fovea', Greek 'βόθυνος' ('pit'), and the rendering is 'lake' in several Wycliffite sermons,[64] but not in WB: 'And if a blynd man lede a blynd man, bothe fallen doun in to the diche' (with the adverb 'doun' omitted in some manuscripts).

7. 'For where two or thre are gathered togedder in my name, there am I in the myddes of them' (Mt 18.20)

Tyndale's rendering of Christ's words to his disciples is distinguishable from the WB2 version because of his addition of the adverb which the latter lacks: 'For where tweyne [var. 'two'] or thre ben gaderid in my name, ther Y am in the myddil [var. 'myddes' in WB1] of hem' (cf. Vulgate 'sunt . . . congregati'). However, in a reference to the Matthew passage, a Lollard tract more or less contemporary with WB2 makes the addition (stylistically an excellent choice) and also modifies the copulative verb, as Tyndale does: '. . . þe kirk particuler, as were two or þre are gedrid to gidir in Cristis name'.[65]

8. 'the burthen and heet of the daye' (Mt 20.12)

The phrase is from the parable of the vineyard, in which the industrious labourers resent the fact that late-comers receive equal wages: 'These laste have wrought but one houre, and thou hast made them equall vnto vs, which have born the burthen and heet of the daye' (Tyndale). The Greek of the second part of the sentence uses a participle construction,[66] which the Vulgate renders with a relative pronoun and perfect verb: 'et pares illis nobis fecisti qui portauimus pondus diei et aestus.' WB2 stays close to this: 'and thou hast maad hem euen to vs, that han born the charge of the dai, and heete'. The effectiveness of Tyndale's version derives from his use of the more emotive 'burthen' for Greek βάρος' (Latin *pondus*) and the way he neatly and simply (though not strictly speaking accurately) makes 'day' the genitive complement of both of the abstract nouns. Perhaps this was indeed Tyndale's creation, but it is of note that something similar in principle had been done by a Kentish sermon-writer towards the end of the thirteenth century:

> and habbetþ i-þoled þe berdene of þo pine and of þo hete of al þo daie.[67]

And in connection with 'burden', it is interesting that an Anglo-Saxon translator of the gospels was using the noun already in the tenth century in this context: 'and þu dydest hig gelice us þe bæron byrþena on þises dæges hætan.'[68]

9. 'take thyne ease: eate, drinke, and be mery' (Lk 12. 19)

The is one of the most celebrated of 'Tyndale's' idioms, which translates 'ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου' (cf. Vulgate 'requiesce comede bibe epulare'). But Tyndale was certainly not the first, in the context of Luke's gospel, to collocate eating and drinking with being, or making, merry. Walter Hilton, c. 1396, writes in book two of his *Ladder of Perfection*: 'And therefore they saye: Ete we, drynke we and make we mery here, for of this life we be syker [i.e. certain]'; and in the *Medytacyons of Saynt Bernarde*, 1495, there is a past-tense version: 'Ete, dranke, and made mery'.[69] Medieval versions frequently use expressions involving 'glad'; thus *The Sayings of St Bernard*: 'Þei eeten and dronken & maden hem glad'.[70] WB2 aims for a more literal rendering of the Vulgate *epulare*: 'reste thou, ete, drynke, and make feeste'.

10. 'There shalbe wepinge and gnasshinge of teth' (Lk 13.28)

Instead of Tyndale's evocative second verbal noun, WB has 'Ther schal be wepinge and betynge togidre of teeth' (cf. Greek 'ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων', Vulgate 'stridor dentium'). But a Lollard sermon-writer had set the precedent for Tyndale: 'þere shal be weping and gnasting of teeth'.[71] 'Gnash' was an alternative form of 'gnast' (a verb of Old Norse origin) and occurs also in other medieval texts in connection with the torments of hell.[72]

11. 'it rayned fyre and brymstone from heven' (Lk 17.29)

I have come across no exactly parallel Middle English form of this reference to the events at Sodom, which is made by Christ as he foretells his second coming. However, a citation of the passage in the *Pricke of Conscience* comes very close: 'It rayned fire fra heven, and brunstane' (Vulgate 'pluit ignem et sulphur de caelo').[73] We may note also that WB differs from Tyndale only in giving the verb a personal subject: 'the Lord reynede fier and brymstoon fro heuene'. The impersonal expression had been used in the *Old English Gospels*: 'hyt rinde fyr and swefl of heofone'.[74] Although 'swefel' occurred most frequently for 'sulphur' in Old English, 'brimstone' was already in use also by the later Anglo-Saxon period.[75]

12. 'father forgeve them, for they woot not what they do . . . to daye shalt thou be with me in Paradyse' (Lk 23.34, 43)

In extracts from Luke's account of the passion in the thirteenth-century *The Mirror of Saint Edmund*, we read: 'Ffadire forgyffe þame þis syne, for þay wate noghte whate þay doo', which differs from Tyndale's version only on account of the supplying of a second object for the verb ('this sin') which is in neither the Greek nor the Latin versions.[76] For Lk 23.43, *The Mirror* has: 'þis day sall þou be with me in paradyse', with its minor variation in the form of the temporal adverb but its putting, as in Tyndale, of verb before pronoun.[77] As so often, Tyndale is close also to WB: 'Ffadir forȝyue hem, for thei witen not what thei doon . . . this dai thou schalt be with me in paradise'. In the KJV, of course, Tyndale's 'woot' gives way to 'know'.

13. 'in the twinclinge of an eye' (I Cor 15.52)

This phrase is a vivid part of Paul's exposition of the mysteries of the resurrection: 'Beholde I shewe you a mystery. We shall not all slepe: but we shall all be chaunged, and that in a moment, and in the twinclinge of an eye, at the sounde of the last trompe' (Tyndale). The Greek 'ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀφθαλμοῦ' was rendered 'in ictu oculi' in the Vulgate, and WB1 showed literalism at its worst by opting for a sense of Latin *ictus* which, in other contexts, might have been appropriate but is clearly wrong here: 'in the smytinge of an yȝe'. The same was done by the equally literal translator of the Pauline Epistles in Corpus Christi College, MS. 32.[78] WB2, however, removed the nonsense by substituting 'twynklyng of an iȝe', presumably because the reviser was familiar with the received idiom in this well-known passage. 'Twinkling', to denote the speed with which the eye closes when one blinks, was well established by the fourteenth century in reference to the events of the end times adumbrated in Paul's epistle. It is used, for instance, in the *Sayings of St Bernard* (of Clairvaux), to describe the fate of ladies who, unthinking, lived the good life:

> Þey beren hem here so stout and hiȝe,
> Ac in twynklyng of an eiȝe
> Heore soules were for-loren.[79]

In the *Pricke of Conscience* (c. 1340), the souls of the saved are likened to angels, who:

> May come doune tylle erth in a moment,
> And up agayne tylle heven may flegh,
> In þe space of a twynkellyng of ane eghe.[80]

B. J. Whiting cites numerous other occurrences.[81] None seems to have the definite article before 'twinkling', which distinguishes Tyndale's version.

14. 'Deeth where is thy stynge?' (I Cor 15.55)

In this further extract from Paul's account of the end times, the Greek 'Ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον?' was rendered 'ubi es mors stimulus tuus?' in the Vulgate. WB1 and WB2 (and the version in Corpus Christi College, MS. 32)[82] chose 'prick' as a translation of *stimulus* (κέντρον): 'Deth, where is thi pricke?' This is perfectly acceptable, but Tyndale's 'sting' seems far more evocative, and has been the choice of virtually all translators since. He was not, however, the first to opt for it. As early as c. 1300, we read in the third book of *Cursor Mundi*:

> To ded i said, 'quar is þi stang?'
> Till hell, 'quar ar þi mightes strang?' [83]

'Stang' is presumably a northern dialect version of 'sting'. The verb was in use in Old English and (in the form 'styng') translates *ictus pungentis* in the ninth-century Old English version of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*.[84]

15. 'Ye have hearde of the pacience of Iob' (Jas 5.11)

Although the phrase 'the patience of Job' has been associated particularly with Tyndale, as though he invented it, in fact it had been proverbial since at least the end of the fourteenth century. It appears in the *Book of the Mother* (c.1400): 'þe pacience of Iob ȝe hauen herd',[85] and in the *Governance of Lordschipes* (c. 1425): 'Yn þe er founden . . . þe pacience of Iob, þe chastite of Daniel'.[86] The tradition of rendering the noun (a translation of Greek 'τὴν ὑπομονὴν', which the Vulgate renders as 'sufferentium') as 'patience' rather than 'suffering' is acknowledged in some manuscripts of WB, where 'patience' is presented alongside the more literal rendering of the Latin noun: ȝe herden [var. 'han herd'] the suffring, eithir pacience, of Job'. Was this perhaps a bowing to the pressure of a well-known proverbial form? In other manuscripts, however, 'pacience' alone or 'suffring' alone is used. The fourteenth-century version of the Pauline Epistles printed by Paues uses a doublet: 'And ȝe habbeþ y-herd þe suffrynge & þe abydynge of Iob'.[87]

16. 'Beholde I stonde at the doore and knocke' (Rev 3.20)

A Lollard sermonist's version of this passage is almost identical with that of Tyndale. He cites the Vulgate words and translates, 'Þat is: "I stonde at þe dore" (þat is, of

mannes soule) "and knocke".'[88] Where Tyndale continues, 'Yf eny man heare my voyce and open the dore, I will come in vnto him and will suppe with him, and he with me', the sermonist writes: 'Whoso heereþ my voice and openeþ to me þe ȝate, I schal entre to him, and soupe wiþ him, and he wiþ me.'

Discussion

Many more such illustrations could be given, and many more are undoubtedly waiting to be identified. I have deliberately restricted my main examples to those in which the parallel idioms in the earlier literature are associated there with the specific scriptural passages under review. Not included, therefore, are such phrases as 'til the worldes ende' or 'the beasts of the field'. Tyndale used the former in Ex 14.13, the passage in which Moses emphasizes the finality of the Egyptians' obliteration, though the KJV opted for the more conventional 'forever'.[89] 'The world's end' is a common enough phrase in the medieval period, but usually has a locative sense. Chaucer, however, is among those who use it temporally, as part of Criseyde's rhetoric about her reputation in *Troilus and Criseyde*:

> Ne though I lyved unto the werldes ende,
> My name sholde I nevere ayeynward wynne.[90]

The second phrase was used by Tyndale in his version of Gen 3.1: 'But the serpent was sotyller than all the beastes of the felde'. It is of a type that has been identified as characteristic of Tyndale, being a very appropriate rendering of the Hebrew construct form, in which two nouns are in genitival relationship.[91] I have not found 'beasts of the field' used in any earlier version of Gen 3.1 (cf. WB1: 'lifers of the erthe' and WB2: 'lyuynge beestis of erthe', translating Vulgate '[callidior cunctis] animantibus terrae'), but it does have a scriptural pedigree. In an early fourteenth-century version of Ps. 8.7, Vulgate *pecora campi* is rendered as 'þe bestes of þe felde'.[92] WB1 and 2 translate likewise in their version of the psalm: 'beestis of the feeld', and WB2 has the same translation for Vulgate *agrestia* in its version of Wisd 19.18 (but cf. WB1 'Feeldi wilde thingus').[93] There are numerous other examples of the use of the noun-plus-of-plus-noun construction to translate two Latin nouns in genitival relationship, in English versions of both the Old and the New Testaments.[94]

Yet how significant are my examples of 'continuity', even when the idioms can be shown to reappear over a long period in successive versions of a specific scriptural

passage? The significance of some is no doubt more apparent than real, resulting from the sort of coincidences which are inevitable when two translators translate the same basic scriptural text into the same language, even if, in one case, that text has been mediated through a third language. This is a phenomenon that Mozley recognized,[95] and I have noted already the recent finding of Nielson and Skousen that as much as 58 or 59 per cent of the language of the Wycliffite translators is shared by Tyndale, despite the fact that the former were translating exclusively from the Latin Vulgate, the latter with reference to the Hebrew and Greek.[96] To take one of the most 'proverbial' of my own examples, it is difficult to see how Christ's words to the disciples in Mt 5.13 ('Ὑμεῖς εστὲ τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς', Vulgate 'uos estis sal terrae') could come out in English – whichever language they were translated from – as anything other than 'You are the salt of the earth', with appropriate variation in the forms of pronoun and verb, according to the period. The words and syntax are the plainest and the metaphor needs no explanation; indeed, it owes its force to simple clarity. Much scriptural language is of like simplicity and offers little scope for variation by translators.

This is undoubtedly the most likely explanation for the many coincidences between Tyndale's English and that of the Wycliffite translators. Several more of my listed examples (such as nos. 5 and 16) might, arguably, fall into this category; and numerous others involving well-known passages are to be found. To cite just one, from Matthew's account of the passion, Tyndale's 'my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Mt 27.46) is matched almost exactly by WB2: 'My God, my God, whi hast thou forsake me?' (cf. WB1: 'My God, my God, whereto [var. 'whi'] has thou forsaken mee?') The only real scope for variation would be in the translation of the Vulgate verb *derelinquisiti* (Greek 'ἐγκατέλιπες'), but 'forsake' seems to be the invariable choice in the medieval and early modern periods.[97]

There are, however, numerous instances where the inevitability of a certain choice of wording is far less obvious than this and where the argument for the establishment and transmission of a special biblical idiom looks more convincing, the more so, perhaps, when WB eschews it for a reasonable alternative. A case in point, as we have seen, is the use of 'sting' in I Cor 15.55 (my no. 14), where 'prick' would have done well enough, and apparently did do so for the Wycliffites. Did Tyndale 're-invent' this translation, or did he choose, from the alternatives available to him, the word which was already current in English in this context, and perhaps had been for at least three hundred years? In the case of 'eat, drink, and be merry' in Lk 12.19 (no. 9), too, the choice of the latter verbal phrase was certainly not dictated by the original, and several good alternatives were possible.

The example of the eighth commandment (part of my no. 2) is particularly useful in studying the mechanics of linguistic continuity in the context of biblical English. The idea involved in the commandment – 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour' – is so simple, and is so simply put, that significant variation in its expression in English seems on the face of it unlikely. In fact, however, 'bear' is by no means the only suitable choice of verb. The Vulgate version, from which of course all our early translators (before Tyndale) were working, one does not 'bear' false witness but 'speaks' it: 'Non loqueris contra proximum tuum falsum testimonium'. The earliest direct translation of the Vulgate commandment that I know of is in an Old English homily in a twelfth-century collection, where the Latin is translated literally: 'Ne spec þu aȝein þine nexta nana false witnesse'.[98] But at least as early as the beginning of that century, the idea of 'bearing' witness was already in place, as the entry for 1127 in *The Peterborough Chronicle* shows: 'he wæs on hæfod ða að to swerene and witnesse to berene'.[99] Its use here is of particular interest, for Peterborough is in the East Midlands, an area of much Danish settlement, and Scandinavian influences on the version of the *Chronicle* written there, especially in respect of vocabulary, are well known. It may be that the idiom 'to bear witness' should be added to the list; certainly *bera vitni* is used in the saga literature and, notably, in the earliest Norwegian laws.[100] Whatever its origin, the currency of the idiom is confirmed by its use a number of times in the *Ormulum* (c.1200), as in 'and bereþþ wittness opennliȝ';[101] and a decade or so before Rolle was writing, Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne* (1303) gives us our first clear example of its use in the expression of the eighth commandment: 'Þou shalt no fals wytnes bere/ Þyn euene crystyn for to dere'.[102] Characteristically, the Wycliffite Bible opts for strict fidelity to the Latin: 'Thow shalt not spek aȝens thi neiȝbore fals witnes' (WB1) and 'Thou schalt not speke fals witnessyng aȝens thi neiȝbore' (WB2). But it is important to reiterate that literalness produces no problem here; there is nothing awkward about the concept of 'speaking' or 'declaring' false witness.

Why, therefore, did Tyndale (along with every subsequent translator, it seems) use 'bear'? The conclusion – and it is scarcely a controversial one – must be that Tyndale used the idiom which was by now the familiar English way of expressing the idea involved in the specific context of the decalogue. That idiom had been established through its use over a long period by preachers and teachers of the ten commandments. It is appropriate here to ask whether Tyndale, as the first English translator of the Old Testament who was equipped to go back behind the Latin or Greek versions to the Hebrew, chose 'bear' as the most accurate or at least the most apt rendering of the original language. In fact this was not the case. The Hebrew verb

used has the basic meaning of 'answer' or 'respond', with a specific sense, in the context of Ex 20.16 and Dt 5.17, of 'respond as a witness' or 'testify'.[103] Jerome's use of a verb meaning 'speak' in his Vulgate version was therefore itself an excellent choice.

The eighth commandment, as treated in *The Lay Folks' Catechism* and related works, which I discussed above, provides us with useful evidence of the existence of two different registers in biblical translation in the Middle English period – a literal one and an idiomatic one. We may compare Archbishop Thoresby's original Latin version of the work both with the fuller English version (the *Catechism* itself) and with a Wycliffite adaptation. In the Latin version, the eighth commandment is cited in its familiar Vulgate form, using the verb *loqueris*, but the English version is in effect a report of the commandment, not a direct translation, so literalness is not called for and the verb used is 'bere':

> The aughtand biddes us we sall bere
> No fals wittenes ogayne our euen-cristen.[104]

In the Wycliffite adaptation the method of presentation is to preface each commandment with a heading which paraphrases it, before giving the commandment itself and then an elaboration and discussion of it. Thus the section on the eighth commandment has the paraphrastic heading, 'Fals wytnesse þow noon *bere* þy neyȝbore wyttyngly to dere', but in the direct translation which follows, the verb changes: 'The eyȝten comaundement is þis. þou schalt not *speke* fals wytnesse ageyns þy neybore.'[105] The explanation for the differences here seems to be that the writer has kept as close as possible to the Latin original when claiming to cite the actual words of the Bible, and this has meant the eschewing of the long established idiom, which he used quite naturally in the heading. Tyndale, unhampered by the constraints of literalism which bound the Wycliffite translators, took up the established idiom.

There is, finally, a further dimension to the development of biblical English which warrants attention, though here I can do no more than introduce it. England in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries was a trilingual country, at least for the educated. English, French, and Latin existed, 'not just side by side but in symbiotic relationship and drawing strength from one another; not three cultures but one culture in three voices.'[106] There is ample manuscript evidence for this state of affairs, demonstrating the ready acceptance of all three languages by both clerical and lay readers.[107] Now, although England had to wait for the Wycliffites for its first complete Bible in the vernacular, France had such a work before the end of the

thirteenth century; not only that, but French scripture, in various forms, was circulating in England, and being copied there, during the thirteenth century (or perhaps even earlier in the case of the psalter).[108] Furthermore, as we have seen, a number of the works in English which were vehicles for the transmission of well-known passages of scripture had been composed originally in French. Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne* was a case in point, being a translation of the *Manuel des péchiez* made towards the end of the thirteenth century. When, therefore, we see 'que vous ne *porteȝ* mi fause tesmoygne' translated in this work as 'Þou shalt no fals wytnes *bere*', we will not be surprised; but we may perhaps go a step further and wonder whether the parallel use of the 'carrying' idiom in French might not have helped in the establishment of the idiom in English among bilingual readers. I suggest no more than the possibility of the reinforcement of an idiom already known (one possibly introduced, in this case, by the Danes). I have noted two other interesting parallels which warrant investigation. First, the 'falling face' idiom used to this day in most English versions of Gen 4.6 (though eschewed by Tyndale), and current in the general language, was in use in French versions of Gen 4.6 in the medieval period (though not in those of today). Second, the French version of Gen 3.7 used a form of Latin *bracas* (*braies*) to describe the garments hastily made by Adam and Eve out of fig-leaves ('aprons' in Tyndale), just as the Old English translator had (*wæd-brec*), and just as the translators of both the Wycliffite Bible and the Geneva Bible did (*brechis* and *breeches*, respectively).[109] Again the possibility of cross-influence ought to be considered.

Conclusion

My survey of continuity in the citation of scripture in religious literature during the three centuries before the Reformation has been unsystematic and impressionistic, but I hope that it has shown that we must be cautious about attributing to Tyndale's creative genius alone all those notable scriptural idioms which we still use, and some of which we have tended particularly to celebrate as his. Tyndale relied on no major pre-existing Bible translation in preparing his own, and yet, to an extent which is difficult to quantify but which I believe has been underestimated, he must have drawn on familiar English idiom and, moreover, often on idiom specifically associated already with well-known passages of scripture. It is easy enough to show Tyndale's great advance on the English of the Wycliffite Bible, but the huge quantity of other pre-existing scriptural verse and prose should not be ignored. Among this material is

of course the mass of Lollard sermons and treatises; as we have seen, it is not unusual for them to carry familiar idioms eschewed in the Wycliffite Bible manuscripts. Whether Tyndale appropriated established scriptural idiom consciously or unconsciously is another matter, and perhaps not an important one, though it seems to me likely that in general the process of choosing would have been an automatic one. Tyndale scholars will perhaps be able to assess likely sources of influence. Only a comprehensive index of scriptural citation in Middle English would enable us to establish the true extent of the continuity of biblical idiom between the earliest Middle English period and the Reformation. For the earlier centuries, a parallel index of representative French translations would enable the separate issue of the influence of such translations on the development of English idiom to be tested also. Collecting Middle English scriptural citation would be a mammoth task, however, made harder by the fact that so many editions of the relevant texts (including some recently published ones) fail to provide their own scriptural indexes.

In claiming that much of the biblical idiom used by Tyndale, and passed on to the KJV, may already have been familiar to users of English before the 1530s, I cast no aspersions on Tyndale's achievement. His original contribution to the evolution of the Bible in English remains, unarguably, colossal, and certainly it lies as much in the all-important area of style as in that of the choice of the individual word or phrase. The fact that Tyndale may have built on known biblical idiom for his version more often than has been acknowledged detracts not at all from our admiration for him. As the authors of modern English versions of the Bible have all too often shown, we reject the familiar at our peril.

NOTES

[1] In the 890s, the first fifty psalms were translated into Old English prose (by King Alfred) and the four gospels and much of the first seven books of the Old Testament (some of the latter by Abbot Ælfric) in the latter part of the tenth century. See below, n. 15.

[2] Jon Nielson and Royal Skousen, 'How Much of the King James Bible Is William Tyndale's? An Estimation Based on Sampling', *Reformation 3* (1998), 49–74, at 67-73.

[3] In the Old Testament, Tyndale reached the end of Chronicles and also finished Jonah; his New Testament was complete. On his life and work, see esp. David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), with discussion of the translations at pp. 108–51 and 283–357, and Gerald Hammond, *The Making of the English Bible* (Manchester: Carcenet New Press, 1982), chs. 1–2. The latter is excellent on Tyndale's English style, in which, in the Old Testament, he was able to stay remarkably faithful to the original Hebrew; and on style see also G. D. Bone, 'Tindale and the English Language', in S. L. Greenslade, *The Work of William Tindale* (London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1938), pp. 50–68.

[4] David Norton, *A History of the Bible as Literature. Volume 1. From Antiquity to 1700* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), p. 85.

[5] See, for instance, J. F. Mozley, *William Tyndale* (London: SPCK, 1937), pp. 104–05, David Daniell, ed , *Tyndale's New Testament. Translated from the Greek by William Tyndale in 1534. In a modern spelling edition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. ix–x, and Rowland Whitehead, 'Pith and Marrow', *The Tyndale Society Journal* 12 (1999), 5–14 and 20, at 13–14. See also David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), p. 64 (a list of 'KJV' influences).

[6] Its production, however, was in line with Wyclif's reforming philosophy. See Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge: University Press, 1920; repr. w. corr. 1966), p. 225, and Anne Hudson, *Lollards and their Books* (London: Hambledon, 1985), p. 145. One of the most judicious surveys of the Wycliffite Bible remains H. Hargreaves, 'The Wycliffite Versions', in *The Cambridge History of the Bible. Vol. 2: The West from the Fathers to the Reformation*, ed. by G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 387–415. For editions, see below, n. 46.

[7] This is the version that used to be ascribed to John Purvey, but there is no firm evidence; see Hudson, *Lollards*, pp. 108–09.

[8] Notably by M. Ellsworth Olsen, in *The Prose of Our King James Version* (Washington, DC: Revier and Herald, 1947), p. 167.

[9] *William Tyndale*, pp. 98–109, with Tyndale quoted at p. 99. See also the comments of David Norton, *A History of the Bible as Literature* I, p. 85, n. 2. Norton discusses the literary

quality of Tyndale's translation and his concept of 'proper English' at pp. 85–104.

[10] *William Tyndale*, p. 100.

[11] 'How Much?', pp. 72–73.

[12] *English Wycliffite Sermons*, ed. by Pamela Gradon and Anne Hudson, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983–96), III, pp. lxix–xcviii, with summary at xcvi–xcviii. Even today, over 250 manuscripts (chiefly of the revised form of the translation) survive, despite deliberate suppression after 1407 and the normal ravages of time.

[13] *English Wycliffite Sermons*, III, p. xcvi. It is of note that Ælfric, at the turn of the first millennium, similarly re-translated lections in his homilies independently of the continuous translations of his which became part of the *Old English Heptateuch*, and 300 years earlier, Bede appears to have felt no compulsion to use the excellent Vulgate text established in three great pandects at his monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow when composing his (Latin) works of exegesis.

[14] *A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version*, ed. by Anna, C. Paues (Cambridge: University Press, 1904), and *The Pauline Epistles contained in MS. Parker 32 Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*, ed. by M. J. Powell, EETS e.s. 116 (London, 1916).

[15] For details, see my '"Ask What I Am Called": The Anglo-Saxons and their Bibles', *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, ed. by J. L. Sharpe and K. Van Kampen (London: British Library, 1998), pp. 145–76, at 161–62; and Geoffrey Shepherd, 'English Versions of the Scriptures before Wyclif', in *The Cambridge History of the Bible. Vol. 2*, ed. by Lampe, pp. 362–87. The glossing in Old English of Latin psalters and gospel-books (often as a help in teaching Latin) was another important aspect of the 'vernacularisation' of scripture.

[16] *The Language of the Book of Common Prayer* (London: André Deutsch, 1965), pp. 152–53.

[17] 'Cain's Face, and Other Problems: the Legacy of the Earliest English Translations', *Reformation* 1 (1996), 29–51, at 39–42. Here I suggest that the use of a form of Latin *brecas* by Ælfric in his translation of Gen 3.7, for the garments made by Adam and Eve to hide their nakedness, may have influenced use of the word (as 'breeches') in later versions, including the Geneva Bible; and also that his deliberately literal rendering of Gen 4.5 may have established the 'falling face' idiom in English, which still survives (though, curiously, Tyndale eschewed it).

[18] Charles C. Butterworth, in his *The Literary Lineage of the King James Bible 1340–1611* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941), p. 33, identifies a 'simple sturdy minimum of speech' as the Old English contribution to the continuity of scriptural English. Despite much unsupported statement and vague argument, Butterworth's work remains useful.

[19] In the following summary, I draw heavily on a number of works, including: W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1955),

pp. 189–262, and J. A. W. Bennett, *Middle English Literature*, ed. by and completed by Douglas Gray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), esp. pp. 23–67 and 291–334. See also the lucid surveys in Albert C. Baugh, *A Literary History of England* (New York and London: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), pp. 158–64 and 200–7, and by Alexandra Barratt, 'Works of Religious Instruction', in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to major Authors and Genres*, ed. by A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. 413–32. Most useful for bibliographical reference are *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500*, ed. by J. Burke Severs and Albert E. Hartung (New Haven, CT: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967–), esp. vol. 2; *Middle English Prose*, ed. by Edwards, chs. 1–3, 5, 9, 10, 12, and 18; and Gray, *Middle English Literature*, pp. 477–79 and 483–85.

[20] These were printed by Richard Morris, along with homiletic pieces from other manuscripts, in *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, First Series, EETS 29, 34 (London, 1868) and *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century*, Second Series, EETS 53 (London, 1873).

[21] *An Old English Miscellany containing A Bestiary, Kentish Sermons, Proverbs of Alfred, Religious Poems of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. by R. Morris, EETS 49 (London, 1872), pp. 26–36.

[22] W. A. Pantin, *The English Church*, p. 235. On the role of the vernacular in preaching, see also G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to the Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350–1450* (Cambridge: University Press, 1926), pp. 22–5.

[23] *Mirk's Festial*, ed. by T. Erbe, EETS e.s. 96 (London, 1905).

[24] *English Wycliffite Sermons* (see n. 12).

[25] *The Lay Folks' Catechism, or the English and Latin Versions of Archbishop Thoresby's Instruction for the People; together with a Wycliffite Adaptation of the same*, ed. by T. F. Simmons and H. E. Nolloth, EETS 118 (London, 1901). See Owst, *Preaching*, p. 282.

[26] Printed in parallel with the earlier versions by Simmons and Nolloth in *The Lay Folks' Catechism.*

[27] *Instructions for Parish Priests by John Myrc edited from Cotton MS. Claudius A. II.*, ed. by E. Peacock, EETS 31 (London, 1868).

[28] *Ormulum*, ed. by R. M. White, rev. by R. Holt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878).

[29] Ed. by O. Arngart, Lund Studies in English 36 (Lund: Gleerup, 1968).

[30] *Cursor Mundi: A Northumbrian Poem of the XIVth Century*, ed. By R. Morris, EETS 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99 and 101 (Oxford, 1874-93; repr. complete 1995).

[31] *The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus Conscientiae) A Northumbrian Poem by Richard Rolle de Hampole copied and edited from manuscripts in the Library of the British Museum* [pt. 2 of The Philological Society's Early English Volume 1862-4], ed. by R. Morris (Berlin: A. Asher & Co., 1863).

[32] *Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne' A.D. 1303 with those parts of the Anglo-French treatise on which it was founded, William of Wadington's 'Manuel des Pechiez'*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS 119 and 123 (London, 1901–03)

[33] *Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwit, or Remorse of Conscience*, ed. by R. Morris, EETS 23 (London, 1866; rev. by P. Gradon 1965).

[34] Ed. by W. Nelson Francis, EETS 217 (London, 1942).

[35] *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse edited from Robert Thornton's MS. (Cir. 1440) in the Lincoln Cathedral Library*, ed. by George G. Perry, EETS 26 (London, 1867), pp. 15–47.

[36] *On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School*, EETS 191A (London, 1932), p. xcvii.

[37] On the *Ancrene Wisse*, see Bennett, *Middle English Literature*, pp. 264–75, with a list of editions of the various versions at p. 483; and on the 'Katherine group', pp. 275–91.

[38] *The Psalter or Psalms of David, and Certain Canticles, with a Translation and Exposition by Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. by H. R. Bramley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884).

[39] *The English Writings of Richard Rolle*, ed. by H. E. Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), pp. 82-119.

[40] *The Ladder of Perfection*, trans. by Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957); *Julian of Norwich, A Revelation of Love*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe, rev. ed. (Exeter: Exeter University, 1986); *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by P. Hodgson, EETS 218 (London, 1944).

[41] Yale Studies in English 41 (New York, 1911). Cook's works were his two series of *Biblical Quotations in Old English Prose Writers* (London: Macmillan, 1898, and New York: Scribner and London: Arnold, 1903).

[42] *Biblical Quotations*, pp. 288–89.

[43] I also acknowledge my general debt to Stella Brook's *The Language of the Book of Common Prayer* (see n. 16, above), which is packed with valuable insights into the development of biblical English. Especially useful are chs. 3 and 4, which examine the stylistic background of the prayer book and compare its language with that of the KJV. Butterworth, *Literary Lineage*, has a valuable appendix (pp. 245–353) which compares more than a dozen English versions (from the Wycliffite period onwards) of selected Bible passages.

[44] They are cited from *William Tyndale's Five Books of Moses Called The Pentateuch, Being a Verbatim Reprint of the Edition of M.CCCCC.XXX*, ed. by J. I. Mombert (1884), reissued with intro. by F. F. Bruce (Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press, 1967). Tyndale published a revision of Genesis in 1534, but there was no alteration to the passages I cite.

[45] They are cited from *The New Testament Translated by William Tyndale 1534*, ed. by N. Hardy Wallis (Cambridge: University Press, 1938).

[46] My source is *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, ed. by J. Forshall and F. Madden (Oxford: University Press, 1850). The Wycliffite Bible is being re-edited by Conrad Lindberg: see *The Earlier Version of the Wycliffite Bible* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1959–97) and *The Middle English Bible* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1978–); the volumes in the latter series give earlier and later versions, along with a Latin text.

[47] *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D. 8*, 2 vols., ed. by S. Spector, EETS s.s. 11 and 12 (Oxford, 1991), I, 39–40: 'Who made me my brother's keeper? Since when was I his protector? I can't tell where he is; I was never appointed to guard him'.

[48] Tyndale varies the eighth commandment slightly in his Exodus version: 'Thou shalt bere no false witnesse agenst thy neghboure' (Ex 20.17).

[49] Ed. by Simmons and Holloth, p. 37.

[50] *English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle de Hampole* ed. by George G. Perry, EETS 20 (London, 1866), pp. 10–11. Perry edits a copy (c. 1440) in the Library of Lincoln Cathedral.

[51] *Lay Folks' Catechism* ed. by Simmons and Nolloth, p. 43.

[52] *Canterbury Tales*, III. 2196, cited from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by L. D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1988), p. 135.

[53] Cited in B. J. Whiting, with the collaboration of H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases From English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1968), p. 501.

[54] *Two Wycliffite Texts: The Sermon of William Taylor 1406; The Testimony of William Thorpe 1407*, ed. by Anne Hudson, EETS 301 (Oxford, 1993) p. 11, l. 294.

[55] Ed. by Simmons and Nolloth, pp. 8, 10, and 11.

[56] *Middle English Sermons edited from British Museum MS. Royal 18 B. xxiii*, ed. by W. O. Ross, EETS 209 (London, 1940), p. 10.

[57] Cf. 'καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν'.

[58] *Religious Pieces*, ed. by Perry, p. 34

[59] Ed. by Francis, p. 111. For a similar version, see *Ayenbite of Inwit*, ed. by Morris, p. 113.

[60] *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Gloria Cigman, EETS 294 (Oxford, 1989), p. 4.

[61] *Wycliffite Sermons*, ed. by Hudson and Gradon, III. 221.

[62] *The Reuele of Crysten Religioun by Reginald Pecock, D.D. now for the first time edited from Pierpont Morgan MS. 519*, ed. by W. C. Greet, EETS 171 (London, 1927), pp. 441–42.

[63] *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Cigman, p. 118.

[64] See *Wycliffite Sermons*, ed. by Hudson and Gradon, I. 339 and 471.

[65] *An Apology for Lollard Doctrines, Attributed to Wicliffe. Now for the first time printed from a manuscript in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin*, ed. by J. H. Todd (London: The Camden Society, 1842), p. 17.

[66] 'καὶ ἴσους ἡμῖν αὐτούς ἐποίησας, τοῖς βαστάσασι τὸ βάρος τῆς ἡμέρας, καὶ τὸν καύσωνα' [lit. 'and thou hast made them equal to us, the having-endured the burden of the day and the burning heat'].

[67] *Old English Miscellany*, ed. by Morris, p. 34: 'and [we] have endured the burden of the suffering and of the heat of the whole day'.

[68] R. M. Liuzza, *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, EETS 304 (Oxford, 1994), p. 40: 'and you treated them like us who bore the burden in this day's heat'.

[69] Both cited in Whiting, *Proverbs* [see above, n. 53], p. 152, from editions by Winkyn de Worde, 1494 (*Medytacyons*) and 1495 (*Scala perfectionis*). For the latter see also *Ladder of Perfection*, trans. by Sherley-Price, p. 142.

[70] *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS. Part II*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS 70 (London, 1901), p. 52, l. 187.

[71] *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Cigman, p. 70.

[72] See, for example, *The Pricke of Conscience*, ed. by Morris, p. 198, l. 7338.

[73] Ed. by Morris, p. 132, l. 4853. Cf. 'ἔβρεξεν πῦρ καὶ θεῖον ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ'.

[74] Liuzza, *Old English Version*, p. 139.

[75] See *Early English Homilies from the Twelfth Century MS. Vesp. D. xiv*, ed. by R. D-N. Warner, EETS 152 (London, 1917), p. 143: 'heo sculen drigen brynstanes stænc on helle' ['they shall endure the stench of brimstone in hell'].

[76] *Religious Pieces*, ed. by Perry, p. 41. 'Πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς· οὐ γὰρ οἴδασιν τὶ ποιοῦσιν' and 'Pater dimitte illis non enim sciunt quid faciunt'.

[77] *Religious Pieces*, ed. by Perry, p. 42.

[78] *Pauline Epistles*, ed. by Powell, p. 97.

[79] *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.* ed. by Furnivall, p. 521 ll. 190–92: 'They acted so proud and haughty, but in the twinkling of an eye their souls were damned'.

[80] Ed. by R. Morris, pp. 208–09, ll. 7736–38. See also p. 214, l. 7948, on the same themes: 'In a schort twynkellyng of ane eghe'.

[81] *Proverbs*, p. 615. Other sources include *The Book of Margery Kempe* and Chaucer's *Clark's Tale*.

[82] *Pauline Epistles*, ed. by Powell, p. 98.

[83] *Cursor Mundi*, ed. by Morris, III, l. 18115: 'To death I said, where is thy sting? To hell, where are your strong powers?'

[84] *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by T. Miller, EETS 95, 96, 110, 111 (London, 1890-98), p. 122.

[85] Cited in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1954–), s.v.

[86] *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, ed. by Robert Steele, EETS e.s. 74 (London, 1898), p. 41. See also Whiting, *Proverbs*, p. 310.

[87] *Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version*, p. 35. Modern versions usually opt for a word which more specifically defines the nature of Job's 'patience', as in 'the perserverence of Job' (NIV) and 'the endurance of Job' (NRSV), and in one abysmal case a paraphrase is engineered: 'how Job stood firm' (NEB).

[88] *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Cigman, p. 2.

[89] Hammond discusses Tyndale's translation here in *Making of the English Bible*, p. 39

[90] V. 1579–80, in *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, p. 558.

[91] See the discussion by Daniell in *William Tyndale*, p. 285, and by Hammond in *Making of the English Bible*, pp. 49–53.

[92] *The Earliest Complete English Prose Psalter together with Eleven Canticles and a Translation of the Athanasian Creed. Part 1. Preface and Text*, ed. by Karl D. Bülbring, EETS 97 (London, 1891), p. 8.

[93] It is also worth noting that the use of the adjective 'subtle' in connection with the serpent of Gen. 3.1 was well established in the medieval period. Thus 'the sotell serpent' in *Lydgate's Minor Poems. The Two Nightingale Poems (A.D. 1446)*, ed. by Otto Glauning, EETS e.s. 80 (London, 1900), p. 6, l. 136.

[94] For example, 'schadewe of deeþ' and 'þe hous of þe lord' for 'umbr[a] mortis' and 'dom[us] Domini' (Ps 22) in *The Prymer or Lay Folks' Prayer Book*, ed. by H. Littlehales, EETS 105, 109 (London, 1895–7), pp. 60-61, and 'liȝt of þe worlde' for 'lux mundi' (Mt 5.14) in *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Cigman, p. 196 (with the same version in WB). And note my examples, 'patience of Job' and 'salt of the earth', above, and 'gnashing of teeth', below.

[95] See above, p. 2.

[96] Above, p. 2.

[97] Other citations of the passage include that of Dame Eleanor Hull, written in the 1420s, in *The Seven Psalms. A Commentary on the Penitential psalms translated from French into English by Dame Eleanor Hull*, ed. by Alexandra Barratt, EETS 307 (Oxford, 1995), p. 97, and Richard Rolle, in *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, ed. by S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, EETS 293 (Oxford, 1988), p. 57.

[98] Ed. by Morris, *Old English Homilies*, First Series, p. 13. This is the earliest occurrence of 'false' collocated with 'witness' that I am aware of. *Neahgebur* (with many spelling variations) for 'neighbour' was already in use in Old English, but *nexta* (a variation of *niehsta*) seems to have been favoured in this context. Cf. the version of the commandment in the Old English translation of Exodus: 'Ne beo ðu on leasre gewitnesse ongean ðinne nextan' (*The Old*

English Heptateuch, ed. by S. J. Crawford, EETS 160 (London, 1922; repr. 1969, with the text of two additional manuscripts transcribed by N. R. Ker)), p. 262.

[99] *Two of the Saxon Chronicles in Parallel with supplementary extracts from the others*, ed. by John Earle and Charles Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892–9), I.258: 'he was the principal one to swear the oath and bear witness'.

[100] I am indebted to Dr Judith Jesch for this information. The standard edition of the old laws of Norway is *Norges gamle love indtil 1387*, ed. by R. Keyser *et al.*, 5 vols (Oslo: Gröndahl, 1846–95); see esp. *vitni* in the glossary (V, 722–25).

[101] Ed. by White, II, 272, l. 17976; see also ll. 17942, 18909, 18929, etc.

[102] Ed. by Furnivall, p. 93, ll. 2637–8: 'Thou shalt bear no false witness in order to harm thy fellow Christian.' The term 'euene crystyn' (in a great variety of spellings) is frequently used for 'neighbour' in Middle English versions of the decalogue.

[103] F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), s.v. I am grateful to Prof. John Rogerson for guidance on the Hebrew text.

[104] Ed. by Simmons and Nolloth, p. 52: 'The eighth commands us that we bear no false witness against our fellow Christian'.

[105] Ed. by Simmons and Nolloth, p. 53.

[106] Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 181.

[107] See esp. *England the Nation*, pp. 185–203. On the mix of languages, see also *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Volume II. 1066–1476*, ed. by N. Blake (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), pp. 1–22, at 5–9 and 15–20.

[108] See C. A. Robson, 'Vernacular Scriptures in France', in *The Cambridge History of the Bible. Vol. 2*, ed. by Lampe, pp. 436–52. Also Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, pp. 141–45 and 212–14. I am indebted to Dr Rosalind Brown-Grant for encouraging me to investigate the French connection.

[109] Gen 4.6: 'Chaym fu moult corrouciez et *son voult cheoiz*', and Gen 3.7: 'et quant il virent qu'il estoient nuz, il cousirent fueilles de figuier et se firent *braies*'; cited from *La Bible française du xiii^e^ siècle: Édition critique de la Genèse*, ed. by M. Quereuil, Publications Romanes et Françaises 183 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1988). On these two examples, see above, p. 3, and n. 17.