

The Authority of Scripture, the Church and the King
in the debate between Thomas More and William
Tyndale 1528-1533

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Tiivistelmä – Referat <p>This thesis examines the literal debate between Thomas More (1478–1535) and William Tyndale (1494-1535) between 1528–1533. The main theme is authority and what Tyndale and More believe to be the highest authority concerning all matters of faith: The Scriptures, the Church or the King. After the historical background this thesis is divided into three analysis sections: In the first section we examine the need for English vernacular Scriptures and Tyndale's translation of the New Testament (1525) and especially the meaning of <i>ekklesia</i> and <i>presbyteros</i> in English. In the second section we examine the foundation of the Church, infallibility of the Church, the relationship between written and unwritten word and the interpreting and defining of the Scriptures. In the third part we examine earthly authority and King Henry VIII's divorce and Tyndale and More's relationship with the king.</p> <p>The sources selected for this thesis are Tyndale's <i>The Obedience of a Christian man</i> (1528), More's <i>A Dialogue Concerning Heresies</i> (1529), Tyndale's <i>An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue</i> (1531) and More's <i>Confutation to Tyndale's Answer</i> (1532-33). The method applied to the sources is close reading. The sources are presented in chronological order in each of the subjects and Tyndale's and More's views are also compared to Erasmus Desiderius and Martin Luther. Erasmus and Christian humanism is a common theological context for Tyndale and More. Tyndale was influenced by Erasmus and More was a collaborator and a friend of Erasmus. Tyndale is compared to Luther in order to examine his dependence on the German reformer.</p> <p>As a result this thesis shows that the highest authority concerning all matters of faith for Tyndale is the Scriptures and for More the Church. Tyndale believes that all matters that we need to know about faith have been written down and there can be no unwritten tradition or doctrine that contradicts the Scriptures. However, More believes that since Christ promised to be with his Church it is guided by his word both written and unwritten.</p>			
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1. Introduction

Thomas More (1478–1535) is one of the most important and controversial figures of 16th century England. He was a lawyer, Christian humanist and a very productive writer. More has been held as a fanatic and a great statesman¹ and he is a saint both in the Anglican and the Catholic Church. He was a friend of Erasmus Desiderius² (1466–1536) and served in the court of King Henry VIII (1509–1547) from 1518 to 1532 eventually rising to the position of lord chancellor in 1529.³ He was heavily involved in fighting against the Reformation⁴ from the early 1520s and was authorised in 1528 to be the official voice of English Church writing against the heretics in vernacular.⁵ William Tyndale (1494–1535) was a priest, theologian and linguistic who translated the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament in English in 1520s and early 1530s and wrote many treatises criticising the Church. He was influenced by Erasmus, Lollards and Martin Luther but had his own distinctive theology on *sola scriptura*.⁶ Tyndale was the most prominent English ‘Lutheran’ theologian and the anti–Lutheran campaign of Thomas More and the English Church was mainly aimed at Luther and Tyndale.

This thesis examines the debate between More and Tyndale which started from the publishing of More’s *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* in 1529. In the *Dialogue* More attacked Tyndale’s English translation of the New Testament and his two treatises *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) and *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528). Tyndale answered with *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue* (1531) and More responded with *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer* (1532–1533). Therefore the time span chosen for this thesis is 1528–1533 and the primary sources are Tyndale’s *The Obedience of a Christian Man* and *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue* and More’s *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* and *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*. Tyndale’s *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* was left out since it concentrates on the matter of justification. *The Confutation* was chosen to be the last work since Tyndale did not answer to it although More wrote against Tyndale even after *The Confutation*. When the

¹ Richard Rex ‘Thomas More and the heretics: statesman or fanatic’, in George M. Logan (ed), *Cambridge Companion to Sir Thomas More*, Cambridge 2011, 93–94.

² Gerard Wegemer *Thomas More A Portrait of Courage* Princeton 1998, 61–64.

³ Cathy Curtis ‘More’s Public Life’, in George M. Logan (ed), *Cambridge Companion to Sir Thomas More*, Cambridge 2011, 75, 83, 87.

⁴ For More and in his lifetime the Reformation, as we know it, was simply heresy.

⁵ Richard Marius *Thomas More A Biography*, New York 1985, 338; Curtis ‘More’s Public Life’, 77.

⁶ Ralph S. Werrell *The Theology of William Tyndale*, Cambridge 2006, 14–21.

debate began More was on the height of his career as the lord chancellor, the king's right hand, and Tyndale was an exile in the continent writing and trying to avoid attention. The debate was only literal since More and Tyndale never met and did not really know each other.

The subject of this thesis is whether the Church, the Scriptures, or the king is the highest authority concerning all matters of faith. Authority was chosen as the main theme since in everything from pilgrimages, miracles, saints, papacy, Tyndale's translation, the sacraments to justification More and Tyndale disagree with what is the final authority, the Scriptures, the Church or the king. In order to contextualise More and Tyndale's notions they are compared to Erasmus whom both were influenced by, both respected and occasionally appealed to in the debate. This common ground in Erasmus and Christian humanism raises the question that why did they end up on so different positions? Tyndale is also occasionally compared to Luther in order to determine his dependence on the German reformer. The method applied to handling the sources, which cover almost two thousand pages, is close reading. The sources are presented in chronological order so that the reader can see the development of the debate and how Tyndale and More respond to each other. After Tyndale and More's views are presented they are compared to Erasmus in the end of each chapter.

In the first part of the analysis section we concentrate on the Scriptures, Tyndale's translation and the vernacular Bible. Tyndale's *New Testament* and More's opinion about vernacular Bible must be investigated because Tyndale's translation reflects his theology. Vernacular Bible is an essential issue because the Scriptures were not available to Englishmen in their native tongue at the time. If the Scriptures are the highest authority but they are not available to the common people in their own language how can they know that the Church is teaching them correctly? More attacked especially Tyndale's translation of *ekklesia* and *presbyteros* and the meaning of these words is handled in detail. The discussion of the meaning of the Greek words and their correct English translations end up on the question whether they are to be decided solely on scriptural basis or by the Church.

In the second part of the analysis section we concentrate on the Church. First we will examine what More and Tyndale saw as the foundation of the Church. Is it founded on Peter or faith? Secondly we will examine whether the Church can err. The understanding of the foundation of the Church affects

Tyndale and More's understanding of whether the Church can err or not. The foundation of the Church is for More and Tyndale a question whether the highest authority concerning all matters of faith is the Scriptures or the Church. In the chapter concerning the question if the Church was before the gospel or the gospel before the Church we will investigate how More and Tyndale saw the place of unwritten word (guidance of Holy spirit, miracles, prophets, oral tradition) in their time compared to the written word (the Scriptures). The relationship of written and unwritten word is a matter of authority. If all necessary to know about matters of faith is written then the Scriptures are the highest authority and all unwritten word must be judged by it. If the unwritten word is held as equal to the written word then the highest authority cannot be the Scriptures. But is it the Church or the king? Finally, we will handle Tyndale and More's understanding of how and by whom the Scriptures should be interpreted which leads us to the question of authority. Can anyone interpret the Scriptures and can all matters of faith be decided with interpreting the Scriptures by comparing the texts together or should the Church, if it is guided by the Holy Spirit, decide the right interpretation?

In the third part of the analysis section will examine More and Tyndale's relationship with earthly authority. This theme concentrates mainly on Henry's divorce and Tyndale and More's opinions about it. The divorce, Henry's 'Great Matter', represents well how Tyndale and More saw the temporal authority and its relationship with the Church and the Scriptures. After all, both sides of the divorce appealed to the Scriptures and it raised the question that who has the authority to decide the matter, the king, the Church, the pope? In the end we will handle the fate of Tyndale and More under the earthly authority.

Dickens summarised the debate in the following way: 'The clash of these two good men stands among the most depressing spectacles of the English Reformation because it involved the imposition of that century's least Christian habits upon its most devoted minds.'⁷ Thomas More and William Tyndale's debate did not always bring the best out of them as Dickens points out. However their verbal extremities rose from their devotion. Both were hopelessly concerned on the salvation of their fellow Englishmen and were willing to do whatever was necessary to fight those who they believed to be leading them astray. More was so deeply against heretics because he believed that heresy could lead to eternal damnation. On similar basis Tyndale wrote in favour of vernacular Scriptures so

⁷ A.G. Dickens *The English Reformation*, Kent 1989, 96.

that people could know if those who teach them are truly with Christ and not false prophets.⁸

More and Tyndale did not spare using colourful language and making rude judgements over each other. In his *Answer* Tyndale compared More to Judas and exhorted him and his 'company' to awake or 'lest the voice of their wickedness ascend up, and awake God out of his sleep, to look upon them, and to bow his ears unto their cursed blasphemies against the open truth, and to send his harvestmen and mowers of vengeance to reap it.'⁹ Tyndale in his *Obedience* called the pope antichrist and 'husband of no wife but the holder of as many whores as he listeth.'¹⁰ Calling each other followers of antichrist was a common argument and More called Tyndale and other 'Lutherans' forewalkers of the antichrist.¹¹ More also stated that in *Obedience* Tyndale 'raileth at large against all popes, against all kings, against all prelates, all priests... against all virtuous works, against all Divine Service, and, finally, against allthing, in effect, that good is.'¹² In the end of his *Dialogue* More summarised that Tyndale is even worse than Luther:

'In which books he showeth himself so puffed up with the poison of pride, malice, and envy... that it is more than marvel that the skin can hold together! For he hath not only sucked out the most poison that he could find through all Luther's books or take of him by mouth, and all that hath spit out in these books; but hath also in many things far passed his master, running forth so mad for malice.'¹³

Of the two More went to a more personal level and his habit of continually mocking Luther and his marriage to a nun in his works has raised a lot of speculation.¹⁴ The style was not always pretty but nothing new in the polemical

⁸ Rex 'Thomas More and the Heretics: Statesman or fanatic', 98; William Tyndale *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 17-18. All references to the *Obedience* are from the edition by David Daniell for Penguin Classics, London 2000.

⁹ William Tyndale *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 15. Reprint of the edition by Henry Walter for the Parker Society, Cambridge 1850.

¹⁰ William Tyndale *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 88.

¹¹ Thomas More *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 434. All references to the *Dialogue* are from the edition rendered to modern English by Mary Gottschalk for Scepter Publishers, New York 2006.

¹² *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 303.

¹³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 424.

¹⁴ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 165: 'Thus, quoth I: as if Luther, lately a friar and having now wedded a nun, were commanded to amend his lewd living and put away that *harlot* whom he abuseth in continual incest and sacrilege under the name of a wife; and he would say that he did well enough... and that their vows could not bind them—were he not bound to believe the Church, and obey, thereto, as well concerning his belief as his living'. Read more in Marius *Thomas More*, 14-15, 345. David Daniell *William Tyndale A Biography*, London 1994, 276; Eamon Duffy 'The comen knowen multytude of crysten men: *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* and the Defense of

works of the time. The function was clearly to make the opponent and their cause seem untrustworthy.

The debate has divided scholarly opinions. According to Daniell, 'More gave us three quarters of a million words of scarcely readable prose attacking Tyndale. Tyndale outraged More by giving us the Bible in English, England's greatest contribution to the world for nearly five hundred years.'¹⁵ Fox stated about More in the controversies that there was seen 'a pattern of progressive deterioration: dialogue gives way to debellation, self-control yields to loss of proportion and perspective, candour is replaced by dishonesty, and charity is displaced by violence.'¹⁶ As previously cited, Dickens found the debate 'one of the most depressing spectacles of the English Reformation.'¹⁷

Tyndale and More have received a very disproportioned attention concerning scholarly studies. Therefore Daniell pointed out that 'Tyndale is only known in some powerful intellectual circles as an annoyance to the blessed Saint Thomas, clinging like a burr to the great man's coat, as if Tyndale's life was meaningless without More.'¹⁸ Daniell obviously wanted to raise Tyndale from the shadow of More. Even though his statements seem to have an emotional stance he does have a point that Tyndale has been sidelined by scholars as an independent object of study. It is easy to find More's works and books about him but there is a lot less material of Tyndale. Until the publishing of Daniell's biography in 1994 there had been no serious competitor to Mozley's biography of Tyndale which was first published in 1937!! First biography of More, written by his son-in-law William Roper was written already in 1557 and serious scholarly biographies came out in steady flow in the 20th century. There has been improvement in the last two decades and Tyndale's works have been published as modern editions and there has appeared new biographies. More has retained his popularity. However, more study of them independently and of their debate is still needed.

Before we go to the debate we must examine the religious situation of the early 16th century in England. Because More was sixteen years senior to Tyndale they were in different points of their lives when the religious atmosphere in

Christendom' in George M. Logan (ed), *Cambridge Companion to Sir Thomas More*, Cambridge 2011, 209.

¹⁵ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 280.

¹⁶ Fox *Thomas More*, 111.

¹⁷ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 96.

¹⁸ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 262.

Europe changed. More graduated in the start of 16th century and had been working for years and started a family before Luther's and other evangelical's ideas started to spread. Tyndale graduated in 1515 from Oxford and continued his studies after that in Cambridge. Tyndale confronted the new ideas as a young theologian and More as a lawyer and statesman working for Henry VIII's court. Therefore to understand the scene for their debate and how they see the Church we must understand what was the situation in the religious life in the early 16th century.

2. Historical background

2.1 The English Church in the early 16th century

Tyndale claimed in *The Obedience* that people know that the clergy are greedy liars and because of that people do not believe them even if they preach the truth. He also claimed that the clergy are uneducated, do not know Latin more than they use in the mass and do not know the New Testament any better than the Turks. According to Tyndale the, clergy do not even care what they say if it fills their bellies. For Tyndale, the clergy only care about 'honour, riches, promotion and authority'.¹⁹ But was the Church in such a bad state in the early 16th century?

In this chapter we will investigate the changes that took place in the English religious life in the first decades of the 16th century. Next we will examine how the Church was changing before the Reformation and how was the Church and its activities experienced by the local parishioners. We will also examine the early acceptance of the Reformation in order to understand whether these changes were wanted by laymen or not. Finally we will examine the spreading of Lutheran ideas and the anti-Lutheran campaigning in England in the 1520s. It is important to set the stage for the debate of More and Tyndale to be able to better evaluate their arguments of the state of the Church and its problems.

2.1.1 Ordinary Englishmen and the Church: Growing dissatisfaction or steady support?

For a long time in the 20th century English Reformation historiography it was a common belief that behind the English Reformation was growing dissatisfaction of the people with the Church which showed in rising of Lollardy and anticlericalism. This belief was founded mainly on Dickens' work *English Reformation* (1964) and Elton's *Reform and Reformation* (1977), and repeated in

¹⁹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 16-18.

Marius's *Thomas More* (1984).²⁰ Dickens founded his arguments mainly on John Foxe's records of heresy trials.²¹ Something must be said about Foxe's reliability. According to Gregory, Foxe edited some of the martyr's radical Protestant views for his *Acts and Monuments*. That does not discredit Foxe entirely but shows us that Foxe had certain criteria for the martyr's included in his work which we need to be aware of.²²

First we must introduce the movement known as Lollards who played an important part in the history of English vernacular Scriptures. Lollard translation and activity lead to The Constitution of Oxford 1408 that forbade the translating of the Bible into English unless given permission by the bishops.²³ The term Lollard was originally connected to the followers of John Wycliffe (d. 1384) who was an English theologian and preacher who studied and taught in Oxford.²⁴ Wycliffe criticised the Church's wealth in his lectures and thought that clerks should be poor because of the example of Christ. Although he was issued with a Papal Bull in May 1377 Wycliffe did not stop and criticised transubstantiation in 1378. After the Peasant's Revolt in 1381 was connected to heresy and blamed on Wycliffe he could not avoid the authorities anymore. Wycliffe was condemned as a heretic in a Church Council in London 1382.²⁵

Wycliffe based his criticism on the Bible which he saw as the highest authority and he emphasised personal faith and reading of the Scriptures.²⁶ Wycliffe and his followers translated the Bible from the Latin version *Vulgate* to English in 1380–84 known as the Wycliffe Bible which was revised by his follower John Purvey in early 15th century. Though the translation was made mostly from word to word it was still the first attempt for a complete Bible in English.²⁷ Wycliffe's followers were dubbed as Lollards which meant a religious

²⁰ A.G. Dickens *The English Reformation*, London 1964, 45-50, 83, 93-95, 97-99, 103-104, 107-108; G. R. Elton *Reform and Reformation England 1509–1558*, London 1977, 9-16; Marius *Thomas More*, 312.

²¹ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 22-37 (1964 ed); Dickens *The English Reformation*, 49-51 (1989 ed).

²² Brad S. Gregory *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*, London 1999, 23-24.

²³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* 388-89; Richard Rex *The Lollards*, New York 2002, 75; Moynahan *Book of Fire*, xxii-xxiii. More does not mention a year for the synodal decree. Rex claims that Bishop Arundel made strict laws of the translating and circulating in 1410. However, Moynahan states that the Constitutions of Oxford was created in 1408 by Arundel. Therefore the *Constitutions* are from now on referred with the year 1408.

²⁴ Rex *The Lollards*, xii-xiii, 25-26.

²⁵ Rex *The Lollards*, 27, 29-32.

²⁶ Moynahan *Book of Fire*, xiii.

²⁷ Peter Levi *The English Bible From Wycliff to William Barnes*, Gateshead 1985, 15-17.

dissident and came from Dutch word meaning mumbling. Rex points out that the term Lollard however came to mean heretics in general in Late Medieval England.²⁸ What is good to remember about the Lollards concerning this thesis is that the movement led to the forbidding of translating the Scriptures in English and that the term was used in 16th century to mean heretics in general.

The Dickens-Elton position was challenged in the 1980's by historians called 'revisionists'. For example, Christopher Haigh, although admitting some validity in Dickens arguments, points out that what might seem as rising Lollardy through Foxe's records might have been simply intensifying control and persecution from the side of the authorities. Haigh explains that this might be because the amount of reported heresy cases seems to be consistent with the level of official investigations. Haigh also points out that there might have been misunderstandings and scepticism of the canon lawyers and theologians towards the laity which might show in their reports as referring to a 'coherent heretical position'. According to Haigh, Lollardy was nothing as big as what the authorities made of it. Haigh adds that we must be careful of making too much of Lollardy simply because the Reformation happened and the Protestant faith won.²⁹

Dickens published a revised second edition of his *English Reformation* in 1989 where he handled new questions raised by recent studies and defended his research against critique by Christopher Haigh and other revisionists. Dickens changed his contextualisation of the English Reformation to cover a longer period. With this he aimed to prove that claiming the Reformation being 'a mere act of state' was a simplification and Haigh was generalising.³⁰ Dickens upheld his main position that there was anticlericalism and growing dissatisfaction to the Church and that the Reformation was somewhat inevitable and that by 1553 'popular protestantism..had already become strong and ineradicable'.³¹ This chapter presents in detail the relationship of the ordinary Englishmen with the Church through the anticlerical versus revisionist position.

When it comes to anticlericalism Dickens and Elton argued that there was resentment towards the clergy among the people even though they valued the

²⁸ Rex *The Lollards*, xii.

²⁹ Christopher Haigh 'Introduction' in *English Reformation Revised* edited by Christopher Haigh, Cambridge 1987, 4-5.

³⁰ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 10; 21-22 (1989 ed.).

³¹ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 10; 21-22; 80-81; 320. (1989 ed.)

Church and its services.³² Dickens raised the issue of clerical education as a part of the grudge and bitterness from laity towards the clergy. According to Dickens the criticism from Colet and More, chancellor of York Minster William Melton's and Bishop of York Edward Lee about too easy admittance, poor educational level and morality of local parish clerics supports this.³³ These men were worried about the uneven education of local parish clergy and Melton for instance was shocked by how they hardly knew Latin and therefore were not be able to read the Scriptures at all.³⁴ In fact the clerical education did vary from university graduates to apprenticeship.³⁵ Melton also claimed that an ignorant person remains ignorant despite of sacred studies which explains the drinking and other immoral actions of the country clergy.³⁶

Dickens does not hide his own views and claims that even the educated clerics outside of London or South-East were not familiar with the new ideas such as Christian humanism nor protestantism and were close-minded and lacked interest in developing the Church.³⁷ Dickens is very critical towards the high-rate of annual ordination of clergy which had been highly increasing in the decades before Reformation. It certainly did constitute the problem that there was not enough proper jobs for all the clergy and therefore many had to deal with very low income.³⁸ According to Dickens, young scholars and laymen expected better Christian teaching but the administratively focused bishop's did not meet this expectation especially in the 1520s.³⁹ Dickens puts the situation of the early sixteenth century English Church the following way: 'Their power and influence in society was more apparent than real. They stood in no favourable posture to wage any conflict against the growing pretensions of the laity and of the State. Their leaders lacked inspiration, unity and loyalty to the supranational concept of Christendom...English Church remained too full of conflicting interests, too complacent in its conservative and legalist routines to reform itself.'⁴⁰

If the immorality and poor education lead to the foresaid anticlericalism why did laymen chose to become clergy in an increasing amount in the early

³² Dickens *The English Reformation*, 90-102 (1964 ed.); Elton *Reform and Reformation England*, 8-11, 51-58, 118-119.

³³ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 68-69; 72-73. (1989 ed.)

³⁴ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 69. (1989 ed.)

³⁵ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 69; 72. (1989 ed.)

³⁶ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 69. (1989 ed.)

³⁷ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 73. (1989 ed.)

³⁸ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 70. (1989 ed.)

³⁹ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 65. (1989 ed.)

⁴⁰ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 80. (1989 ed.)

sixteenth century? Haigh confirms the notion that majority of the clergy were to expect low-rate assistance jobs because of the high amount of recruits. Therefore the high number of ordination is even more surprising. The popularity of attaining clerical career is very surprising if there had been significant tensions from the laymen towards the clergy.⁴¹ According to Haigh study of reports from local parishes has shown that despite some local conflicts people were quite satisfied about their parishes and clergy and hardly complained of them. Haigh suggests that anticlericalism has been used to explain why the Reformation was so peaceful.⁴² But although the Reformation in England was peaceful compared to the continent it was not without resistance and there was differences in the acceptance of the Protestant faith in different areas.⁴³ Haigh also questions the motives of London lawyer Edward Hall (1497–1547), the main chronicle source supporting a rising negative atmosphere towards clergy in London and the Parliament. Hall's accounts of anticlericalism have to be noted but also interpreted with care since he was working with Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540) and his aim was to show that the Church was oppressive against the people and Henry VIII and the authorities needed to stop it.⁴⁴

Haigh also warns to make too much of the first session of Parliament in 1529 where three statutes were made against the Church: *The Mortuaries Act*, *Probate Act*, and the *Supplication Act*. Haigh points out that both mortuary and probate costs hardly changed and the poor were mostly released from them anyway.⁴⁵ *The Supplication Act* claimed that the church courts were inefficient and expensive and interested more in money than justice. This has been proved incorrect by regional studies of the church courts which are reported later in this chapter. Haigh suggests that the attack against the church courts might have been Cromwell's political game to turn the Commons against the bishops to save his own career. Other reasons might be that the heresy cases against laymen had increased and they had concerned more educated people than before which might have made politicians concerned of the Church and its way of handling criticism.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Christopher Haigh 'Anticlericalism And The English Reformation' in *English Reformation Revised* edited by Christopher Haigh, Cambridge 1987, 70.

⁴² Haigh 'Introduction', 5.

⁴³ Haigh 'Introduction', 7.

⁴⁴ Haigh 'Anticlericalism And The English Reformation', 60.

⁴⁵ Haigh 'Anticlericalism And The English Reformation', 60-62.

⁴⁶ Haigh 'Anticlericalism And The English Reformation', 63-64.

There was also competition between common law courts (common lawyers suffered from unemployment) and the church courts which were partly handling cases such as breach of contract and litigation of debt which had belonged to the common courts before and were more of their area. Even though that might have not been the reason for the employment problem of common lawyers it is easy to understand that they wanted to change the practise. As it can be seen, the changes made by the Parliament were more cosmetic than major and can hardly be interpreted as a sign of extensive anticlericalism which also shows in the fact that the second meeting of the Parliament in 1529 hardly touched any ecclesiastical matters.⁴⁷ Haigh suggests that the real purpose of the Parliaments acts was to bring down Cardinal Wolsey's ailing career for good with these three acts that were connected to his career.⁴⁸

What was also different from the continent in the English Reformation was that it was slow and happened gradually during a thirty year period from 1530s to 1560s. Dickens saw the progressing of the Reformation as gradual protestantization of the authorities and clergy towards glad acceptance of the people.⁴⁹ Haigh claims that Dickens ignores the difference of the Reformation of the state and people. According to Haigh the focus of protestantism on reading of the Scriptures, justification by faith and predestination was not appealing to the laymen. He also claims that Reformation came from above and was driven by Henry's and politicians motivations.⁵⁰

Ronald Hutton's study concerning the impact of the Tudor Reformations based on the churchwarden's accounts gives an interesting insight on the parishes. According to Hutton during Henry's reign from the 1520s to his death the practises and ornaments of the Church hardly changed in local parishes unless enforced by law. And for the disappointment of Protestants their main agenda of having Scripture available in local parishes did not receive enthusiastic reception but the order to buy Bibles was largely neglected.⁵¹ Ronald Hutton's study shows that local parishes were very active and people invested in their churches and their decorations and images and little changed before the Injunctions of 1538.⁵²

⁴⁷ Haigh 'Anticlericalism And The English Reformation', 65.

⁴⁸ Haigh 'Anticlericalism And The English Reformation', 60.

⁴⁹ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 36-37, 45-50, 83, 325-329. (1964 ed.)

⁵⁰ Haigh 'Introduction', 6-7.

⁵¹ Ronald Hutton 'The Local Impact Of The Tudor Reformations' in *English Reformation Revised* edited by Christopher Haigh, Cambridge 1987, 114-119.

⁵² Hutton 'The Local Impact Of The Tudor Reformations', 116-117.

D.M Palliser has studied the acceptance of the Reformation in different areas. His study shows how closing down the monasteries and shrines and banning pilgrimage and worshipping of saints affected everyday life and faced opposition. Even though resistance was mostly not very open examples of open resistance occurred such as the five risings in the north in 1536–37. Though there was partly social and economic motivations behind the risings the main focus was to defend the Church (Latin mass, chantries etc.) against the changes made by authorities.⁵³ Palliser's study also goes through the religious content in wills of ordinary men and women of the era and shows that Catholic imagery remained common for decades after official separation of the English Church.⁵⁴ Palliser also gives notice to the fact that even though the clergy were allowed to marry there was great variation between areas in clerical marriage from London's almost thirty percent to Lancashire's under five percent from its legalization in 1549 to 1553. Clerical marriage was also not taken among laymen without resistance and according to Palliser married ministers were treated harshly even in Elizabeth's time in Lancashire and Cornwall.⁵⁵

Palliser's study shows from these various sources that support for the old faith and conservative beliefs did not disappear with the the protestantation of England but fought back and survived even in Elizabeth's reign. Palliser summarises that there was opposition to the new faith even in Elizabeth's reign especially in the north but also in Hamsphire and Sussex even though there was significant Protestant support in these areas as well.⁵⁶ Even though Palliser's study focuses on a later period than More and Tyndale's debate it gives a good perspective to the openness and acceptance of the new ideas from the continent in England in general.

As mentioned earlier, Dickens claimed that laymen were not satisfied with the Church in early 16th century and the Church was too strained by the conflicting motives inside it to reform itself and the leaders uninspired to do so either.⁵⁷ However, Stephen Lander's study shows that before the Reformation there was especially administrative reform happening in the English Church. One might not think that the functionality of the church courts had importance to

⁵³ D.M. Palliser 'Popular Reactions To The Reformation During The Years Of Uncertainty 1530-1570' in *English Reformation Revised* edited by Christopher Haigh, Cambridge 1987, 96-99.

⁵⁴ Palliser 'Popular Reactions To The Reformation', 98-99.

⁵⁵ Palliser 'Popular Reactions To The Reformation', 100.

⁵⁶ Palliser 'Popular Reactions To The Reformation', 99-100.

⁵⁷ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 80 (1989 ed.).

the spiritual wellness of the parishes but they did. In the eyes of a local parishioner it mattered if and how misbehaving clergy or laymen were corrected, how long a probate of wills or handling of instance cases took and how expensive dealing with the court was. In the early 16th century there was rivalry in the church courts over the most lucrative instance cases. This led to overlooking of disciplinary cases which were not that profitable for the judges and proctors and the convictions, if charges were even pressed, were light.⁵⁸

Robert Sherburne the Bishop of Chichester in 1508–1536, however, made a thorough reorganisation, hired new educated staff and unified the jurisdiction by 1518. This resulted in a serious improvement in the courts effectiveness and the court days in the consistory court exceeded from 19 in 1507 to 45 in 1524 and the dealing of office cases such as the disciplinary cases increased from 65 in 1507 to 195 in 1520. According to Lander also all the charges were mainly justified and the court functioned well. This also led to cheaper costs in plaintiffs and probate of wills.⁵⁹ Even though Lander's study is about one diocese and there were differences in the way bishops lead their dioceses it still shows that the reality was not as dark as Dicken's painted it. There was reform happening, although administrative, that had actual impact wellbeing of local parishes. From this point of view the effects of the Parliament's attack towards the church courts from 1529 onwards worsened the conditions of local parishes by weakening of the church courts and decreasing their effectiveness.⁶⁰ It seems that Tyndale's criticism of the education of the clergy was not entirely out of place. However, unlike Tyndale claimed, the people were quite happy with the Church and did not think that the clergy were greedy liars nor cared so much for having the Scriptures in vernacular.

2.1.2 Lutheran ideas in England in 1520s

More stated numerous times that Luther was Tyndale's master and Tyndale therefore a Lutheran.⁶¹ Because Tyndale was marked as a Lutheran we must examine how Lutheran ideas were spreading in England in the 1520s. More became involved with fighting against Luther from early on and therefore we

⁵⁸ Stephen Lander 'Church Courts And The Reformation In The Diocese Of Chichester, 1500-58' in *English Reformation Revised* edited by Christopher Haigh, Cambridge 1987, 34-37.

⁵⁹ Lander 'Church Courts And The Reformation In The Diocese Of Chichester, 1500-58', 38-42.

⁶⁰ Lander 'Church Courts And The Reformation In The Diocese Of Chichester, 1500-58', 46-47.

⁶¹ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 327, 346-347, 350-351.

must examine these years before he became the official heresy fighter that started the debate with Tyndale.

More's involvement in fighting against The anti-Lutheran campaign started in 1521 with King Henry VIII's response to Martin Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) the *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments Against Martin Luther*. Luther had written that there were only three sacraments according to the Scriptures which were the eucharist, baptism and penance and Henry's work defended the Catholic Church's seven sacraments. More had just been knighted in May and promoted to undertreasurer. Henry earned the title 'Defender of the Faith' from Rome of his work and for More it was his first involvement in writing and fighting against heresy.⁶² It was also an acknowledgement that the religious changes happening in the continent were something to be worried about and needed official attention in England too.

The new theological ideas had been spreading in universities for sometime especially in Cambridge. Erasmus had taught there in the previous decade and the students gathered in the local pub White Horse to discuss the burning matters. Future key figures such as Miles Coverdale, Thomas Bilney, Hugh Latimer and Robert Barnes who served as a chairman, attended these meetings. Lutheran books were circulating in the university and the officials intervened and there was a big burning for heretical books lead by Cardinal Wolsey on 12 May 1521.⁶³ As Elton points out the officials had no reason to be worried about students debates in the universities since it was nothing new to them. However, he adds that the similarity of Lutheran ideas with Lollardy was something they were worried since it could mean that Lutheran ideas might find support outside of universities.⁶⁴ Although the officials probably thought so it has been showed by Haigh and others that the threat and amount of Lollards was not as great and more likely the increasing persecution just made it seem so.⁶⁵

Another important group was businessmen and merchants in London and foreign traders. A good example of the merchants who were caught up by Luther's ideas was Humphrey Monmouth who was a cloth merchant and importer and distributor of heretic literature and became a patron to Tyndale while he was

⁶² Marius *Thomas More*, 202-203.

⁶³ Dickens *The English Reformation*, 91-92. (1989 ed.)

⁶⁴ Elton *Reform and Reformation England*, 74.

⁶⁵ Haigh 'Introduction', 4.

in London.⁶⁶ Even though the development of printing media had enormous effect in spreading the new ideas it was hardly the sole vehicle. Sermons, images and dramas were also of great importance since being able to read and write was not common among the average folk in Tyndale's and More's time.⁶⁷ However, in England the strict heresy laws made public preaching of evangelical ideas rather dangerous and drove many reformers abroad. That gave printed works even more value in England.⁶⁸ The atmosphere towards heresy tightened in 1526. Raids and book burnings started a more active phase in February 1526 under Wolsey with assistance of Tunstall, Fisher and More. Tyndale's *New Testament* began to spread from March 1526 and it started to become clear that the spreading of lutheranism was increasing.⁶⁹

Under these consequences Tyndale and More's readers were limited to mainly educated people though writing in vernacular broadened the audience. However, Tyndale definitely hoped that especially his *New Testament* would find the laymen and help them see the errors of the Church.⁷⁰ Tyndale might have also thought that those who could read would read the Scriptures or his treatises to others. Daniell speculates on the interest in the 1520s to Lutheran ideas and vernacular Scripture through the size of the print of Tyndale's *New Testament*. Daniell points out that when usually the prints in Europe were averagely about 1000 copies and Luther's September edition of the *New Testament* about 4000 copies the Worms print of Tyndale's *New Testament* in 1526 was rather large possibly even 6000 copies. Although there has been more modest suggestion the edition was at least 3000 copies which would still be quite large even for a Bible print (they were usually larger than the average).⁷¹ Daniell points out that even though printing such a large amount was a financial risk, and the first print was shockingly for Tyndale mostly burnt by Cuthbert Tunstall in London there proved to be demand since five pirate editions were printed between 1527–1534.⁷²

Daniell reminds that too much should not be made of this in evaluating the number of heretics in England in that period. According to Daniell there were probably just 50 lutherans and a few hundred Lollards in England in 1520s and

⁶⁶ Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 45.

⁶⁷ Brad C. Pardue *Printing, Power, and Piety: Appeals to the Public during the Early Years of the English Reformation*, Amersfoot 2012, 72.

⁶⁸ Pardue *Printing, Power, and Piety*, 21.

⁶⁹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 189-190.

⁷⁰ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 16.

⁷¹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 187-188.

⁷² Daniell *William Tyndale*, 187-188, 191.

the core members were partly the same as shown in records. Daniell joins with Haigh and others in concluding that Foxe's (and Dickens' also) assumption of rising lollardy and public hope for reform was exaggeration, although he sees that the anticlericalism was still formidable.⁷³ Pardue adds that through the bishop's records and John Foxe's chronicles we can see that the people who were caught with heretic literature were not a homogenic cast: singers, priests, lawyers, servants and merchants for instance.⁷⁴ The scene where our debaters start their battle of words has now been set. Although the battle was a very serious one for More and Tyndale it seems that for the common Englishmen, who were quite happy with the Church and its mass, sacraments and rituals, it did not have much relevance.

2.2 Thomas More and William Tyndale

In this section we will examine the lives of Thomas More and William Tyndale. It is important to see how a famous Christian humanist like More ended up in the court and was involved in fighting heresy and why Tyndale had to leave England in order to make his translation. Their biographies also show us what they came to hold as the highest authority. We will also examine Erasmus' friendship and influence on More and his influence on Tyndale. This is important since Erasmus and his Christian humanism provided in many ways the common ideological and theological context for both Tyndale and More even though they ended up in very different directions. Understanding the change of atmosphere in English politics and religion in the first decades of the 16th century also helps us to see why More and Tyndale were heading for different directions. More and Tyndale will be dealt separately because they did not really know each other. Since More was 16 years older than Tyndale, they had really no connection before More's *Dialogue* and they never even met. Erasmus' influence is handled in its own chapter.

2.2.1 The Life of Thomas More

Thomas More was born in February 6th 1478 in London as a second child and first son to a middle class family of John More (1451–1530) and Agnes More (d. before 1507).⁷⁵ Thomas More's father John More was a lawyer who worked for

⁷³ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 188.

⁷⁴ Pardue *Printing, Power, and Piety*, 77-78.

⁷⁵ Guy *Thomas More*, Cornwall 2000, 22.

the court and wanted his son to have a good education.⁷⁶ At the age of sixteen Thomas began his law studies at Inns of Court in London. In addition to law More also studied Greek literature, philosophy, theology and history.⁷⁷ Thomas More and Erasmus' friendship started when Erasmus came to England for the first time in 1499 to tutor Lord Mountjoy. They shared the common interests in Greek and classics.⁷⁸ More seems to have been struggling between spiritual and public profession between 1500–1504 when he lived in Carthusian monastery or close to it.⁷⁹ Besides his studies More concentrated on prayer and devotion in the monastery. From the monastery he moved to the house of John Colte from Essex who had four daughters and in 1504 or 1505 More married Colte's eldest daughter Jane.⁸⁰

Erasmus stayed with More's family for six months from late 1505 while they translated Lucian together. McConica points out that although Erasmus was ten years senior from More, More had started studying Greek earlier than Erasmus and the translation work was 'more companionable than that of master and pupil.'⁸¹ The translations were published in 1506 and printed at least thirteen times in their lifetime.⁸² When Erasmus came back to England in June 1509 he wrote or at least finished his famous book *The Praise of Folly (Enconomium moriae)* at More's home his famous book which was dedicated to More. The Latin name *Enconomium moriae* is a wordplay of More's latinised name.⁸³ The closeness of their relationship has been a matter of dispute and the matter is handled in detail on page 29.⁸⁴

More's connection to the monastery has inspired speculation if he would have wanted to become a priest but gave up because he could not live in celibacy. According to John Guy this conversation started from Nicholas Harpsfield's biography of More (1557) where he interpreted William Roper's story of More living in the monastery 'without vow' meaning struggle between priesthood and a

⁷⁶ Caroline M. Barron 'The making of a London citizen' in George M. Logan (ed), Cambridge Companion to Sir Thomas More, Cambridge 2011, 8-9.

⁷⁷ Curtis 'More's Public Life', 71-72.

⁷⁸ Marius *Thomas More*, 79-81.

⁷⁹ Marius *Thomas More*, 34.

⁸⁰ William Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, knyghte*, 6. All references to *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas* are from Early English Text Society edition, Original series, No. 197, Suffolk 1958.

⁸¹ MacConica 'Thomas More as humanist' in George M. Logan (ed), Cambridge Companion to Sir Thomas More, Cambridge 2011, 29.

⁸² E.E. Reynolds *Thomas More and Erasmus*, London 1965, 54-55.

⁸³ Marius *Thomas More*, 88-89, 94-95.

⁸⁴ Marius questioned the closeness of More's and Erasmus' relationship and *Praise of Folly* as a strong evidence of it. Marius *Thomas More*, 92-95. Wegemer had quite the opposite stance. Wegemer *Thomas More*, 61-64.

layman's life.⁸⁵ This view has been supported by researchers such as Richard Marius who saw More's marriage as 'sexual necessity'.⁸⁶ Guy points out that Roper's story does not give much information and the Carthusian monastery could have attracted More because it was a center of lay piety in London and there was a great library.⁸⁷ According to Wegemer, More had a conflict whether to marry or become a priest but sees it rising from the way marriage was seen as a concession and therefore a lesser choice than priesthood. Wegemer adds that More would rather be a 'chaste husband than a licentious priest'.⁸⁸ Obviously More was deeply interested in the religious matters from a young age but More's choice to marry and be a layman was probably not simply his to make. Thomas was the eldest son and his father had paved the way for More's career as a lawyer from early childhood. He would have probably been very disappointed if Thomas had chosen not to marry and become a priest. This period is nevertheless important in understanding More's theological positions later in his life when he was writing against Tyndale and other heretics.

More was obviously talented and progressed fast in his career. First he worked in various positions at Inns of Court but in 1509 he was appointed an honorary member of the Mercers Company, elected to Henry's first parliament as a representative of Westminster and made justice of the peace in the County of Middlesex. More also worked as an undersheriff for London from 1510 to 1518.⁸⁹ In the summer of 1511 More's wife Jane died but he remarried in a month to Alice Middleton (1471–1551) a widow six years his senior.⁹⁰ During these busy years with work and family More also wrote his famous novel *Utopia* which was published in 1516.⁹¹ More worked successfully in the royal commissions and eventually the king wanted More to work for him fulltime.⁹² More accepted in the spring of 1518 even though he was still unsure and wrote to Bishop John Fisher that he had done so against his will 'as everyone knows'.⁹³ According to Curtis, More's education in the humanist field hints that his career development was

⁸⁵ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 6; Nicholas Harpsfield *The life and death of Sr Thomas Moore, knight, sometyms Lord high Chancellor of England*. Edited by Elsie Vauhan Hitchcock. Oxford 1963, 17; Guy *Thomas More*, 29-30.

⁸⁶ Marius *Thomas More*, 39-40.

⁸⁷ Guy *Thomas More*, 30.

⁸⁸ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 10-11.

⁸⁹ Curtis 2011, 72-73.

⁹⁰ Marius *Thomas More*, 41.

⁹¹ Marius *Thomas More*, 153.

⁹² Guy *Thomas More*, 46-47. According to Guy, Cardinal Wolsey asked More to join the court already in 1514 but More tried to avoid it and made excuses.

⁹³ Curtis 'More's Public Life', 74.

predictable.⁹⁴ Of course More also understood that not accepting the king's will could have negative consequences and joining the court was a careerwise move.

The year 1521 marked a sort of a turning point for More since in the spring he was knighted, appointed under-treasurer of exchequer and became involved with Henry's campaign against Luther.⁹⁵ This involvement would lead to a path that would define greatly his later career and his controversial reputation even in his own lifetime. Henry VIII's *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments Against Martin Luther* was published in the summer of 1521 and it was a response to Martin Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520). The *Assertion* attacked Luther's claim that there are only three sacraments found in the Scriptures and defended the Catholic teaching of seven sacraments with a short section on the defence on indulgences.⁹⁶

The level of More's involvement with the *Assertion* has been a subject of debate.⁹⁷ More wrote later in 1534 in a letter to Cromwell that he had advised Henry to write carefully about papal power. More had argued that giving too much power for pope might be harmful if a conflict would arise between the king and pope later on.⁹⁸ Marius claims that Henry did not write it entirely by himself but got help from a committee that More was a part of since Henry 'never in his life showed slightest talent in writing extended prose'. Marius also argues that the Latin in *The Assertion* is not in the style of More.⁹⁹ Daniell agrees with Marius with the idea of a committee being partly behind *the Assertion* but sees More's style in the argumentation and the way Luther's personality as a heretic is attacked.¹⁰⁰ If More instead of just giving guidance wrote parts of the *Assertion* it is interesting that he would later write in the same letter to Cromwell, as previously mentioned, that he had been unsure of the divine authority of the see of Rome before reading Henry's *Assertion*.¹⁰¹ Of course this could have been just politeness towards the king but it seems odd that More would first advise the king not give too much power in his book and then later write that the same book assured him of the pope's supremacy. All the same More later referred to the

⁹⁴ Curtis 'More's Public Life', 73.

⁹⁵ Curtis 'More's Public Life', 76-77. Rex 'Thomas More and the Heretics: Statesman or fanatic', 95.

⁹⁶ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 251-252.

⁹⁷ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 252.

⁹⁸ Marius *Thomas More*, 278.

⁹⁹ Marius *Thomas More*, 279.

¹⁰⁰ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 252-253.

¹⁰¹ *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, edited by Elisabeth Francis. Princeton 1947, 498.

Assertion several times in his polemical writings when defending pope even though the book leaves the extend of pope's power quite ambiguous.

1529 was another turning point for More as he was Henry's representative with Tunstall and John Hacket in the meeting of the 'universal church' in 1529 which Charles V called to decide on mutual actions against the threat of Reformation. Henry seems to have been satisfied with his representatives since shortly after Tunstall was promoted bishop of Durham and More as lord chancellor in 25th of October after Wolsey's fall.¹⁰² More and Tunstall had tried to get Erasmus to take part in the fight against Luther but since he declined continuously More took the pen and started writing against heretics with the authorization of Tunstall in March 1528. The first result of this was the publishing of his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* in 1529 which was written against Tyndale and Luther.¹⁰³ More was soon outlined in the courts affairs since it was focusing increasingly on Henry's desired divorce. The new rising star of English politics was Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540) a lawyer who supported the divorce and became Henry's adviser.¹⁰⁴ More was still busy writing against heretics and published his first part of *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* in January 1532.¹⁰⁵ More hanged on until 1532 when Henry first got through in the Parliament the *Act in Conditional Restraint of Annates* and later in May the *Submission of the Clergy* to the crown which made him the head of the Church of England. This was too much for More who resigned in 16th of May 1532 and gave back the royal seal and wished to withdraw from public life and concentrate on spiritual matters.¹⁰⁶

More was hardly inactive after resigning but kept busy with writing against the heretics and released his second part of *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* in 1533 and other works. More did not attack the King directly in his writings but defended the Church's legal independence. More made a much stronger statement by not attending the coronation of Anne Boleyn in June 1533.¹⁰⁷ However, Henry would not stand such opposition for long of a internationally known lawyer, humanist and statesman such as More.

¹⁰² Curtis 'More's Public Life', 82-83.

¹⁰³ Marius *Thomas More*, 333-334; 338-339.

¹⁰⁴ Curtis 'More's Public Life', 85.

¹⁰⁵ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 142.

¹⁰⁶ Curtis 'More's Public Life', 87.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Marshall 'Last years' in George M. Logan (ed), *Cambridge Companion to Sir Thomas More*, Cambridge 2011, 118-119.

In early 1534 after the House of Lords had for three times refused Henry to accuse More of heresy he set his own commission of Cranmer, Cromwell, Duke of Norfolk and the new lord chancellor Thomas Audley to handle the case.¹⁰⁸ More was called in front of the commission in March but their attempts to change More's mind were useless.¹⁰⁹ Cromwell had however come up with a way to catch More by tightening the treason laws to include death sentence for actions and writings with malicious intent and prison sentence for speech with malicious intent.¹¹⁰ In April 1534 More was invited to the palace of Lambeth to take an oath like many others to support the legality of Henry's marriage and the right of their possible offspring to the crown. More declined to make the oath nor state his reason for it.¹¹¹ After the interrogation More was kept under the surveillance of the Abbott of Westminster for four days to pressure him before he was imprisoned in the Tower since there was no evidence against him.¹¹²

During his fourteen months in the Tower, More wrote many devotional works such as *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* and *De Tristitia Christi* (*The Sadness of Christ*). He was allowed visitors and he corresponded with his friends and especially with his daughter Margaret.¹¹³ Through the many interrogations More continued not to plainly state his opinion of the king's supremacy nor his marriage. *The Act of Supremacy* was passed in November 1534 which finalised Henry's power over Church and in November More was also charged with an attainder for serving the king unkindly and with 'sundry' ways. More was called in front of the counsel for the last time in 1st of July 1535 where he was read four counts from a long indictment. The fourth count which said that More had maliciously deprived the king of his title in a conversation with Richard Rich on 12th of June was to be the one that lead to his sentence although More denied ever doing so and claimed that Rich was lying. More was sentenced to death and the sentence was executed 6 July 1535 in the Tower.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 159.

¹⁰⁹ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 64-67.

¹¹⁰ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 162.

¹¹¹ Marius *Thomas More*, 461-464. According to Cranmer the problem for More was probably the introduction which declared that marriage is a secular matter and Henry's marriage to Catherine had been against God's will and the marriage to Anne sacred. Marius *Thomas More*, 463.

¹¹² Marius *Thomas More*, 463-464.

¹¹³ Marshall 'Last Years', 123.

¹¹⁴ Marshall 'Last Years', 126, 129-131, 133.

2.2.2 The Life of William Tyndale

William Tyndale (1494–1535) was most likely born in mid-Gloucestershire to a family of wealthy landowners and merchants. His parents names are not known but he had at least two brothers, Edward and John who rose to influential positions in the area. Records for his early life are not as accurate as Thomas More's and the first real fact we know about him is that he took his Bachelor of Arts 1512 in Oxford.¹¹⁵ Tyndale probably attended grammar school at Wotton-under-Edge as a child where from he went to Magdalen Hall at Oxford around 1506.¹¹⁶ In Oxford, Tyndale improved his skills with subjects that would later come in good use such as Latin and rhetoric and probably also started his Greek studies graduating as Master of Arts in 1515.¹¹⁷ Tyndale was not satisfied for the years of scholastic studies before being able to study the Scriptures (which was possible only after completing the Master of Arts-program) and thought that it was brainwashing that would prevent students from understanding them.¹¹⁸

Tyndale went from Oxford to Cambridge. Campbell suggests that Tyndale left because the atmosphere in Oxford was getting strained by the rising quarrels of 'Greeks' who supported classical studies and 'Trojans' who were strongly against them. The quarrel grew into such measures that the king had to send Thomas More to solve the situation in 1518 and settled it in favour of the 'Greeks'.¹¹⁹ Daniell affirms that the rising hostility in Oxford might have influenced Tyndale's choice but points out that Richard Croke's Greek lessons and the more tolerant atmosphere for Lutheran ideas also made Cambridge quite appealing.¹²⁰ Erasmus had taught there a few years earlier and finished his *Novum Instrumentum*¹²¹. Cambridge was more affected by the rising interest of what we know as humanism and, as Moynahan describes, was 'more radical and more Lollard-influenced than Oxford'.¹²² Cambridge provided Tyndale with the chance to study Greek and get his hands on Erasmus's Greek *New Testament*. In Cambridge, students read Luther and had discussions and debates in the local inn

¹¹⁵ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 9-11, 22.

¹¹⁶ Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 22.

¹¹⁸ William Tyndale *Practise of Prelates*, 436-437. All references to the *Practise* are from *The Works of the English Reformers William Tyndale and John Frith* edited by Thomas Russell for Ebenezer Palmer, London 1831.

¹¹⁹ W.E. Campbell *Erasmus, Tyndale and More*, Suffolk 1949, 102.

¹²⁰ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 51-52.

¹²¹ *Novum Instrumentum* consists of an introduction called *Paraclesis*, a Greek New Testament, a new Latin translation and a commentary which is called *Annotations*.

¹²² Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 11.

White Horse about current matters. In these years Cambridge saw many key figures of future Protestantism such as Robert Barnes (1495-1530), Thomas Bilney (1495-1531) and Hugh Latimer (1487-1555) and many others. However, it is not known how long and when exactly Tyndale was in Cambridge and who he might have known in his time there.¹²³

After leaving Cambridge Tyndale returned to Gloucestershire where he worked in the household of an important local figure and friend of King Henry VIII Sir John Walsh teaching his two boys. Tyndale probably knew Walsh through his brother Edward who succeeded Sir John as Crown Steward of Berkeley estate in 1519. The boys were very young so Tyndale probably had plenty of time to devote to his studies and sharpen his skills in Greek. Gloucestershire was also close to Oxford and Bristol where Tyndale could have obtained relevant books.¹²⁴

While in Gloucestershire, Foxe reports, Tyndale had a dispute with local ‘doctorly prelates’ who were regular guests at the Walsh estate. They criticised Tyndale’s views and the Walshes became suspicious. Tyndale convinced the Walshes with his English translation of Erasmus’ *Enchiridion*. The prelates lost the favour of the Walshes and were angered.¹²⁵ However, as Foxe had a Protestant agenda in his *Acts and Monuments* the story should be read with care as mentioned in page 8. In the preface of *The Pentateuch* (1530) Tyndale reveals only that after the incident the offended prelates gave false accusations of him to the bishop’s chancellor. He was invited to the chancellor’s office who according to Tyndale threatened him and treated him like a dog.¹²⁶ Daniell points out that despite the rude treatment Tyndale got no official ramification.¹²⁷ This hints that the case against Tyndale probably did not have much substance as Tyndale claimed himself.

After the conflict Tyndale seems to have realised that it was time to move on. He wanted to translate the Bible into English and thought that the only place where it could be done would be London where Tyndale arrived probably in the summer of 1523. Because of the Oxford Constitution from 1408 translating the Scriptures was forbidden without official permission so Tyndale had to find

¹²³ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 49-50.

¹²⁴ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 54-56.

¹²⁵ Foxe *Acts and Monuments*, 1264.

¹²⁶ *Pentateuch*, 4.

¹²⁷ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 74-76.

someone to support him who could get such a permission.¹²⁸ In his preface to *Pentateuch*, Tyndale reports how he had thought that the Bishop of London Cuthbert Tunstall, who was proficient in Greek and had helped Erasmus with his Greek New Testament, could be the patron he needed. Tyndale brought with him his translation of Isocrates oration from Greek to English as a proof of his skills. Tyndale's high hopes were let down by the busy bishop who had no place for him in his house.¹²⁹ However, Humphrey Monmouth, a merchant from London took him to live in his house and supported him for about six months. Monmouth reports that Tyndale studied most of day and night and 'would eat but sodden meat..and drink but a small single beer'.¹³⁰

Tyndale left England sometime in the spring of 1524 and probably went to Hamburg but there is no certainty of where he was before the summer of 1525 when the printing work of his *New Testament* started in Cologne.¹³¹ It is possible that Tyndale went to Wittenberg before Cologne and studied there and finished his translation under Luther. Mozley suggested that *Guillemus Daltici ex Anglia* (William Daltici from England) who matriculated 27th of May, 1524 from Wittenberg would have been William Tyndale. The matriculation of an apostate friar William Roye 10th of June, 1525 in Wittenberg, who became Tyndale's assistant, suggests that Tyndale was also there and that they met there.¹³² Although the printing of Tyndale's *New Testament* began in Peter Quintell's press in late 1525 it was never completed. The drunken printer's of Quintell told about their assignment to Tunstall's friend Johann Cochlaeus (1479-1552), who was looking for a printer, and the officials seized the printing and Tyndale and Roye fled to Worms.¹³³

Tyndale finally succeeded in Worms when in early 1526 his almost 700 pages long New Testament (first made in pocket size) came out of the printers of Peter Schoeffer with a print from three to six thousand. Tyndale's written English made a deep impact on the shaping of English language as his translation came to

¹²⁸ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 83-84.

¹²⁹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 83-85. *Pentateuch*, 5

¹³⁰ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 102-103. John Foxe 1570, 1172. Monmouth was interrogated and put to the Tower for a short time by Thomas More in 1528 for his connection to Tyndale. Monmouth tells that he had met Tyndale in St Dunstons where he had preached and after Tunstall refused to employ Tyndale he offered to help him.

¹³¹ J.F Mozley *William Tyndale*, Suffolk 1937, 48, 51; Daniell *William Tyndale*, 108.

¹³² Mozley *William Tyndale*, 51-53. Mozley explains that even though *Daltici* do not seem to come from either English or Latin but when the syllables of Tindal are reversed it is Daltin. Since the surviving register is a copy and the difference between Daltin and *Daltici* is one letter it might be explained just by a mistake of the copyist.

¹³³ Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 63-66, 73-74.

be used as a basis for later editions such as the 1611 *King James Bible* and through it to our time.¹³⁴ Tyndale's *New Testament* was banned in England after two months of its publishing and although the book did not have the name of the author on it was hardly a surprise and in Tunstall's injunction to archdeacons in 24th of October 1526 it was already linked to Tyndale and Roye. On 26th of October Tunstall preached the sermon on St Paul's where he claimed that the translation had two thousand errors and copies were burned.¹³⁵

After Worms Tyndale's whereabouts are uncertain until he appears in Antwerp in May 1528.¹³⁶ In 8 May 1528 Tyndale's *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* was printed in Antwerp.¹³⁷ *The Parable* was Tyndale's first longer treatise and which he aimed to prove the teaching of justification by faith. It was founded partly on a Luther's sermon and the parable of unjust steward from Luke 16. All the rest of Tyndale's books were printed in Antwerp. It is not a surprise that he would settle in there about 1530 since there were many English merchants and good printers who would print evangelical books. It was also a centre of Christian humanism and it would be possible to stay unnoticed.¹³⁸ Tyndale's next book *The Obedience of a Christian Man* came out in October 1528 and it was Tyndale's defense against the claims that reformers with their interpretations of the Scriptures were to blame of the violent unrest in the continent.¹³⁹

Tyndale probably went from Antwerp to Hamburg after the *Obedience* was published.¹⁴⁰ Tyndale probably left because Cardinal Wolsey had asked him to be captured by the Regent of the Low Countries in the summer of 1528 and the rumours had placed him in Antwerp.¹⁴¹ After returning from Hamburg he published his first translations of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew *The*

¹³⁴ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 134-135.

¹³⁵ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 174-175.

¹³⁶ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 155. According to Moynahan, Tyndale went probably from Worms to Marburg in 1527 which was ruled by a lutheran Philip the Magnanimous which would have been a safe place to be for Tyndale who was hunted by Sir John Hackett a English Ambassador in the Low Countries with orders from Wolsey. Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 115.

¹³⁷ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 155.

¹³⁸ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 155-156.

¹³⁹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 223-224

¹⁴⁰ According to Foxe (only in 1570 edition) Tyndale's ship sank while on his way to print *The Pentateuch* in Hamburg and he lost his work, copies and materials and had to do the translation all over again. However, Miles Coverdale came to help and they completed the work between March and December 1529. Foxe *Acts and Monuments*, 1266. Mozley adds that besides Coverdale's unsure presence in Hamburg there has been also questioning that there was no printer in Hamburg and that Tyndale was proved to be in Antwerp during the time Foxe placed him in Hamburg. Mozley *William Tyndale*, 146-147. Daniell points out that a very good printer George Richloff from Lübeck just had opened his press there and there were other printers too so that does not exclude Tyndale's presence in Hamburg. Daniell *William Tyndale*, 198-199.

¹⁴¹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 198.

Pentateuch in January 1530. In Antwerp he also wrote the *Practise of Prelates* which came out in the end of 1530. It was Tyndale's last non biblical work and in it he criticised Henry the VIII's divorce campaign and concluded to Henry's anger that according to the Scriptures he could not divorce Catherine.¹⁴²

Tyndale stayed in Antwerp until he was arrested in May 1535 and wrote his *Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* (1531), translated and published the book of *Prophet Jonah* (1531) and made a revised edition of his *New Testament* (1534).¹⁴³ Tyndale was living in the English House in Antwerp with the Poyntz family in the spring of 1535 when he was betrayed. A young Oxford law graduate Henry Phillips came to Antwerp with a secret mission to help capture Tyndale. Phillips was in financial trouble and the mission could solve his situation although he disliked both the king and the Lutherans.¹⁴⁴ According to Foxe, Tyndale got to know Phillips in dinners he had with merchants and they became friends. Poyntz was suspicious about Phillips but was assured that he was trustworthy by Tyndale. While Poyntz was away on a business trip Phillips managed to lure Tyndale out of the English house to have dinner. After they set out of the long narrow entry Phillips pointed to two officers waiting in both sides of the exit to capture Tyndale.¹⁴⁵

After being arrested probably 21st of May, 1535, Tyndale was imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle close to Brussels where he would stay for sixteen months for a heresy charge against the Holy Roman Emperor. The English merchants wrote to the court at Brussels and to the English government.¹⁴⁶ Cromwell wrote to the court in favour of Tyndale's release and delivery to England and Thomas Poyntz delivered the letter to the Emperor's council. However, Phillips sabotaged the attempt to release Tyndale and claimed that Poyntz was a heretic acting alone without the government. Poyntz was then arrested and imprisoned but was able to flee the prison. After this Cromwell did not try help Tyndale and he was on his own even though Stephen Vaughn wrote him in 1536 that with a letter to privy council Tyndale could be released.¹⁴⁷ Tyndale was condemned as a heretic in

¹⁴² Mozley *William Tyndale*, 146-147, 163-165; Daniell *William Tyndale*, 200-201.

¹⁴³ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 205, 269, 316.

¹⁴⁴ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 361-362.

¹⁴⁵ Foxe *Acts and Monuments*, 1267.

¹⁴⁶ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 364-366.

¹⁴⁷ Daniell *William Tyndale* 370-372.

August 1536, stripped from his priesthood and after waiting for two months he was executed in early October.¹⁴⁸

2.2.3 Erasmus' influence on More and Tyndale

In understanding the debate of Thomas More and William Tyndale it is important to know that even though they were on different sides they had one crucial thing in common: Erasmus and the movement which he started known to us as Christian humanism. Erasmus was More's friend and Tyndale was inspired deeply by Erasmus's *The Manual of a Christian Knight (Enchiridion Militis Christiani)* (1503) and used his Greek New Testament *Novum Instrumentum* (1516) as a source for his English translation.

Erasmus had lived in England on various occasions for about six years combined. He was well connected and knew both important statesmen and clergy such as Cardinal Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell, Archbishop Warham, Thomas More, Bishop of London Cuthbert Tunstall and the King Henry VIII himself.¹⁴⁹ Friendship between Thomas More and Erasmus started when Erasmus came to England for the first time in 1499 to tutor Lord Mountjoy. More was in his twenties and Erasmus in his thirties and they had common interests in Greek and classics but neither was famous yet. Erasmus enjoyed his stay and became friends also with scholars such as John Colet, William Grocyn and Thomas Linacre.¹⁵⁰

After returning to continent in 1500 Erasmus's career took off and before he returned to England in 1505 he had published *Adages* a collection of Greek proverbs and *Enchiridion* a hand-book for Christian life which William Tyndale would be the first to translate in English.¹⁵¹ Richard Marius has stated that 'the *Enchiridion* probably contributed more to the origins of the English Puritanism than any other book except the Bible itself'.¹⁵² *Enchiridion*'s English translation was printed eight times between 1533 and 1549 which quite well shows its steady popularity and influence in England.¹⁵³ *Enchiridion* is a practical guidebook of Christian life written by a request of the wife of an arms manufacturer and a friend Johannes Poppenruyter who was unfaithful to his wife.¹⁵⁴ In the *Enchiridion* Erasmus stated that the choice of weaponry to Christians are prayer and

¹⁴⁸ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 381-382.

¹⁴⁹ A.G. Dickens & Whitney R.D. Jones *Erasmus The Reformer*, Wales 1994, 194-195.

¹⁵⁰ Marius *Thomas More*, 79-81.

¹⁵¹ Marius *Thomas More*, 81-82.

¹⁵² Marius *Thomas More*, 82.

¹⁵³ Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 197.

¹⁵⁴ Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 50.

knowledge or in other words learning. For Erasmus this learning is achievable through the study of the Scriptures and those Church Fathers whose teaching is in line with Christ who is the centre and chief teacher. Erasmus wrote in the *Enchiridion* that faith is the only way to Christ and we are not to believe ‘with mouth only’ but ‘immovable throughout all thy breast’. Erasmus was critical towards the clergy and claimed that many of the ‘pastors and doctors...abuse the titles of Christ to their proper advantage’ and that the monks are lazy and fail to live charitably because they do not understand the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures. Erasmus also criticised the scholastics and claimed that the followers of Duns Scotus (c.1265–1308) despise old doctors and are so sure of themselves that they never even look at the Scriptures.¹⁵⁵ This theology he calls Philosophy of Christ. Tyndale made similar claims in his own works and as Daniell points out it is not a surprise that Tyndale found *Enchiridion* appealing.¹⁵⁶

Erasmus and More reconnected when Erasmus returned to England and they translated dialogues of Lucian together from Greek to Latin which were published in 1506. In June Erasmus went to Paris and from there to Bologna and he stayed in Italy for three years.¹⁵⁷ Erasmus came back to England in 1509 and while staying at More’s home he wrote *The Praise of Folly* which was published in 1511 and it became a huge success.¹⁵⁸ According to Dickens and Jones it is theologically very similar to *Enchiridion* though its tone is very different. *The Praise of Folly* both amused (Pope Leo X is told to have enjoyed it) and angered readers with its sharp and painful criticism towards the Church and its practises.¹⁵⁹ According to Marius, *Praise of Folly* might not be as strong evidence of More and Erasmus’ close friendship as it is believed since Erasmus was known to dedicate books to those who might be useful to him. Marius also points out that the length of Erasmus stay at More’s is not known when he was writing *Folly* (Erasmus himself bragged that he wrote the *Folly* in a week). Marius adds that they hardly corresponded between the publishing of *Folly* in 1511 and 1514 when Erasmus left England and that Erasmus wrote quite distantly about More through these years to his closest friend Andrea Ammonio. Marius suggests that More might have

¹⁵⁵ Erasmus *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, 10-11, 28, 32-33, 59. All the references to the *Enchiridion* are from digitalized English edition *The Manual of the Christian Knight* made by Methuen and Co. London 1905 available at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/191>.

¹⁵⁶ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 66.

¹⁵⁷ Marius *Thomas More*, 83, 86-87.

¹⁵⁸ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 251.

¹⁵⁹ Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 54.

been even offended by the *Folly* since although he could join Erasmus hilarious criticism of monks and scholastics he always defended the majority of them being good.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, More did defend the *Folly* in 1515 which suggests that he was not at least offended by it.¹⁶¹ It must be also noted that Erasmus had been disappointed as a monk and fought for years to be released from the cloister whereas More after pondering whether to marry or become a priest had chosen to marry. It could have affected their views of the monks and the clergy.

More and Erasmus were probably good friends before More joined Henry's court but in their later life their friendship might have suffered. Dickens and Jones point out that More and Erasmus did not see each other after 1521 and that More's heavy official duties and More's strict approach to heresy might have distanced the more moderate Erasmus from him.¹⁶² Although Erasmus and More's relationship might have suffered in their last years More defended the *Folly* in his *Confutation* 1532-33 when Tyndale appealed to Erasmus to defend his translation.¹⁶³

From August 1513 to February 1514 Erasmus taught Greek and made educational books in Cambridge by the invitation from Chancellor Bishop John Fisher. Aside his teaching responsibilities he also worked on the Greek New Testament using manuscripts from the university's library.¹⁶⁴ After leaving Cambridge Erasmus stayed in England till July when he went back to the continent.¹⁶⁵ His work in Cambridge with the New Testament manuscripts later resulted in the publication of the *Novum Instrumentum* (1516) which consists of an introduction called *Paraclesis*, a Greek New Testament, a new Latin translation and a commentary which is called *Annotations*.¹⁶⁶ Erasmus's would make brief visits to England until April 1517 when he came to England for the last time.¹⁶⁷

Although Tyndale did not know Erasmus personally nor ever met him he was still a very important influence for Tyndale. Knowledge of Tyndale

¹⁶⁰ Marius Thomas More, 92-95.

¹⁶¹ Marius Thomas More, 95.

¹⁶² Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 194-195.

¹⁶³ Marius Thomas More, 95; Thomas More *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 177. All references made to *The Confutation* are from *The Complete Works of St Thomas More* Yale University Press 2013 Volume 8.1 and 8.2 with standardised spelling by Mary Gottschalk available at <http://thomasmorestudies.org/publications.html#Concordance>.

¹⁶⁴ Reynolds *Thomas More and Erasmus*, 87-91.

¹⁶⁵ Reynolds *Thomas More and Erasmus*, 95-96.

¹⁶⁶ Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 58-59.

¹⁶⁷ Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 194.

translating the *Enchiridion* (probably around 1522) comes from John Foxe's *Acts and Monument*. As mentioned previously, Tyndale assured the Walshes of his views with the *Enchiridion* when he got into a quarrel with the local clerics.¹⁶⁸ However, first records of a printed English *Enchiridion* are from London in 1533 and if Tyndale actually translated it then he either gave a manuscript copy of it or the print records just have not survived.¹⁶⁹ Tyndale also explains in the preface of his translation of *The Pentateuch* (1530), that he went to ask support for his wish to translate the Bible in English from Cuthbert Tunstall the Bishop of London because Erasmus had praised him in the annotations of his *Novum Instrumentum* which Tyndale used to translate his *New Testament*.¹⁷⁰

Erasmus's influence on the English Reformation has been discussed a lot but as Dickens and Jones point out that even though we need to be cautious not to dub all political and religious development as erasmian it would also be 'perverse to ignore the evidence of personal contacts, of repeated translations of Erasmus' works, and of direct appeals to his moral authority'.¹⁷¹ Tyndale showed his respect for Erasmus's work when he recommended Erasmus's *Annotations* in his *Obedience*.¹⁷² Tyndale also used More's 'darling Erasmus' and his *Novum Instrumentum* as an authority arguing against More in his *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue of his New Testament translation* (1531).¹⁷³ However, More did the same when he answered Tyndale with his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532–33).¹⁷⁴

Erasmus was the common ground for these two passionate scholars and believers although he influenced them differently. It could be said that Erasmus influenced Tyndale mainly with the humanist approach of emphasising the importance of the knowing and returning to the sources. Erasmus also gave the example and tools with *Novum Instrumentum* for translating the New Testament from the original text. Theologically Erasmus probably influenced Tyndale with emphasising in *Enchiridion* and *Praise of Folly* that faith was the only way to Christ, everyone should be able to read the Scriptures, and criticising hypocritical

¹⁶⁸ Foxe *Acts and Monuments*, 1264

¹⁶⁹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 70-71.

¹⁷⁰ *Pentateuch*, 5.

¹⁷¹ Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 196.

¹⁷² *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 168.

¹⁷³ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 15-16.

¹⁷⁴ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 177.

clergy and scholastic theology.¹⁷⁵ Tyndale used these ideas and tools but chose a different and less mediating direction. For More, Erasmus was a friend, an equal, who he corresponded and shared the common humanist mission. However, More ended up on less compromising attitude and actions towards heretics. Erasmus stood in the middle and had to watch how the ‘golden age’ which he thought to be forming and wrote about in 1517 did not come but instead the Reformation with its polarised opposites well portraited in More and Tyndale.

3.Sources

In order to to understand the debate it is important to examine how the debate began and what was the situation that these treatises were written and published. It is also important to examine briefly what are these treatises about in addition to the subject of authority and how were they received. The sources are presented chronologically and they are Tyndale’s *The Obedience of a Christian man* (1528), Thomas More’s *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529), Tyndale’s *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue* (1531) and More’s *Confutation to Tyndale’s Answer* (1532-33).

3.1 Literary debate and its context

Thomas More had been active in fighting Lutherans since he had helped Henry VIII with his *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments*, which Henry wrote against Luther’s *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) in 1521.¹⁷⁶ However, More’s debate with Tyndale did not start until the Bishop of London Cuthbert Tunstall authorised More in March 1528 to read prohibited works and write treatises against them in English. The reason behind this action was the increasingly spreading vernacular evangelical literature.¹⁷⁷ More and Tunstall had tried to recruit Erasmus to be the leading man to fight against Luther and Tyndale but he was not really interested and declined continuously.¹⁷⁸ Even though Erasmus would have been the first choice it is still very interesting that instead of a bishop, such as John Fisher, Tunstall asked Thomas More, a lawyer, to defend Catholic Church and to fight a battle over the Scriptures and their meaning in English. Demaus suggested that because of More’s status as a first class scholar in Europe

¹⁷⁵ *Enchiridion*, 10-11, 28, 32-33, 59. Erasmus *Praise of Folly*, 89-91. All references to *Praise of Folly* are from *Praise of Folly and Pope Julius Barred from Heaven*, an edition by Roger Clarke for Oneworld Classics, Jordan 2008.

¹⁷⁶ Rex ‘Thomas More and the heretics: statesman or fanatic?’, 95.

¹⁷⁷ Rex ‘Thomas More and the heretics: statesman or fanatic?’, 99.

¹⁷⁸ Marius *Thomas More*, 333-334.

and through his friendship with Erasmus and Colet ‘It could not be objected to him that he was an ignorant bigot, and a foe to all polite learning’¹⁷⁹ It is true that More was well known and well connected and trusted by both the state and Church and he had already been involved in fighting heresy for years.

In this thesis we focus in examining the theme of authority concerning the Scriptures, the Church and the king through the following works of More and Tyndale: Tyndale’s *The Obedience of a Christian man* (1528), Thomas More’s *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529), Tyndale’s *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue* (1531) and More’s *Confutation to Tyndale’s Answer* (1532–33). These themes were not important only in England but had been a matter of dispute for years in the continent such as in the schism between Luther and the Church.

In addition to these main primary sources some contemporary sources and other works from Tyndale and More will be used. Tyndale’s *New Testament and Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) are sort of a starting point for this study. When More wrote his first English work *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529) he was mostly trying to refute Tyndale’s *New Testament* and his theology in the *Obedience Of A Christian Man*. More’s *Dialogue* also referred to Tyndale’s *Parable of the Wicked mammon* (1528), a small treatise focused on justification by faith. *The Obedience* was chosen since this thesis concentrates mainly on authority and it handles wider range of Tyndale’s theology.

3.2 The Obedience of a Christian Man (1528)

The Obedience of A Christian man was published on 2nd of October 1528 and it was printed by Martin De Keyser in Antwerp although he used a cover name of Hans Luft of Marburg. Using cover names was typical at the time for those printing Protestant books. The original book was a little over three hundred pages long and David Daniell describes it being the same size as modern smaller Anglican prayerbooks found in the church pews. The size of the original print is unknown.¹⁸⁰ *The Obedience* was probably transported to England in bales of cloth that were secretly marked which was the custom at the time. Other means were hiding them in flour sacks, water-tight boxes placed in barrels and caskets of wine or oil or in chests with secret compartments.¹⁸¹ It seems to have found its way to

¹⁷⁹ R. Demaus *William Tyndale A Biography* Revised edition by Richard Lovett for J.C Gieben from the original made in 1886, Amsterdam 1971, 249.

¹⁸⁰ David Daniell ‘Introduction’ in *The Obedience of a Christian Man* edited by David Daniell for Penguim Classics, London 2000, xxi-xxiii. Daniell *William Tyndale*, 155.

¹⁸¹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 186.

England quite quickly since Thomas More's first publication against heretics in vernacular *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* was published just eight months later in June 1529.¹⁸² In his *Dialogue* More referred to the *Obedience*: 'And Tyndale, in his book on obedience, or rather disobedience, says...'.¹⁸³ After two reprints in the continent in 1535 and 1537 it was printed in England finally on 1536/37 and many times thereafter.¹⁸⁴

The book contains three parts: a prologue, a preface and the actual book which consists of twenty seven sections. These sections can be combined under ten themes such as obedience, power, duty and sacraments.¹⁸⁵ In the prologue of *The Obedience of a Christian man* Tyndale states that he has written the treatise since the Church claims that the Word of God makes men rise against their rulers his aim although it is the opposite since all obedience is from God.¹⁸⁶ This obedience to God manifests in different relationships from children to elders, husbands to wives and peasants to kings.¹⁸⁷ Concerning the obedience to kings Tyndale writes that 'He that judgeth the king judgeth God, and he that layeth hands on the king, layeth hand on God, and he that resisteth the king resisteth God, and damneth God's ordinance.'¹⁸⁸ However, Tyndale adds that the king must rule after the example of Christ and seek only the best of his subjects.¹⁸⁹ According to Tyndale, the Church is itself guilty of rising against the princes and waging war. Tyndale claims that the pope and the bishops are concerned merely of power and wealth and do not preach nor teach the people as they are supposed to. Therefore the kings should end their tyranny and rule with the right given by God.¹⁹⁰

As Daniell points out, Luther had stated similar hierarchy already before 1525 but Tyndale extended it to the entire society from children to the kings.¹⁹¹ The other major theme beside authority in temporal matters is the teaching of the Church. For Tyndale all matters of faith should be based only on literal

¹⁸² Duffy 'The comen knowen multytude of crysten men', 191.

¹⁸³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 398.

¹⁸⁴ Pardue *Printing, Power, and Piety*, 86.

¹⁸⁵ Daniell 'Introduction', xxiv-xxv.

¹⁸⁶ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 26.

¹⁸⁷ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 31-48.

¹⁸⁸ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 39.

¹⁸⁹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 63.

¹⁹⁰ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 91-92, 95-96.

¹⁹¹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 224.

interpretation of the Scriptures and that everyone should be able to read them in their own language to evaluate all teaching.¹⁹²

It is told, that Anne Boleyn gave a copy of the *Obedience* to King Henry who said that ‘this is a book for me and all kings to read’. The story was written down by the grandson of the poet Sir Thomas Wyatt in a history of Anne published in the 1590s. From there it ended up on Foxe’s chronicle. Although the accountability of the story is questionable, Anne is known to have been favourable to the Reformation and her personal copy of Tyndale’s 1534 New Testament has been preserved. Nevertheless, King Henry would have found the parts concerning his supremacy as a king over pope and bishops valuable for his divorce campaign.¹⁹³ Ironically, although Tyndale emphasised that man was not allowed to resist or judge his superior because only God can judge or avenge wrongdoing, he did not follow his own words.¹⁹⁴ Tyndale criticised the king’s divorce campaign in *The Practise of Prelates* and did not come back to England when Cromwell tried to persuade him to come home and join the king’s side.¹⁹⁵

3.3 A Dialogue Concerning Heresies (1529)

A Dialogue Concerning Heresies was published in June 1529 and it was the first work that Thomas More wrote after Cuthbert Tunstall had asked him to write against heresy in English. It was only More’s second book written in English (the first being the English version of *The History of Richard III*). In the next five years More wrote ten works in English aside his actual work as a chancellor and later lord chancellor.¹⁹⁶ The book has also been called *A Dialogue Concerning Tyndale* because it concentrates more on refuting Tyndale and his works than Luther.¹⁹⁷ Daniell points out that Tyndale might have not expected his correspondent to be More. Tyndale could have expected a response from Tunstall or Fisher but not More who after all was a layman.¹⁹⁸ It must be noted though that More was hardly your average layman since he had learned Greek and studied the Scriptures and theology beside his law studies. The *Dialogue* seems to have found its audience since second edition was published in 1530. This is not a surprise

¹⁹² *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 16-17, 20, 105-106, 156.

¹⁹³ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 244-247.

¹⁹⁴ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 36-38

¹⁹⁵ Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 230-234.

¹⁹⁶ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 118.

¹⁹⁷ Marius *Thomas More*, 339.

¹⁹⁸ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 262.

since as Marius points out ‘it was by far the best thing in English that defended the old faith on the eve of schism from Rome’.¹⁹⁹

In the original title More makes clear what he is addressing by listing matters such as veneration of images, praying to saints and pilgrimages. He also names his adversaries being the ‘pestilent sect of Luther and Tyndale’.²⁰⁰ The original title did not include the word heresy and according to Wegemer the shorter title was invented by More’s nephew William Rastell for his 1557 edition of Thomas More’s *English Works*.²⁰¹ According to Marius the *Dialogue* is similar to Erasmus’s *Familiar Colloquies* in both form with its light dialogues and in content but where More defends the Catholic Church and its practices Erasmus criticised them.²⁰² The *Dialogue* was written as a socratic dialogue between More himself and a college student who has been sent to see More by a friend. In the dialogue More and the student (who is called The Messenger) have six conversations in four days at More’s house in Chelsea.²⁰³

The book is divided to four parts named ‘Part one’ and so on and is about 450 pages long. In addition to the discussion More and the Messenger tell tales and laugh and eat. The student represents young adult of the time who is serious about matters of faith and is searching for answers to the burning questions that the new doctrines have raised. The Messenger has studied Latin and the Scriptures and is working as a tutor for More’s friend’s sons. He does not appreciate other disciplines and thinks that logic is ‘nothing but babbling’ and philosophy is useless. In the messengers eyes logic and philosophy have destroyed good theology and are blinding the light of the Scriptures. After this short introduction and conversation More sends the messenger home and tells him to come back early next morning.²⁰⁴

The actual discussion begins the next day and in the first two parts More and the Messenger discuss Thomas Bilney’s case,²⁰⁵ veneration of saints, miracles, pilgrimages, the Scriptures and the nature of Church.²⁰⁶ More answers the Messengers questions and until the end of the second book More has

¹⁹⁹ Marius *Thomas More*, 349.

²⁰⁰ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 36.

²⁰¹ Gerard Wegemer and Stephen Smith ‘A Note on the Title’ in the modernized edition of *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* by Mary Gottschalk for Scepter Publishers, New York 2006, 36.

²⁰² Marius *Thomas More*, 339-340.

²⁰³ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 119-20.

²⁰⁴ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 54-55.

²⁰⁵ Messenger claims that Thomas Bilney was accused inaccurately of heresy and forced to abjure to silence criticism of the Church’s malpractices.

²⁰⁶ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 74-77.

convinced the young man and he goes back to university. After a two week break the Messenger comes back with new burning questions. The third part goes back to the Bilney's case and handles Tyndale's translation in detail.²⁰⁷ In the fourth volume More focuses mainly on Luther although Tyndale and other matters are also discussed. In the end of the fourth book More justifies the burning of heretics by claiming that they forced the authorities to act with force with their violent actions and outrage. For More heresy is a sin that offends God the most and therefore requires firm actions.²⁰⁸ After the discussions are over and the Messenger is fully satisfied they sit down to dinner before parting ways.²⁰⁹

According to Duffy, More actually used writings of Tyndale and trial records of Bilney and other heretics for the Messengers speeches.²¹⁰ There has been some differentiating views about the quality of More's *Dialogue* and its characterization. According to Wegemer the *Dialogue* is 'masterfully conceived' and that 'More's art of conversation in exploring and answering the messenger's many difficult questions is highly instructive', and that the messenger 'is no stock character; he is unusually bright, witty, and articulate, and has highly complex motives'.²¹¹ C.S Lewis praised the *Dialogue* of being 'Perhaps the best specimen of that form ever produced in English'.²¹² However, Daniell claims that the aim of the *Dialogue* is simply 'slaughter' and that the book 'tries the patience of his reader beyond endurance'.²¹³ Daniell also disagrees deeply over the Messenger's presentation: Daniell thinks that because of the introduction where the Messenger expresses his disrespect towards logic and philosophy he is established as 'a airy-headed nitwit before he has properly begun'.²¹⁴ Marius states that the *Dialogue* is witty and considers it the best of More's polemical works but finds More inflexible and twisting his opponent's arguments for his benefit. Marius also claims that More is trying to prove that everyone who is opposing the Church is 'totally wrong, malicious or even insane'.²¹⁵

²⁰⁷ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 282-284.

²⁰⁸ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 460-461.

²⁰⁹ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 491.

²¹⁰ Duffy 'The comen knowen multytude of crysten men', 192.

²¹¹ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 119-120.

²¹² C.S. Lewis *English Literature In the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*, London 1954, 172.

However, Lewis did not value it theologically and thought that More presents the case of justification by faith in a way that it does not handle what he considers the real problem being the nature of Christian experience. Lewis *English Literature*, 171-172.

²¹³ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 262, 265.

²¹⁴ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 264.

²¹⁵ Marius *Thomas More*, 339.

Pardue points out that More's *Dialogue* (and later *Confutation*) made it possible for Protestants to read about Luther and Tyndale's ideas and Scripture since in refuting them More had to introduce them even though they might be presented in a way that suited More's own arguments.²¹⁶ In his biography of More, Richard Marius acknowledged that when reading More's *Responsio ad Lutherum* (1523) people could just ignore More's comments that were separately in the texts and read only Luther's text.²¹⁷ More's *Dialogue* could easily work the same way (and the *Confutation* also). Pardue points out that in making the Messenger's arguments sympathetic and reasonable More also made it possible that the reader might find the Messenger's arguments more appealing.²¹⁸ It seems that although More could control the matters and their presentation in his works he could not control how the readers used them. Therefore his works such as the *Dialogue* could turn against him and the Church and be used to safely promote heresy.

3.4 An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue (1531)

Tyndale completed his response to More *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* in January 1531 but it was not published until July 1531, two years after More's work.²¹⁹ It was printed again by Martin De Keyser in Antwerp and it is a little over 200 pages long (against More's 450 pages). *An Answer* contains a preface and two main parts. The first part addresses doctrines of New Testament that the Catholic Church according to Tyndale has manipulated and the second consists of Tyndale refuting More's *Dialogue* chronologically.

In the first part Tyndale goes straight to essentials and defines what the word 'church' signifies and answers More's critique of his translation especially on the key words like *ekklesia* as 'congregation', *presbyteros* as 'elder', *agape* as 'love', *xaris* as 'favour', *metanoia* as 'repentance' and so on. Tyndale defends his translations and explains that they represent better what the original Greek words mean than what the Church uses.²²⁰ According to Tyndale, More knows what the Greek words really mean but is blinded by his 'covetousness and drunken desire for honour'.²²¹ In the first part Tyndale also answers whether the gospel was before the Church, if the apostles left anything unwritten, whether the Church can

²¹⁶ Pardue *Printing, Power, and Piety*, 75-76.

²¹⁷ Marius *Thomas More*, 280, 282.

²¹⁸ Pardue *Printing, Power, and Piety*, 76.

²¹⁹ Moynahan *Book Of Fire*, 237.

²²⁰ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 11-23.

²²¹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 23.

err, how true members of Christ's church may sin but are not sinners, whether the pope and the Church is Christ's. He also writes about justification by faith, election, sacraments, mass, pilgrimages and ceremonies.²²² The rest of the book consist mainly on commenting More's dialogue book by book through arguments mainly based on what we have dealt here of the first part of *An Answer*.

Tyndale wrote *An Answer* at a time when Henry's campaign for divorce had started to change. It seemed even more so that Henry VIII was not going to get the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon from the pope and he started to seek other solutions. After *Obedience* Tyndale could prove a good supporter of Henry's cause even though Tyndale's *Practise of Prelates* (where Tyndale said that Henry cannot divorce Catherine) had angered Henry. Cromwell assigned a friend and a merchant Stephen Vaughan to find Tyndale in January 1531.²²³ Vaughan tried to contact Tyndale many times through letters in the Spring offering a safe return to England but Tyndale declined. Because of burnings of heretics in England Tyndale was quite understandably mistrusting and feared a plot. Vaughan finally met Tyndale who told him that he had written an answer to More's *Dialogue* but it had not yet been printed. Vaughan reported meeting Tyndale twice more in May and June but Tyndale's mistrust remained unchanged until Henry would allow England to have a vernacular Bible. For a vernacular Bible Tyndale would have returned, stopped writing and taken any punishment the king would have decided.²²⁴

It is hard to say how many people *The Answer* reached since there is no records of such things but probably it found its way to the hands of university students, merchants and officials as the king's interest would suggest. At least, just as *The Obedience*, *The Answer* is concise and easy to read. It is obvious that the debate with More was not a priority for Tyndale since he did not answer More's *Confutation* but concentrated on his own work.

3.5 The Confutation to Tyndale's Answer (1532-33)

The Confutation to Tyndale's Answer was published in two parts in 1532 (first three books) and 1533 (last six books). It was printed in London by William Rastell. It is the longest book written by More and consist of half million words in

²²² *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 24-78.

²²³ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 209.

²²⁴ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 211-217; Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 226-234.

over thousand pages. In the *Confutation* More addresses Tyndale's *An Answer* trying to refute it step by step.²²⁵

The Confutation's first three parts are the only books More wrote as lord chancellor in a time of double literary campaign: More was writing to preserve the Catholic Church and Cromwell was attacking the Church with the help of the lawyer Christopher St German in order to enable the king's divorce. According to Wegemer, More is in addition to attacking Tyndale also constantly reminding Henry of his status as the Defender of the Faith.²²⁶ Wegemer also points out that More's timing for the release of the first three parts was not a coincidence: the *Confutation* was published just before the Parliament was about to gather on the king's matters in early 1532.²²⁷ In March 1532 the Parliament made an *Act in Conditional Restraint of Annates* which meant that the clerics would not have to make payment to Rome for their appointment to benefice anymore.²²⁸ More resigned in May after the Parliament passed the *Act of Submission of the Clergy* to the Crown which made Henry the Supreme Head of the Church of England.²²⁹ Because Henry had worked for years to get the divorce it is easy to understand that the *Confutation* could not change the king's mind and More must have known that. It is also good to remember that before the acts from the spring of 1532 England was officially Catholic and therefore More was defending what was at the time the official faith with the *Confutation*.

The Confutation starts with a preface in which More defends his books, discusses many heretical works and cites them as evil, handles the cases of Thomas Hitton and other heretics. According to Louis A. Schuster, More attacks the burned heretics in the preface in order to prevent possible public compassion towards them spreading.²³⁰ After that follows the nine books in which More answers Tyndale's preface, comments his translation, defends the position that Church was before Gospel, the pope's power, the Church's right to decide what is true Scripture and confutes Barnes' understanding of the church. The positions are clear by now and mostly repeated with More answering on the basis of *Dialogue* but adding new arguments and evidence in order to refute Tyndale's *Answer*.

²²⁵ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 274-5.

²²⁶ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 154-155.

²²⁷ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 155.

²²⁸ Guy *Thomas More*, 158.

²²⁹ Curtis 'More's Public Life', 87.

²³⁰ Louis A. Schuster 'Thomas More's Polemical Career, 1523-1533' in *The Complete Works of St Thomas More: The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, Massachusetts 1973, 1247.

If the *Dialogue* is considered to be the best of his polemic works *The Confutation* is mostly considered to be the worst. Daniell condemns it 'almost unreadable' and wonders if More had lost his common sense.²³¹ Daniell suggests that More's ferocity shows that Tyndale's influence had grown so big that More tried to bury him with any means necessary.²³² Moynahan argues that More's extensive writing suggests that he seems 'to be trying to smother them (Tyndale's arguments) by the weight of words alone'.²³³ It must be said that *The Confutation* is with its over thousand pages way too long. The overblown length of *The Confutation* works against More's cause since just the amount of pages is uninviting and More's way of taking a few sentences and answering them with many pages is tiring. It could be summarised that from the actual debate More's *Dialogue* and Tyndale's *Answer* contain the essential content of their positions.

4.What is the highest authority: the Scriptures, the Church or the King?

The early 16th century was turbulent throughout the Europe and the Church was facing many challenges posed by the new ideas from Luther and other reformers. As we have seen Lutheran ideas spread also into England and Tyndale's *New Testament* and treatises were questioning the authority of the Church. At the same time that More and Tyndale's debate began the English Church had its own special challenge as the king wished to divorce the Queen Katherine of Aragon but the matter was not proceeding in the way the king hoped. The question of who has the authority to judge all matters of faith, the Scriptures, the Church or the king was a burning one.

In this section we will examine how More and Tyndale understand authority concerning the Scriptures and the Church. First we will investigate their views on vernacular Scriptures and Tyndale's *New Testament*. Secondly, we will examine the Church and its foundation and whether it should be founded on Peter or faith. Then we will examine More and Tyndale's view on the Church's infallibility, the role of the Holy See, the relationship of written and unwritten word and the interpretation of the Scriptures. Thirdly, we will examine More and Tyndale's relationship to earthly authority. The sources will be handled on chronological order and we will see how Tyndale and More respond to each other and what they

²³¹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 274.

²³² Daniell *William Tyndale*, 278.

²³³ Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 242.

held as their authority. More and Tyndale's notions are also compared to Erasmus' notions concerning each matter to see how and why they differed. Occasionally Tyndale is also compared to Luther to see if and how his theology related to the German reformer.

4.1 Scripture and vernacular Bible

We must start with Tyndale's translation of the New Testament. Tyndale had approached Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall sometime in 1523 to translate the Bible in English. If Tunstall had allowed Tyndale to do the translation or had set an authorised committee to do it there probably would have been no need for Tyndale and More's debate. Tyndale's choice of translating *ekklesia* as 'congregation' instead of 'church' and *presbyteros* as 'elder' instead of 'priest' reflect how his views about the Church differed from the authoritative teaching of the Church. This is why the translation was banned and More attacked it. Before concentrating on the translation we must examine the matter of the need for vernacular Scriptures in general since it was an important matter of the age. England was different from the continent on the matter since translating the Bible was forbidden by the Constitution of Oxford (1408).

In the preface of *The Obedience of A Christian Man* (1528) Tyndale argues that instead of claiming that vernacular Bible would lead laymen to understand it differently the Church should teach them how it should be understood. And if they are not willing to give vernacular Bible to peasants they should at least give it to priests who Tyndale criticises of not knowing Bible more than what 'they read at mass, matins and evensongs which they understand not'.²³⁴ Tyndale's conviction for mediating the Scriptures to his fellow Englishmen shows quite clearly in Stephen Vaughan's letter to Thomas Cromwell (who's agent he was on the continent) in May 1531. In the letter, Vaughan reports that Tyndale had told him that

'if it would stand with the kings most gracious pleasure to grant only a bare text of the scripture to be out forth among his people...be it of translation of what person soever shall please his majesty, I shall immediately make faithful promise never to write more...but immediately to repair unto his realm, and there most humbly submit myself at the feet of his royal majesty,

²³⁴ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 16-17.

offering my body to suffer what pain or torture, yea, what death his grace will, so this be obtained.’²³⁵

It seems that Tyndale was willing to compromise and stay in the Church if the Scriptures in vernacular were made available to the public. He probably thought that having the Scriptures in English would lead peasants and priests to see the heresies in the Church and be inspired by the Word of God to correct these issues. After all, Tyndale stated in the *Obedience* that if the people are allowed to have the Scriptures they can see if the clergy ‘jugglest or not’.²³⁶

Erasmus was a supporter of vernacular scriptures. He was critical of theologians writings and teaching and suggested in the preface of *Enchiridion* that the Philosophy of Christ should be made available to every man and there should be made a compilation of essential Scripture accompanied by some of the most approved interpreters which would benefit both clergy and laymen.²³⁷ Erasmus took this further in the *Novum Instrumentum* as he declared that the Scriptures and especially the Gospels and Pauline epistles should be translated to all languages and made available to men and women, rich and poor and educated and uneducated. He also mocked those who seem to think that Christ’s teaching was so complicated that it could be understood only by theologians.²³⁸ Tyndale probably found at least assurance, if not direct inspiration, for his translation work from the *Enchiridion* and *Novum Instrumentum*. However, Daniell points out that even though Erasmus praised and encouraged the idea of vernacular Scriptures and other religious texts he himself only wrote in Latin.²³⁹ This may be because he might have thought that his first aim was to influence those with power to provide the Scriptures to the people and the official language in Europe was Latin.

Thomas More was not against the Bible in English as he explains in his treatise *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529). He first summarises the arguments used against vernacular Bible through the Messenger and then replies to them as himself. Arguments start from Adam’s and Eve’s fall through the desire for knowledge, Christ’s way of teaching his disciples privately, English being too ‘barbarous’ a language and a notion that only learned men can digest the Scriptures.²⁴⁰ When replying, More first affirms the arguments against vernacular

²³⁵ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 216.

²³⁶ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 16.

²³⁷ *Enchiridion*, 8-10.

²³⁸ Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 60-61.

²³⁹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 69.

²⁴⁰ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 379.

Scripture with statements from Church Fathers such as St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Jerome that ordinary people should not be studying Scripture themselves at all or without being taught. More also mentions Plato who thought that in matters of civil law people who were unfit should not debate about it.²⁴¹

More also claims that uneducated people cannot understand many parts of the Bible where God speaks occasionally directly and sometimes through others and therefore the Scriptures should be 'chewed for them' by those who are appointed to it. However, More then says that these arguments do not mean that translating the Bible or reading it in English should be forbidden. According to him these same arguments could have been used against those who originally wrote the Bible in Hebrew and Greek and those who translated it into Latin. He also points out that foreign languages sound often barbarous and though translations might lead to misunderstandings the blame would not be in the translation but in the readers 'ignorance and foolishness' which More does not take as something to deny the Scriptures from everybody else. More points out that heretics are seldomly uneducated and no text in the Scriptures are so hard that they would not be useful for devotion to any virtuous man or woman reading them.²⁴²

More comments on the Messenger's claim that the clergy want to keep the Bible from common people through the synodal decree (Constitution of Oxford 1408) that forbade translating the Bible in English. More points out that the decree however did not forbid the use of vernacular Scriptures made before Wycliffe nor making a new and bishop-approved translation. Tyndale's translation was according to More full of mistakes and could not be corrected (we will examine the translation later).²⁴³ According to Daniell, More falsely states that that there were English Bibles before Wyclif that could be lawfully printed.²⁴⁴ However More does not say anything about printing these pre-Wycliffe bibles just that they 'should remain'.²⁴⁵

Marius makes the important observation that the only time More supports translating the Bible in English is in the *Dialogue*.²⁴⁶ There is visible a change in More's attitude over vernacular Scripture in his *Confutation* as he states that the

²⁴¹ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 380-381.

²⁴² *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 383-385.

²⁴³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 388.

²⁴⁴ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 268-269.

²⁴⁵ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 388.

²⁴⁶ Marius *Thomas More*, 347.

king has decided ‘after diligent and long consideration’ for the time being to keep vernacular Scriptures from Englishmen because

‘evil folk, by false drawing of every good thing they read into the color and maintenance of their own fond fantasies, and turning all honey into poison, might both deadly do hurt unto themselves and spread also that infection farther abroad’.²⁴⁷

More even wrote that in a time that the Scriptures are used for harm he would burn with his own hands Erasmus’s *Praise of Folly* and his own works (even though there is no harm in them) if someone would translate them into English so that they could not be used wrongly like the Scriptures have.²⁴⁸

Considering the translation the most important thing for More was that it would be done properly by Catholics: someone or a committee capable and by the authorisation of clergy and depending on the situation the distribution should be controlled and the bishop could decide who would be worthy of the copies.²⁴⁹ One might still ask why it took ten years until 1535 before an authorised version was published. Concerning the wide circulation of Tyndale’s *New Testament* and other heretical books Tunstall’s campaign’s slow actions on this matter worked against them. But the problem was that Luther’s German translation had linked translation and heresy together and made the clergy suspicious.²⁵⁰

The problem with Tyndale’s translation for More was probably not Tyndale’s skills as a linguistic. Tyndale knew eight languages and was proficient in the languages which Bible was originally written: Hebrew of the Old Testament (which Tyndale had to learn in the continent since hardly anyone knew it in England) and Greek of the New Testament. The clergy and scholars had been using St Jerome’s Latin translation, the *Vulgate*, for nearly a thousand years but Tyndale wanted to make his translation from the original languages.²⁵¹ His decision to translate some of the key words differently from Jerome made the Church and More angry. According to More, Tyndale had translated especially three frequently repeating key words wrong in his *New Testament*: *presbyteros* for ‘senior’ instead of ‘priest’, *ekklesia* for ‘congregation’ instead of ‘church’ and *agape* for ‘love’ instead of ‘charity’.²⁵²

²⁴⁷ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 178-179.

²⁴⁸ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 179.

²⁴⁹ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 388-9.

²⁵⁰ Campbell *Erasmus, Tyndale and More*, 125.

²⁵¹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 1-2.

²⁵² *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 328.

The first authorised English Bible was published in 1535 and made by Miles Coverdale. According to Levi, although Coverdale had worked with Tyndale he translated his Bible mostly from Luther's German version and a Dominican Latin version.²⁵³ However, Marius states that Coverdale was 'plagiarizing Tyndale's outrageously'.²⁵⁴ Coverdale's Bible was superseded by the *Matthew's Bible* already in 1537 which was edited by Tyndale's friend John Rogers (1505-1555). It was largely based on Tyndale's translations with some original content and some parts from Coverdale especially in the Old Testament.²⁵⁵ Although Tyndale's translations were used for later versions some changes were made and for example Bishop of London Richard Banroft (d.1610) instructed the translators of the *King James Bible* (1611) in 1604 that old ecclesiastical words were to be used and 'church' was to be used instead of 'congregation'.²⁵⁶ These were indeed the key words which More criticised in Tyndale's translation. But why did Tyndale abandon the existing words and what exactly made More angry with Tyndale's choices?

4.1.1 What is the meaning of *ekklesia*?

More was strictly against Tyndale's choice of using the word 'congregation' instead of 'church' for the Greek *ekklesia* in his translation of the New Testament. According to More, Tyndale follows Luther's understanding of the 'church' being only a 'congregation' of 'some folk, two here and three there, no one knows where, having the right faith' and so translates *ekklesia* as 'congregation'. For More Tyndale wants to make it seem that Christ never spoke of church or that the church he spoke of was the church of those heretics.²⁵⁷ According to More although 'church' is a 'congregation', only a 'congregation' of Christians is the Church and so it had always also been in England. For More 'congregation' is ambiguous as it can be used for the Turks also.²⁵⁸ Duffy points out that More refutes 'congregation' because he believes that with it Tyndale makes the church an invisible and unknown congregation and leaves out the New Testament

²⁵³ Levi *The English Bible*, 51.

²⁵⁴ Marius *Thomas More*, 348.

²⁵⁵ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 334-335.

²⁵⁶ Alister E. McGrath *In the beginning The Story of the King James Bible And How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture*, New York 2001, 173

²⁵⁷ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 331.

²⁵⁸ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 328-329.

concept of the Church as a holy assembly by making no difference between a company of Christians or Turks.²⁵⁹

Tyndale replied to More in his *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*. First Tyndale defines his understanding of 'church' in the preface. He explains that it meant a place where Christians could gather to hear the word of God and pray. The priest (who Tyndale here refers to as 'officer') would preach only pure word of God and pray in a language that everybody understands instead what which Tyndale describes 'voices without signification, and buzzings, howlings, and cryings, as if it were the hallooing of the foxes'.²⁶⁰

Then Tyndale moves to show how 'church' is wrongly used to mean the 'spirituality and clergy'. This influenced his translation of *ekklesia* as 'congregation' because he thought that the clergy had appropriated the word 'church' to mean them instead of all that believe in Christ. Tyndale justifies this with claiming that 'throughout all the scripture, the church is taken for the whole multitude of them that believe in Christ in that place, in that parish, town, city, province, or throughout all the world, and not for spirituality only'.²⁶¹ It seems that for Tyndale the problem is not the word 'church' but how it is understood and therefore he uses 'congregation' so that people could understand what he thinks *ekklesia* means in the New Testament. Therefore his translation is not a linguistic choice but especially a theological choice.

In this Tyndale agrees with Luther. They both separate the spiritual and temporal church. Luther had similar concerns with translating *ekklesia* into German concerning how people understood the existing word and what it should mean. According to Luther it meant in German 'gathering' (eine Versammlung) but people were used to 'church' (Kirche) and understood it uncorrectly as a consecrated house or building. Luther pointed out that the people who assemble in the building give the place its special meaning and that the best translation would be a Christian community or gathering (eine heilige Christenheit).²⁶² According to McGoldrick although both Luther and Tyndale separate the spiritual and temporal church they have different significations for the true church. Luther defines the Word and Sacraments in scriptural sense as the main sign of the true church whereas Tyndale defines persecution. Both agree that people can seem to be

²⁵⁹ Duffy 'The comen knowen multytude of crysten men', 207.

²⁶⁰ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 11.

²⁶¹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 12-13.

²⁶² Martin Luther *Luther's Large Catechism*, Anniversary translation and introductory essay by Friedemann Hebart, Adelaide 1983, 120-121.

believers outwardly but still lack faith. Therefore Luther stated that no religious establishment can decide if someone is a believer or not and that the institutions are not above individual believers.²⁶³

Tyndale answers More's critique of 'congregation' being a more general term than 'church' that 'church' is as common as *ekklesia* and that 'wherever I may say congregation, there may I say church also'. Tyndale adds that if More wishes to use 'church' he must acknowledge it being as general as *ekklesia* in the New Testament. This he explains by telling how *ekklesia* was used for heathens before the apostles and shows how also Luke used it in this meaning for heathens in the Acts.²⁶⁴ Tyndale also points out that More's 'darling Erasmus' had also rendered *ekklesia* as 'congregation' in many places of the New Testament. Tyndale wonders how More embraced Erasmus' criticism on these same matters when Erasmus wrote *Praise of Folly* in More's home but now writes the opposite. Tyndale then compares More to Judas and claims that More has betrayed Christ for his own desires. With the comparison Tyndale means that More chose wealth over Christ.²⁶⁵ According to Moynahan this is nonsense concerning the wealth More had gained during the years. Moynahan adds that the appearance More had to keep was a part of his post as lord chancellor. Moynahan also points out how More instead of taking a lot of money offered to him for his support for the clergy, he just told them to thank God.²⁶⁶

There's been debate over More abandoning his humanism in his battle against heresy. Marius pointed out that More uses similar merry dialogues in his *Dialogue* as Erasmus had in *Colloquies* but for different purpose. Erasmus criticised and ridiculed many devotional practises but More defended them with the same style. For Marius it seemed that the *Dialogue* was like a refutation of *Colloquies*.²⁶⁷ According to Duffy it is true that More and Erasmus used their merry tales for different targets. Duffy points out that Erasmus did admit that there was idolatrous behaviour concerning the cult of saints although it did not mean the cult was in itself bad. However, unlike More, Erasmus held the Church to blame for the way Protestant faith had grown into a rebellion because it had not done anything for the abuses. Although they had their differences, Duffy claims,

²⁶³ James Edward McGoldrick *Luther's English Connection The Reformation Thought Of Robert Barnes and William Tyndale*, Milwaukee 1979, 138; 150.

²⁶⁴ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 15.

²⁶⁵ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 15-16.

²⁶⁶ Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 249.

²⁶⁷ Marius *Thomas More*, 339-340, 342 .

that More never ‘criticised, much less repudiated, Erasmus or his writings’. However, More saw the change of religio-political atmosphere affecting the way those writings might be understood.²⁶⁸

It seems that More’s change of heart concerning his and Erasmus’s works and the English Bible had hardly anything to do with wealth or stature as Moynahan pointed out. More hardly gave up on his humanism either as Duffy noted. In my opinion it was simply very different to criticise the Church in 1511 when the *Folly* was published than in the late 1520s and early 1530s. What was a scholarly debate of misconducts in the Church in 1511 was in the time of Tyndale and More’s debate something that was changing entire countries and had lead to revolts such as the Peasants war in 1525. No one could have known in 1511 what kind of religious change was to come. It is no wonder that criticising the Church was not a matter of folly for More after the Peasants war and that he turned to a more reserved view on the vernacular Bible.

More answers Tyndale’s three meanings to *ekklesia* in his *Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*. More claims that Tyndale leaves out important meanings of the word *ekklesia* such as the ‘official church’ which gathers in synods and councils and represents the Church similarly as parliament represents the realm and also rulers of the Church instead of all those who believe as Tyndale described.²⁶⁹ Tyndale’s first meaning was a place where people gathered in the ‘old times’ to hear ‘the word of doctrine, law of God, and the faith of our saviour Jesus Christ..’ and be taught how to pray and that now people hear just ‘buzzings and howlings...’ and now do know nothing of Christ’s promises and try to earn salvation with works.²⁷⁰ According to More this is all lies because the Catholic Church still continues to do the tasks Tyndale described of the old times. More attacks Tyndale by claiming that ‘euery childe that is of competent age’ knows how God’s mercy is transmitted through the seven sacraments and that good works will be rewarded. More disapproves Tyndale’s claim that the Church teaches that people can fulfill the law with works like pagans. According to More the law can be fulfilled only with power given by God and with the help of God’s Grace but Tyndale does not want to understand this since he does not believe in free will.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Duffy ‘The comen knowen multytude of crysten men’, 202-203.

²⁶⁹ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 146.

²⁷⁰ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, 11.

²⁷¹ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 148-149.

As for Tyndale's claim that the word of God is not purely preached and that prayers and so on are just 'buzzings and howlings' since they are not spoken in the language that people understand More asks if he means the word written or unwritten or both which according to More are both preached by the Church. If the problem is the 'holy doctors' then More says that they studied their whole lives and testify with their writings the keeping of both the unwritten and written word. And if the problem is philosophy or poetry More assures that they are used only in matters of nature or moral virtues. And Tyndale cannot oppose this since Paul in the epistle to Romans only disapproved of cunning philosophers and in the epistle to Titus he approved use of poetry and disapproved only liars like Tyndale.²⁷²

Despite the handling of Tyndale's separate claims More understands that Tyndale is saying that according to his understanding of the Scriptures the right teaching of the word of God has not continued till their time which has led to the corrupted practices of the Church. Therefore More reminds that the assurance of the continuing correct faith and teaching of God's word in the Church rests on the promises of Christ to give his Holy Spirit to guide and teach the Church which is done of course without writing (Jn 16:13). More reminds how Christ and apostles preached both written and unwritten word of God through their lives and wonders why Tyndale will not believe Christ unless he speaks with written word.²⁷³ The second meaning for 'church' which Tyndale described was that it means the clergy which he thought to be inaccurate. More sees this notion false since even though the clergy represent the Church they are just one part of it (and have not claimed otherwise) and the whole Church is all the Christians which catholic means.²⁷⁴

When More commented in his *Dialogue* that 'congregation' is not good because it is more general term than 'church' and can mean heathen also Tyndale replied that 'congregation' can replace 'church' everywhere and that the circumstances do specify what it means. Tyndale also pointed out that Luke used *ekklesia* in the Acts to mean 'church', 'congregation' and heathen people.²⁷⁵ For More the circumstances are just a vague explanation since in that way he can

²⁷² *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 150-151.

²⁷³ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 151. The matter of unwritten and written word will be handled in detail in the section 'Was the Church before the gospel or gospel before the Church?' starting from page 74.

²⁷⁴ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 164-165.

²⁷⁵ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 15.

make any word to be understood as he wants it to be and could translate the world as a football if he wished to.²⁷⁶ More partly agrees with the use of ‘congregation’ but reminds that *ekklesia* originally only meant ‘congregation’ in a local sense where people gathered to decide and discuss common matters and was similarly used among Christians but soon developed to mean Christians everywhere.²⁷⁷ For More the problem is not that *ekklesia* was used to mean also heathen in Greek but that the word ‘church’ means only Christians and the Catholic Church in the English language and changing it would be pointless.²⁷⁸

According to More when Tyndale wrote as the third meaning that of ‘all multitude gathered to gether in one, of all kyndes, condycyons, and degrees of people’ he seems to mean all citizens or the elects within a city though it means only the Christians throughout the world and not just in a certain city. Although More admits that the Scriptures include this notion for ‘church’ to mean only Christians in certain places Tyndale’s interpretation goes further when he describes it as ‘whole body of the city’ and ‘all that pertain unto the town generally’.²⁷⁹ According to More, Tyndale does not take in to account that in the apostles time the Christians were a minority living in cities among pagans and heretics and that nowadays in a city where all are Christians such as in London people understand ‘church’ to mean what it should, the universal Catholic Church, and Tyndale just wants to lead them astray.²⁸⁰ However it seems that More is conciously misinterpreting and mispresenting Tyndale’s arguments since Tyndale meant that the church is all the Christians around the world as we have seen before. But More leaves this out from the first quotation and claims this position for the Catholic Church. This might be because for More the church is throughout the world the Catholic Church and therefore he sees Tyndale’s position of spiritual rather than temporal church impossible.²⁸¹

Ekklesia does have several meanings in the *Koine* Greek. It was used by the heathens to mean a political body, an assembly, and it was used by the Jews to mean gathering for religious purpose. It means in different texts as well a local congregation or church (1 Cor 11:18), house churches (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19), all the Christians in an area (Mt 18:17; Ac 5:11; 1 Cor 4:17) and an universal

²⁷⁶ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 165-166.

²⁷⁷ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 171.

²⁷⁸ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 167-168.

²⁷⁹ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 147.

²⁸⁰ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 147-148.

²⁸¹ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 147.

church of all believers (Mt 16:18). Paul also uses genitives (God's and Christ's church/congregation) to clarify the special, Christian meaning of *ekklesia* (1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1 Th 2:14; 2 Th 1:4...).²⁸²

In my opinion, in this context we can observe that Tyndale's meaning for congregation as a place where Christians gather to hear the Word preached but also a universal congregation of believers are correct and his criticism of using 'church' to mean the clergy is justified. However, More claims that the Church has kept the duties that Tyndale described of 'old times' and teaches correctly. What Tyndale finds as 'teaching salvation through works' More sees as teaching with both word written and unwritten that mercy transmits through the seven sacraments and good works will be rewarded and that even the children know this.

As I have shown, basically both Tyndale and More have the same kind of understanding of what *ekklesia* means but the argument is really not about what *ekklesia* means in the Bible but whether the Catholic Church represents the same. For More it does and for Tyndale it does not. More does make a point that there is no good reason to change the translation if 'church' is understood among Englishmen as both local and universal congregation of Christ, just as Paul described it. However, according to Tyndale, it should be changed because it means only the clergy in English. It seems to me that for Tyndale it is more important to clarify with the use of 'congregation' instead of 'church' that what makes a Christian is not whether he belongs to an institution such as the Catholic Church but that he believes in Christ and justification by faith alone and therefore belongs to a universal 'church' of believers. More is therefore right that Tyndale's understanding of justification by faith and other 'Lutheran heresies' affects his translation.

Tyndale brought More's 'darling Erasmus' to the debate with wondering why More had not risen against him even though he had translated *ekklesia* as 'congregation' in his *New Testament*.²⁸³ More explains that the difference with Tyndale and Erasmus is that Erasmus had no 'malicious intent' when translating *ekklesia* as 'congregation'. If Erasmus had had bad intentions he would not be More's 'darling' anymore. But the translations are not comparable for More since

²⁸² Walter Bauer *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 240-241. All references taken from Bauer's *A Greek English Lexicon* are taken from a translation and adaptation of Bauer's fourth edition by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich which has been revised from Bauer's fifth edition by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, Chicago 1979.

²⁸³ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 16.

Erasmus just gave the Greek *ekklesia* a Latin name with ‘congregation’ because it did not have one before whereas in English there already exists the word ‘church’ for that meaning.²⁸⁴ As mentioned before the question of translating *ekklesia* was more of a theological than linguistic question. It seems to me that it was a question of what the church is and should be and for Tyndale the church was to be understood only in the light of the Scriptures and for More it was to be understood in the concensus of the Church and through both the word unwritten and written.

4.1.2 What is the meaning of *presbyteros*?

Tyndale translated the Greek *presbyteros* as ‘senior’ instead of ‘priest’ in his English *New Testament* which did not please More. More admits that ‘senior’ is close to *presbyter* in the way that it refers to the common practise of choosing elderly men as priests. However, More points out that there were also priests that were young when they started. More also disapproves of ‘senior’ since it comes from French and was used when ‘one man wants to call another “my lord” in scorn’. For More it means nothing in English. More adds that if Tyndale had taken it from Latin it would just mean older men. For More ‘senior’ is simply misleading because it suggests that priesthood is more about age than office although Paul wrote to Timothy that ‘Let no one scorn your youth’ (1 Tim 4:12).²⁸⁵ According to More, Tyndale uses ‘priest’ for Jewish priests but wants to separate Christ’s church and its understanding of priesthood not separating priests and common people. More summarises that Tyndale’s translations are done with malicious intent to promote his Lutheran heresies.²⁸⁶

When it comes to translation of *presbyteros* Tyndale changed it in *The Answer* from ‘senior’ to ‘elder’. Tyndale explains that ‘senior’ was the best he could think of at the time and admits that More’s critique was justified although he had come to the same conclusion long before More’s *Dialogue* and had used ‘elder’ in his other works ever since. Tyndale also claims that More cannot object his translation of *presbyteros* to ‘elder’ since it is translated the same way in the *Vulgate* and then he would condemn it too as heretic. Tyndale shows examples from letters of John and the Acts (where the latin word is *senior*) where it is used in many different meanings. According to Tyndale, in the Acts 20 *presbyteros* is first translated as ‘elder’ in birth (because of age) and then called bishop or

²⁸⁴ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 177.

²⁸⁵ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 328.

²⁸⁶ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 332-333.

overseer (because of their office). For Tyndale it was used to mean both age and office although the Church has separated these meanings later on. Tyndale also claims that ‘elder’ and ‘bishop’ were used as synonyms but were also later separated by the Church. For Tyndale this shows how his translation is not less correct than the *Vulgate*.²⁸⁷ Tyndale disagreed with Timothy being a priest. According to Tyndale, Paul did not use *presbyteros*, ‘priest’ or ‘elder’ of Timothy and he himself would not call him *episcopus* either because the bishops were governing a congregation in one place and Timothy was an apostle. Tyndale points out that even though women are forbidden to rule or preach, God has let them to do so in ‘sundry times’ and therefore God could also make an exception with Timothy.²⁸⁸

More answers this in his *Confutation to Tyndale’s Answer* by first mocking that ‘elder’ is even worse than ‘senior’. He wonders why Tyndale chose it since it is not known that ‘elder’ would have been used for ‘priest’ in any language.²⁸⁹ For Tyndale’s claim that *presbyteros* has been used in the meaning of ‘elder’ in Latin More answers that he can find ‘elder’ in it only if Tyndale wrote it there himself. For More, Tyndale’s defense for ‘elder’ because of similar use in the old Latin version (Acts and letters of John) fails because the translation is faulted on that part. More explains that Erasmus did not use ‘senior’ in his new Latin translation but used the original *presbyteros* and commented how *seniores* or *maiores natu* reflect more age than the same kind of authority which *presbyteros* meant in Greek. More also points out that Jerome used *compresbyter* in the first letter of Peter and when meaning office he used ‘senior’ and for age *conseniores* and that *presbyteros* did also mean ‘rulers and governors’ as ‘senior’ does.²⁹⁰ According to More, Jerome just used a word which he saw best resembling *presbyteros* in Latin (just as Tyndale defended his use of ‘senior’ in *An Answer*) but the Church however did not use ‘senior’ for ‘priest’ in written works nor preaching.²⁹¹

In his *Answer* Tyndale translated in Peter’s words ‘*Seniores ergo qui in vobis sunt obsecro consenior, pascite qui in vobis est gregem Christi*’ as ‘The elders that are among you, I beseech, which I am an elder also, that ye feed the flock of Christ, which is among you’ (1.Peter 5:1) and explained how in it

²⁸⁷ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, 16-17.

²⁸⁸ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, 17-18.

²⁸⁹ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 182-183.

²⁹⁰ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 185.

²⁹¹ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 185-186.

presbyteros means 'elder'.²⁹² According to More neither *presbyteros* nor 'senior' mean age in them but office. This More justifies by claiming that otherwise Timothy could have not been called for this office.²⁹³ On the matter of Timothy's priesthood being an exception More answers that Tyndale leaves two important passages out. More points out how Paul says that "Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the putting-upon the hands of a priest' (1 Tm 4:14) and 'I warn thee that thou stir up the grace of God that is in thee by the putting of mine hands upon thee'" (2 Tm 1:6). For More the putting of the hands above Timothy and the exhortation to him to do the same proves that he was a bishop and that priesthood is a sacrament.²⁹⁴ To point out for his reader Tyndale's corruptness More reminds that Paul exhorted Timothy to avoid 'men of corrupt minds which waste their brains about wrangling questions' and Tyndale's heresy shows that he has been in the corrupting company of Luther and others.²⁹⁵ For More Tyndale's choice to translate *presbyteros* as 'elder' is wrong because it signifies age and is simply bad English. But the real problem for More is that he thinks Tyndale's translation aims to to promote his view of priesthood not being a sacrament.²⁹⁶

Luther declared in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) that all that have been baptised are equally priests and therefore priests do not have power to command others. However he did define a special office for a priest. A priest is called to this office to preach and teach by his fellow Christians but it is 'nothing else but a ministry'. Luther justified this with Paul's words 'Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor 4:1). And if the priest does not teach and preach he is no priest since 'The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts' (Malachi 2:7).²⁹⁷ Luther claimed that priesthood is not a sacrament since the Scriptures do not mention it and therefore it does not have a 'promise of grace'. According to Luther, the sacrament of order

²⁹² *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 16-17.

²⁹³ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 188-189.

²⁹⁴ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 193.

²⁹⁵ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 192.

²⁹⁶ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 183.

²⁹⁷ Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 57-58. All references to the *Babylonian Captivity* are from the online version of the 1883 edition of *Martin Luther, First Principles of the Reformation, or the 95 Theses and the Three Primary Works of Dr. Martin Luther on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1883) available at: http://whitehorsemedia.com/docs/BABYLONIAN_CAPTIVITY_OF_THE_CHURCH.pdf

was invented by the ‘Church of the Pope’. Although it is founded on a useful rite it is still just a rite.²⁹⁸

The word *presbyteros* has several meanings in Greek. It is used in the New Testament to express age meaning older compared to someone else (Lk 15:25), older but also elders (1 Pt 5:5) and also in feminine form of an old woman (1 Ti 5:2). It was used to mean a designation of an official and for members of local councils in individual cities in the Old Testament (Josh 20:4, Ruth 4:2, 2 Esdr 10:14, Jdth 8:10). Jews also used to denote their officers in Jerusalem with it before 70AD. It was used as a title by Christians just like the Jews and the heathen used it to mean age as ‘old ones’. In the Acts 15 and 16 it is used to mean the Jerusalem church.²⁹⁹ According to Horrell, elders were both older members of the church but also heads of their households. Horrell points out that in certain passages in the first epistle of Peter (such as 1 Pet 5:1) it means especially those who look over the flock and the same goes for Paul (1 Tim. 5:1-2, 17-19, Tit. 1.5). In the early church people gathered to believers houses ‘house churches’ and these elders hosted these meetings.³⁰⁰ Elliot points out that in the first epistle of Peter the younger (not just age but also in faith) are subordinate to the elders in the congregation in the same way that they are in the households. Age and office are linked since in the ancient world age usually meant higher status and the qualification of leadership. Elliot summarises that since the author seems to be identifying himself as co-leader he also presumes that the persons related to the letter are elders in the sense of office.³⁰¹ Both Horrell and Elliot support the understanding that *presbyteros* meant originally in the first epistle of Peter both age and office.

It seems to me that Tyndale was correct of the dual meaning of *presbyteros* although More was correct about his claim on the emphasis of office in the first epistle of Peter (1 Pt 5:1). Nevertheless, as shown before they are not always easily separable since office was connected to age in Roman culture. Timothy as an exception does not outlink them either. Just like with *ekklesia* Tyndale and More do not totally disagree on the meaning of the original Greek word but of the English translation. Tyndale held the Scriptures as his only authority concerning all matters of faith and therefore also with his understanding of priesthood.

²⁹⁸ *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 61.

²⁹⁹ Bauer *A Greek English Lexicon*, 699-700.

³⁰⁰ David G. Horrell *1 Peter*, Somerset 2008, 49.

³⁰¹ John H. Elliott *1 Peter*, The Anchor Bible Series 37B. New York 2000, 811-813.

Because he found the existing word ‘priest’ having contrary meaning with the New Testament among the Englishmen he changed it to ‘elder’. For More, ‘priest’ already was a correct translation and priesthood was understood as it should among Englishmen and therefore there was no need to change the word as Tyndale did in his translation.

Daniell points out that More’s concern mainly over a few words in Tyndale’s translation shows that he was not on a firm ground with his criticism. Tyndale was right and More was wrong and he was not listening to Tyndale’s explanation of his choices because he was even more against the translator who was a heretic and therefore he could not be right.³⁰² According to More the reason for these choices of words is Tyndale’s Lutheran perception of salvation, priesthood and church. More claims that Tyndale’s perception of ‘church’ as an invisible congregation of believers leads him to abandon the earthly church of Catholic faith and his perception of priesthood makes him attribute saying mass, confession or absolution to ‘every man, woman, and child’ and limit priesthood to just an office to preach. According to More, Tyndale uses ‘priest’ only for Jewish priests because he wants to make it seem that in Christ’s church there is no separation between priests and common people. More summarises that Tyndale’s translations are done with malicious intent to promote his Lutheran heresies.³⁰³ Tyndale had an opinion of More’s reason to resist his translation. According to Tyndale, More ‘hath so long used his figures of poetry’ that he thought to be right even when he was wrong. Tyndale claims that More did not write his books to defend the clergy or because he would really believe what he was writing. For Tyndale, More was driven by his greed similarly to Judas.³⁰⁴

More is right that Tyndale is promoting certain theological views in his translation which he believes to be more correct than in the *Vulgate* and how the Church teaches. However, Tyndale himself would have hardly considered his intent as malicious. He probably thought that he was on a godly mission just as More probably did defending the Church. With both *ekklesia* and *presbyteros* the problem was surprisingly not the original Greek meaning of the words but their meaning in English in the early 16th century. Yet again this was a matter of authority. Tyndale interpreted the meaning of these words only through the

³⁰² Daniell ‘Introduction’, xxix.

³⁰³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 331-333.

³⁰⁴ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, 15-16.

Scriptures and More through the concensus of the Church. This leads us to the question of what is the foundation of the Church.

4.2 The Church and its foundation

If we seek to evaluate More and Tyndale's positions we must examine the question of what is the foundation of the Church. Whether the foundation is Peter or faith, it is essential for the authority of the Church that this foundation has been continual from the time of apostles and guarantees that the Church cannot err in any matters of faith nor in its interpretations of the Scriptures. Therefore the foundation of Church is connected to everything in More and Tyndale's debate. First we will investigate what Tyndale and More saw as the foundation of the Church. Secondly, we will examine whether the Church can err or not. After that we investigate the relationship of written and unwritten word and therefore determine if the church was before the gospel or gospel before the church. Finally we will examine what Tyndale and More thought about how and by whom the Scriptures should be interpreted.

4.2.1 Is the Church founded on Peter or faith?

Tyndale handles papacy in the *Obedience* in a chapter called *Antichrist*.

According to Tyndale, the pope and bishops are falsely anointed 'even to bring the very elect out of the way, if it were possible'. Tyndale points out that according to Timothy a bishop must be faultless husband of one wife (1 Tim 3:2) and yet the pope 'the husband of no wife' denies it but can have as many whores as he likes. Tyndale argues that God commands to marry if one cannot live in chaste but the pope allows concubines if put away when one becomes old or gets caught.³⁰⁵ According to Tyndale, the pope persecutes those who preach God's word by calling them to a hearing where they will be questioned about the pope's power, his pardons, bulls and so on and if they disagree in any matter they will be burned. Tyndale adds that the pope makes people fear the Church and its suspensions, excommunications and curses.³⁰⁶ Tyndale claims that the Church and pope unrighteously claim authority on earth over kings and the Emperor. He adds that even this is not enough for them but they wish to rule also heaven and hell

³⁰⁵ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 88.

³⁰⁶ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 89.

and in their thirst for power have created the Purgatory to rule the dead ‘to have one kingdom more than God himself hath.’³⁰⁷

Tyndale claims that in the pope and the Church do not teach nor preach and in addition to their thirst for power they are also greedy. According to Tyndale, the clergy are not content with the ‘honest living’ of their parishes but own lots of land and charge from every ‘proving of testaments, pressing of goods, offering days and privy tithes’. He adds that laymen have to even pay to have Lord’s Supper in Easter, rich or poor.³⁰⁸ For Tyndale, the Church concentrates on things that are not its realm and neglect their true realm since

‘there is no mischief whereof they are not the root, nor blood shed, but through their cause other by their counsel or in that they preach not true obedience and teach not true obedience and teach not the people to fear God’.³⁰⁹

Tyndale points out that kings should remember that they are ordained by God to rule in his stead and they should end the tyranny of the Church and take their power to punish from sins and exhort them to preach, fear God and not to sin.³¹⁰ For Tyndale the pope and the bishops are like the Scribes and Pharisees who wanted the people to see their good works and outward holyness and have people serve them although Christ left us the law of love which bounds us to give instead of receive.³¹¹

Tyndale and Luther sang the same song concerning the pope and the Church: Luther concluded that the pope and the Church is not the true church since they do not preach Christ (and that his sacrifice has gained us faith which makes us acceptable to the Father without any merit from us) and therefore they have no Holy Spirit to gather the Church, assembly of Christians.³¹² Luther also appealed to Paul’s description of a bishop being ‘a husband of one wife’ in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* to prove that the pope was a prince of the ‘Synagogue of Satan’. Luther wondered how polluting ‘six hundred harlots’ is no obstacle of becoming a pope, cardinal or bishop but a man cannot be a priest if he is married.³¹³

³⁰⁷ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 91.

³⁰⁸ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 92-93.

³⁰⁹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 95.

³¹⁰ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 95.

³¹¹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 101-102.

³¹² *Large Catechism*, 119.

³¹³ *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 62.

As Hendrix points out Luther turned against papacy gradually. When Luther published his *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517 he attacked the particular indulgence authorised in 1515 by Pope Leo X to collect money for the building of St Peter's Basilica. For Luther the problem was not the cause but the promise of forgiveness of all sins and assured salvation (instead of a particular sin) with buying these indulgences. According to Luther no pope or bishop could sell these and that good works were itself better satisfaction than indulgences.³¹⁴ Hendrix continues that Luther evaluated papacy concerning whether it fulfilled 'the pastoral duty of nourishing people in the Church with the word of God'. Therefore he accepted his excommunication and permanent drift from the Church when he realised that the popes were unwilling to fulfill this task.³¹⁵ It seems that in the *Obedience* Tyndale builds his argument against papacy from the way popes live which for him is so ungodly and against the teaching in the Scriptures that the pope has to be the antichrist. However, unlike Luther, Tyndale was consistently against the pope throughout his career.

More does not write much about papacy in his *Dialogue*. It is a sideshow when he discusses the infallibility of the Church. However, More states that

'By this church know we the Scripture; and this is the very church; and this hath begun at Christ... and hath had him for their head, and Saint Peter, his vicar after him, the head under him... and always since, the successors of him continually... and have had his holy faith and his blessed sacraments and his holy scriptures delivered, kept, and conserved therein by God and his Holy Spirit.'³¹⁶

More justifies pope's power with the traditional Catholic position: Christ appointed Peter as the 'vicar' to lead his Church and the popes are his successors in an unbroken line. However, Peter denied Christ after he had professed him to be the Son of God (Mt 16:16-19) and therefore his faith 'failed' which questions the continuity of the faith in the Church. More solves this matter by declaring that although Peter as the first successor whose 'firmly professed faith he would build his church' failed, Mary kept the faith as shown in how she stood by her son as he was hanging on the cross. According to More faith therefore continued with Mary and the promise Christ made for Peter meant only his position as the head of the

³¹⁴ Scott H. Hendrix *Luther and the Papacy*, Philadelphia 1981, 25-27.

³¹⁵ Hendrix *Luther and the Papacy*, xi.

³¹⁶ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 238.

Church.³¹⁷ More concluded that Christ's command to Peter to 'Feed my sheep' (Jn 21:17) was not meant just to Peter but to all his successors similarly as his promise to the apostles of giving the Holy Spirit to instruct them in all things (Jn 14:26) or his promise to be present himself where two or three are gathered were meant to all.³¹⁸

Gogan points out that More interprets the text about Peter's profession of faith in two distinct ways in the *Dialogue*. In the first he interprets Peter's faith to be the rock on which the Church is built and on the other Peter and his successors are the rock (since Peter's faith failed momentarily). Gogan adds that More's solution, that Mary kept the faith and Peter would communicate this faith as Christ's vicar, is somewhat illogical. Gogan concludes that although More does not give totally harmonious interpretations of the petrine texts Peter's faith does not fail in the sense that it was passed to the Church and has endured.³¹⁹ According to Duffy, although More sets Peter and his followers as the head of the Church he never aims to prove his arguments with the pope or the councils but with the common faith of Christ's body, the Church. Duffy adds that even the Fathers are used not so much as individual authorities but as witnesses supporting the Church's view.³²⁰

It seems that More is slightly ambiguous about his view on papacy. However, it is quite understandable since More could hardly emphasise the pope's power at the same time when the king was trying to undermine it in favour of his divorce. After all, More told in his letter to Cromwell in late 1534 that he had advised Henry to write carefully about papal power when he was working on with his *Assertion* in 1521 since it might be harmful if a conflict would arise between the king and pope. However, in the same letter More also stated that he had been unsure of the divine authority of the Holy See before reading Henry's *Assertion*.³²¹ It seems to me that even though More gave confusing statements of the primacy of the Holy See he did insist on that the Church was the infallible true church of Christ because Christ promised to be with his Church to the end of the world (Matt 28:20).³²²

Tyndale questioned pope's authority and therefore the Church's authority

³¹⁷ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 134.

³¹⁸ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 135.

³¹⁹ Gogan *The Common coprse of Christendom*, 156-157.

³²⁰ Duffy 'The comen knowen multytude of crysten men', 199.

³²¹ *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, 498.

³²² *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 139-141.

because the pope's live ungodly and do not commit into their celibacy. Therefore this matter must be examined. More answers Tyndale's comments on pope, bishops and clerical marriage when the Messenger suggests that priest should be allowed to marry. According to More, Tyndale is following Luther in his use of Paul's letter to Timothy as a base for his argument and wrongly claims that priests should necessarily have wives against the holy fathers and saints who have understood the text differently through the last fifteen centuries.³²³ However, Tyndale did not say so but pointed out that if one cannot live in celibacy one should therefore marry instead living in sin with a concubine.³²⁴ According to More, Paul instructed that a bishop should be a man of one wife because at the time all the grown men were or had been married. Although Paul preferred celibacy for clergy he was instructed by God with this solution since despite Timothy young men were generally not fit to be priests.³²⁵

More states that although priests were allowed to marry in the old times few did and hardly ever after taking the office and many of the married gave up their 'carnal relationship' with them. More notes that the Greeks are not allowed to marry after taking office and that he will not criticise them because he does not know them but adds that since their empire fell under heathens they are not to be made too much of.³²⁶ More concludes that no one is forced to become a priest and therefore not forced to live in celibacy either. Therefore only those who have the gift of celibacy should try to become priests after all everyone knows that it is expected from a priest.³²⁷

In the *Dialogue* the Messenger claims that there is more vice in clergy than laymen. More defends the clergy but he also admits that there are many who are 'very vile and wicked'. However, More adds that because the Church gathers the multitude, both saints and sinners, there will always be those who are bad. According to More, the English clergy are nevertheless just as good as in any other country and the problems would be 'more than half amended' if the bishops would take less and better men for the office. More adds that we tend to see more vice in clergy than ourselves because people in general are better in identifying sin in others than in themselves. Despite the faults of some More claims that in the

³²³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 347.

³²⁴ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 89.

³²⁵ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 348.

³²⁶ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 354-355.

³²⁷ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 356-357.

clergy everything is greater 'because they are more obliged to be better'³²⁸ It seems that More was partly sidelining Tyndale's criticism as he did not quite comment on the misgivings of popes and concubines but answered only of whether the clergy should marry or no. The fact that More did not use the pope as an argument to prove the Church's infallibility might also be because of Henry's divorce campaign and giving too much power for the pope might have hurt the king's cause.

Tyndale responded to More concerning papacy in his *Answer* and repeats his arguments from the *Obedience*. According to Tyndale, pope has 'ten thousand sects copen in' meaning heresies and set up 'a thousand manner works to be saved by; which is the denying of Christ.'³²⁹ To prove this Tyndale refers to Peter's warning about false teachers which 'shall secretly bring in damnable sects' and lead people astray and make merchandise of Christ (2 Pet. 2). Then he adds that Paul said that 'the law speaketh unto them that are under the law' (Rom 3).³³⁰ According to Tyndale, the pope has rebuked and denied Christ's truth with setting up false works and feigned words such as shrift, penance, pardon and 'a thousand more' and made merchandise of Christ by 'selling God's laws, and also their own, and all sin, and all Christ's merits and all that man can think'. Tyndale adds that Christ said that there will come false teachers with false miracles (Matt 24). Then even the elect might lose their way but they will be protected against 'all natural possibility' by the hand of God.³³¹

Tyndale states that 'heretics' like him do not make miracles since they do not bring new learning, but only the Scripture which is already 'received and confirmed with miracles'. Tyndale sets persecution as a sign of true believers and claims that as Paul shows that the stories of the Old Testament prove this (1 Cor 10).³³² Tyndale adds that 'God shall never have a church that shall either persecute, or be unpersecuted themselves any season, after the fashion of the pope' but adds that in the church there is 'a fleshly seed of Abraham and a spiritual; Cain and an Abel...a worker and a believer.' So there will be many of those who are called but only a small flock of elected and chosen. Those who are called have a faith like the devils and when they think they are serving God they cling to their brain instead of the word of God. Tyndale links 'the called' with

³²⁸ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 338-339.

³²⁹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Answer*, 103.

³³⁰ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Answer*, 102.

³³¹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Answer*, 103.

³³² *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Answer*, 103-104.

clergy by describing them to ‘separate them from all men’, ‘anoint their hands’, ‘gather rents, tithes, offerings’, and make sacrifice in the altar that is useful only for their bellies, and become God’s vicars but are really Pharisees.³³³

About the comparison of the pope to the antichrist Tyndale refers to Paul’s words that ‘antichrist’s coming shall be the working of Satan with all power, signs and wonders of falsehood..’ (2 Thess 2). According to Tyndale, the pope ‘blasphemeth that his word is truer than the Scripture’ and has miracles without God’s words which for Tyndale is the sign of a false prophet. Tyndale claims that popes have no love for the truth which shows in how they have falsely set them above all laws of man so they can sin freely and they have put God’s word asleep so that their consciences would not bother them. And if anyone rebuke’s them of this they make him a heretic and persecute and burn him.³³⁴

More justified papacy with Christ’s words (Mt 16) and Tyndale answers to this that faith is the rock that Christ promised to build his congregation instead of Peter or his successors. With this faith he means a repenting faith in Christ’s offering for our sins and to this rock man can always come back to if he falls. Tyndale adds that ‘against the rock of this faith can no sin, no hell, no devil, no lies, nor error prevail’.³³⁵ In my opinion it seems that for Tyndale the errors of the Church show that it is not the true church which is based on faith as the rock.

More answers in his *Confutation* and rebukes Tyndale’s idea that faith could be the kind of rock that man can come to if he repents and be safe again. For More it is impossible ‘without confession or any endeavor through good works toward satisfaction.’³³⁶ More questions Tyndale’s understanding of faith since for him if in this faith of Peter can ‘no sin, no hell..nor error prevail’ it leads to two different notions. In the first man can never fall and therefore shall never need to repent either which cannot be proved by Scripture. In the second if man falls and then comes back to the faith by repenting then man should know for sure that he repents and returns for otherwise ‘the gates of hell may prevail against him for lack of repenting and returning’.³³⁷ For More, Tyndale must mean the first one which according to him means that the Church would be the unknown church of the elect only who with the right faith of Peter can never fail unless their faith is killed. According to More this would lead to wrong kind of certainty of heaven

³³³ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Answer*, 107-108.

³³⁴ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Answer*, 104.

³³⁵ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, 31.

³³⁶ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 411.

³³⁷ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 412.

simply by faith which is evil.³³⁸

More admits that it is true that we cannot have salvation unless we have the faith that Peter professed but adds that the faith is bound to the known Church in which you need confession, contrition, works of penance and so on. And for Tyndale's claim that his position is proved by the Scriptures, apostles, signs, miracles, blood of martyrs More answers that believing in these things we believe much more than Peter professed and with the same logic we would have to discharge believing in baptism or the eucharist. According to More if one has the same faith as Peter to Christ as the Son of God then he must believe that Christ was true in all his words and teaching. More makes an example that someone might believe this way but believe only what Christ tells him personally and would not believe other's who Christ would have taught personally also not even if they would prove it with miracles. More is referring of course to Tyndale and Luther and points out that similarly they do not believe Christ's words unless they are written and use the Scriptures wrongly 'against all the old holy doctors, and all the church of Christ'.³³⁹

Tyndale made three other interpretations of this petrine faith in his *Answer* in a chapter called 'How a true member of Christ's church sinneth not, and how he is yet a sinner'. More summarises them in the following way: First by that faith we be born of God, and secondly that they have the seed of God in them and thirdly that those who have the seed cannot sin. So if man once acquires this kind of faith he can never sin after. According to More although it is true that by faith we be born of God we are not born of God only by faith but with hope and charity. For More, Tyndale has wrongly tried to include these two into faith although it is the same as to say that 'a body alone' could do something although without soul it is dead. In the second point, More assumes that Tyndale means faith with the seed (instead of the Spirit or God's grace) and claims that it will not keep man from sin itself but as mentioned earlier needs hope and charity with it. For More faith only helps us to return to God by 'the offer of his grace' and therefore have hope and charity again also.³⁴⁰ Although More cited Tyndale correctly he left out Tyndale's comment that we are sinners because of the 'frailty of our flesh' but no sinners 'if thou look unto the profession of our hearts towards

³³⁸ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 413-414.

³³⁹ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 414-416.

³⁴⁰ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 421-422.

the law'.³⁴¹

More seems to suggest that although Peter's faith was correct it is not enough in itself but only a starting point to understand everything Christ taught and keeps teaching through his Church. More is not using papacy as a proof for the infallibility of the Church. Primacy of the Holy See and the infallibility of the Church is proved by Christ promise to be with his Church and guide it through Holy Spirit and all the miracles, Scriptures and martyrs prove it.

What did Erasmus think about the supremacy of the Holy See? After all, in the *Praise of Folly*, which was written at More's house and which More defended, Erasmus criticised the popes. Erasmus' criticism focused especially on how the pope's way of life and behaviour contradicts with Christ's life and example. Erasmus pointed out how Christ lived in poverty but the popes live in riches taxing ordinary people with everything possible and instead of praying, teaching and interpreting the Scriptures they concentrate waging war in the name of Christ.³⁴² According to Dickens and Jones, Erasmus was pointing here to Pope Julius II (1443–1513) who was known by his military efforts.³⁴³ Campbell adds that the peace-loving Erasmus must have been shocked by Julius II's rule during the years he stayed in Italy.³⁴⁴ Conveniently, Erasmus anonymously wrote a dialogue in 1514 about the recently deceased Julius II titled *Julius Excluded from Heaven*. In this satirical dialogue Julius demanded acceptance to heaven from Peter who denied him for such reasons as Julius understood church to mean buildings, priests, curia and himself whereas Peter understood it to mean Christians united in Christ's spirit.³⁴⁵

Erasmus was not just critical to the outward practises of popes but also to the justification of their authority and pompousness which shows in his painstaking comment comparing them to St. Peter:

'Peter received the keys, and received them from one who would not have entrusted them to an unsuitable recipient—yet I'm not sure that he understood (he was never a sharp-witted man, for sure) how someone that doesn't have knowledge can yet hold the key of knowledge.'³⁴⁶

Despite all his criticism Erasmus avoided controversy with popes and wrote

³⁴¹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 32.

³⁴² Erasmus *Praise of Foll*, 89-91.

³⁴³ Dickens & Jones *Erasmus the Reformer*, 57.

³⁴⁴ Campbell *Erasmus, Tyndale and More*, 53.

³⁴⁵ Cornelis Augustijn *Erasmus His Life, Works, and Influence*, Toronto 1991, 86.

³⁴⁶ *Praise of Folly*, 73.

after the Diet of Worms to an English humanist and diplomat Richard Pace that although he found majority of Luther's teaching admirable he himself did not have the courage to be a martyr and risk his life for truth. Therefore he wrote that 'I Fear, if strife were to break out, I shall behave like Peter. When popes and emperors make the right decisions I follow, which is godly; if they decide wrongly I tolerate them, which is safe. I believe that even for men of good will this is legitimate, if there is no hope of better things.'³⁴⁷

Tyndale shared Erasmus's criticism but found the misgivings of the popes as evidence that they are evil. More justified papacy on Christ's words to Peter (Mt 16) but for Tyndale the passage meant that Christ founded the Church on faith and not on Peter. More did not disagree with this because Peter's faith failed him although he still found it as evidence that Christ set Peter and his successors to lead his Church. For More, the Church and the pope was to be believed because Mary had kept the faith and through her it had been continual in the Church. As we can see both More and Tyndale believed that faith was the foundation of church and that the Spirit guides the true church. But if it was possible for Peter to fall could the Church be infallible?

4.2.2 Can the Church err?

Reading the *Obedience* leaves no uncertainty that Tyndale believes that the Church can err. As previously mentioned Tyndale called the pope as the antichrist who persecutes those who preach God's word and makes people fear the Church and its suspensions, excommunications and curses.³⁴⁸ According to Tyndale, the Church had put earthly matters above the Word of God and made wrongly their own doctrine and the pope the judge of Scriptures. Tyndale claimed that only the Scriptures should guide the Church and with it the Church should judge preachers and doctors.³⁴⁹ Tyndale criticised the Church's teaching of the importance of good works for salvation whereas in his opinion good works are only a proof that we are saved and God's spirit is in us but do not contribute anything for our salvation.³⁵⁰ Tyndale claimed that five of the Church's seven sacraments were not sacraments but superstition since they have no promise and signification. According to Tyndale, the true sacraments are holy signs ordained by Christ himself for our comfort and they also need to include a promise from God. For

³⁴⁷ Augustijn Erasmus, 125.

³⁴⁸ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 88-89.

³⁴⁹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 3-4, 20, 106.

³⁵⁰ *The Obedience of a Christian man*, 133-34.

Tyndale only the eucharist and baptism are real sacraments.³⁵¹ As we can see Tyndale found the Church to err in great many things and he saw the reason being that the Church did not preach and teach God's word and had put itself above the Scriptures.

In the *Dialogue* the Messenger claims that Christ is with the Church and guides it through the Scriptures. The Messenger justifies this with Jesus' promise 'I am with you all days, to the end of the world' and 'Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away' (Matt 28:20).³⁵² According to More this is insufficient since Christ said that 'I am with you' instead of 'I shall be with you' and that unlike Moses and the prophets Christ did not leave us a book that he wrote himself and the Scriptures were written later. More explains that when Christ spoke that his words will not pass away he meant his promises instead of the Scriptures. More reminds that Christ also promised to send the Holy Spirit and that it has taught us many things which are not written such as that Mary was a perpetual virgin.³⁵³

Tyndale handles the issue in his *Answer* where he starts bluntly by stating that the 'question, whether the church can err. Which if ye understand of the pope and his generation, it is verily as hard a question as to ask whether he which had both eyes out, be blind or no.'³⁵⁴ Tyndale continues this with his understanding of the church as 'all repenting sinners that believe in Christ, and put all their trust and confidence in the mercy of God'. Tyndale specifies that we are saved without works with a feeling faith. With faith we receive the Holy Spirit which 'purgeth us. As from all sin..' and this is the only way to God.³⁵⁵ For Tyndale faith is the rock that Christ promised to build his congregation and therefore no error nor sin can prevail in the true church. According to Tyndale, the apostles, Scriptures, prophets and miracles and saints testify this faith.³⁵⁶ It must be noted that More held faith also as the foundation for the Church as shown in the last chapter. Tyndale then quotes Paul: 'Church is Christ's body and every person of the church is a member of the body of Christ' (Col 1), 'Now it is no member of Christ's body that hath not Christ's spirit Spirit in it' (Eph 5) and 'as it is no part

³⁵¹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 108-109; 130.

³⁵² *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 139-141.

³⁵³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 141-142.

³⁵⁴ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 30.

³⁵⁵ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 30-31.

³⁵⁶ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 31.

of me, or member of my body, wherein my soul is not present and quickeneth it' (Rom 8). For Tyndale to be in the church is to be in Christ.³⁵⁷

More answers Tyndale in the third book of his *Confutation*. According to More the question of infallibility of the Church is Tyndale's *Answer's* main subject.³⁵⁸ First More points out that 'pope and his generation' is not what the Church is understood to be and that Tyndale is himself blind if he thinks that the Church has been wrong and heretic for the last 800 years.³⁵⁹ More raises the question that how can we sustain the right doctrine if everyone can judge what is right and wrong themselves by reading the Scriptures. More fears that if there is no common trustable institution to guarantee the right doctrine many may fall into heresies of Arius and so on. For More, the Church guarantees and sustains the right faith and therefore we do not need to worry if we are learned or not or if we understand the Scriptures correctly or who teaches the right doctrine and whether to trust a preacher from an unknown congregation. More assures the reader that (as he already said in his *Dialogue*) the Church cannot err since Christ made a promise to his disciples and for the Church to be with them until the end of the world and Peter said that this faith would not fail. More continues that the Church has the same faith that the Fathers like St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose and others had and taught and their writings prove this.³⁶⁰

More then attacks Tyndale's definition of church. More wonders what does Tyndale mean with the 'Christ's elect church' as 'all repenting sinners' since it can mean either people Christ elected such as he elected his apostles although one of them betrayed Christ or 'final elects' predestined to glory before the creation. According to More in the first kind (like the Catholic Church) there are both penitents and impenitents, the good and the bad just as Christ spoke of in his parables of good corn and tares and good and bad fish in the net.³⁶¹ The second kind, the predestined, have both 'repenting sinners' and those who do not and some like Mary and Christ who have nothing to repent. Therefore More suggests that with Tyndale's definition of the elect as repenting sinners Christ was not a man or he was a sinner and his human side is not part of his church. As for the predestined this would mean that their church is headless.³⁶²

³⁵⁷ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 31.

³⁵⁸ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 394.

³⁵⁹ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 388.

³⁶⁰ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 389-390.

³⁶¹ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* 392.

³⁶² *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 393.

More finally states that Tyndale probably means a predestined church ‘with those other conditions that are expressed in his description... For other than this I cannot divine what he should mean.’³⁶³ After describing the possible meanings for elect More turns the question back to Tyndale and asks if the church of the elected can err. According to More, Tyndale leaves this question open with his riddles saying in different places that ‘they may synne and yet synne not, erre an yet erre not’. For More these ‘riddles’ are so bad that an old wife would be ashamed to read them to children by the fire.³⁶⁴ Whatever Tyndale means matters not for More since he sees it impossible for these ‘repentant sinners with all the feeling faith’ to know for certain if they are the elect, is their doctrine right and which are the true Scriptures. This ‘unknown church’ represents for More something that is meant to deceive and lead astray.³⁶⁵ More seems to aim to show with his rhetorics of the different meanings of elect and infallibility of the church that Tyndale’s arguments are suspicious and incoherent in comparison to the clear and trustworthy Catholic Church.

Even though More claimed that the Church cannot err Erasmus was not quite that trusting. Erasmus criticised painstakingly many of the devotional practices of the Church. In *Enchiridion* he emphasised spiritual understanding of Christian life and claimed that sprinkling of holy water is pointless if the inward filth is not wiped away or that instead of touching relics men should follow the saints virtues. To underline his stance Erasmus stated that in order to honor Paul or Peter one should ‘counterfeit one’s faith, and the other’s charity, and thou shalt do a greater thing than if thou shouldest run to Rome x times’³⁶⁶ Erasmus was generally against ceremonies since he emphasised that a Christian life was to be spiritual as Paul taught in his epistle to Romans and not carnal as the Jews taught. Therefore Erasmus criticised those preachers who made the essence of religion the worshipping of Christ with visible things because they lead people astray.³⁶⁷ As previously mentioned Erasmus also criticised the popes and the clergy in general.

Although ever critical, Erasmus also defended the Church. In his *A Discussion or Discourse concerning Free Will*, Erasmus asked the reader that if two persons were in a disagreement should people believe their private judgement or ‘the judgements already made by very many learned and orthodox men, many

³⁶³ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 393.

³⁶⁴ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 394.

³⁶⁵ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 394-395.

³⁶⁶ *Enchiridion*, 78

³⁶⁷ *Enchiridion*, 80-82.

saints and martyrs, many ancient and modern theologians, many universities, councils, bishops, and popes'.³⁶⁸ According to Erasmus, the Scriptures were not quite as clear as the reformers wanted to make it seem. For them interpreting the Scriptures was perfectly clear for those who had the Spirit. However, Erasmus claimed that if the Spirit's work through prophecy and charism had remained from the apostles times it must have been passed to those who were ordained by the Spirit. For Erasmus it was most probable such as that someone who had been baptised were given God's grace compared to someone who was not.³⁶⁹ Erasmus concluded that it was not likely that the Church, all the Fathers, popes and others which some were 'world-famous for their miracles' could have been so blind to misunderstood the Scriptures for thirteen hundred years if they are as clear as Luther stated.³⁷⁰

It seems that although Erasmus believed that the Church was not infallible, it however was not in total error, or at least not in the most central dogma. More was quite close to Erasmus' notion, as he did not believe that the Church could have been wrong for hundreds of years. More claimed that because Christ promised to be with his Church, the Church could not fall to serious error. More could admit that there were sometimes misbehaving among the clergy or some errors in devotional practices. Even then, More saw the problem being the education of the clergy and too easy acceptance to the office. These were more incidental than universal and the Church could not error in any important matter.

Tyndale found the Church to error in great many things and therefore he did not believe the Church to be the true church. For Tyndale church was those who 'repent and believe in Christ' and in salvation with a feeling faith without works. This feeling faith was the precondition to receive the Holy Spirit and the foundation of the church. Therefore no error nor sin could prevail in the true church and it could not sustain such malpractises as the Catholic Church had. He found assurance from Paul's words 'Now it is no member of Christ's body that hath not Christ's spirit Spirit in it' (Eph 5) and 'as it is no part of me, or member of my body, wherein my soul is not present and quickeneth it' (Rom 8).³⁷¹ For Tyndale the misgivings of the Church showed that it did not have Christ's spirit

³⁶⁸ Erasmus *A Discussion or Discourse concerning Free Will*, 2. All references to *A Discussion* are from *Erasmus and Luther The Battle over Free Will* edited by Clarence H. Miller For Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis 2012.

³⁶⁹ *A Discussion or Discourse concerning Free Will*, 3.

³⁷⁰ *A Discussion or Discourse concerning Free Will*, 3-5.

³⁷¹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 31.

and was not the true church. But if the Spirit was guiding the true church was all necessary matters of faith already written down or could the Spirit teach something that was not already written?

4.2.3 Was the church before the gospel or the gospel before the church?

More made a distinction in his *Dialogue* between the written and unwritten word. More points out that in creation God communicated orally giving the three precepts when commanding Adam and Eve to beget and eat and prohibited them to avoid the tree of knowledge. More adds that without the Fall there would have not been any need for written word.³⁷² More continued that faith was after the Fall transferred orally from father to son and God also gave special messages to Noah, Lot and Abraham. Some of these special messages were written later.³⁷³ According to More the written word, the law, was given to Moses when things got worse and ‘common people of the children of Israel were by custom of sin so blinded’ and with it also a ‘intimation of Christ’ was also given (Dt 18:15–19).³⁷⁴ More points out that God also sent ‘some good men’ (prophets) to teach the written word with their words, living and sometimes with miracles also. More concludes that finally Christ was sent ‘to redeem us with his death and leave us his new law’ since the world was ‘in a worse state of decline and ruin of all virtue’.³⁷⁵ According to More this law of Christ that is written in the hearts was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 31:31–33, Heb 10:16). More claims that with this law of Christ’s faith he means especially the substance of our faith itself which he said he would write in our hearts. Similarly, Christ revealed without writing or outward word ‘by the secret inspiration of God’ heavenly mysteries to the apostles. Therefore Christ said to Peter after he had identified Christ as the Son of God (and whom this new law was first revealed) that ‘neither flesh or blood has revealed and shown this to you, but my Father who is in heaven’.³⁷⁶ More points out that the apostles also continued the oral transmission of God’s word by spreading the word first only by conversation and preaching.³⁷⁷

Tyndale responded in his *Answer* that the matter of the written and unwritten word meaning ‘if the church was before the gosspeil, is as hard to solve,

³⁷² *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 165, 167.

³⁷³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 168.

³⁷⁴ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 169.

³⁷⁵ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 169–170.

³⁷⁶ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 170–171.

³⁷⁷ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 171.

as whether the father be elder than the son, or the son elder to his father?.

According to Tyndale ‘the whole scripture and all believing hearts, testify that we are begotten through the word’ and then it can be said that the gospel was before the church. For Tyndale the preached word creates faith and faith makes the congregation and so the word or gospel is before the congregation.³⁷⁸ Tyndale refers to John ‘Ye be clean by reason of word’ (Jn 15) which he claims to mean that ‘the word had purged their hearts from lies, from false opinions, and from thinking evil good, and therefore from consenting to sin.’ Tyndale refers also to another passage by John that ‘Sanctify them, O father, through thy truth: and thy word is truth’ (Jn 17) and ‘I receive no witness of man’ (Jn 5) which for him show that God’s truth is not depended on man’s testimony of it.³⁷⁹

In the *Confutation* More first reminds us of his position: ‘I showed also that the church of Christ hath been, is, and ever shall be taught and instructed by God and his Holy Spirit with his holy word of either kind... since ye know neither the one nor the other to be the word of God, but by the tradition of the Church.’³⁸⁰ Then More points out that even though Tyndale wants to make it seem that he had said that the Church was before the unwritten word he did exactly the opposite. According to More, the unwritten word created the Church and that the written word (although all God’s words were never written) came after the Church.³⁸¹ Tyndale in his *Answer* referred to John and claimed that God’s truth does not depend on mans truth but ‘man is true because he believeth, testifieth, and giveth witness in his heart that it is true’ (Jn 17). More answers in his *Confutation* that no one has claimed that God’s truth would depend on man. More disagrees with Tyndale that man is true because he ‘believeth, testifieth...’ since Peter even though did so when affirming that Christ is God he still denied him later and Judas believed God to be true but still was not true himself as he betrayed Christ.³⁸²

Then More moves to refute Tyndale’s translation of a passage of John as ‘I receive no witness of man’ (Jh 5) and Tyndale’s claim that God’s truth is not dependent on man’s testimony of it.³⁸³ According to More, Tyndale’s translation of this passage shows his true ‘shrewd’ purpose. More claims that Christ meant in

³⁷⁸ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, 24.

³⁷⁹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, 25.

³⁸⁰ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 226.

³⁸¹ *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 227.

³⁸² *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 229.

³⁸³ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, 25.

this passage that he will not take his *special* witness from any man but of God. More makes a linguistic analysis to prove his position with pointing out that unlike in Latin in Greek and English there is a certain article 'the' to make the difference between general and special. And this article makes a great difference on the meaning of this sentence.³⁸⁴ More then shows that in Latin, where there is no article, the passage would be '*Ego testimonium ab homine non recipio*' which translated to English would be 'I take not record of man' instead Tyndale's 'I take no record of man'. According to More, Tyndale should have translated it 'I receive not the record of man' which would have matched with the Greek text including the article and would had been in line with Latin also.³⁸⁵ More suggests that Tyndale left the article out knowingly 'out of malice' because he believes that 'Christ utterly refuseth and rejected all manner witness of man in testification and witnessing of him and his truth'.³⁸⁶ According to Fabiny, More attacks Tyndale for a good reason on the missing article in his translation. Fabiny also points out that Tyndale changed the passage to 'I receive not the record of man' as More had suggested in his revised 1534 *New Testament*. This would mean that More was wrong to claim that Tyndale's translation of this passage had been made with malice and Tyndale might have read the *Confutation*.³⁸⁷

Pardue points out that More is right to remind that the Scriptures are written oral tradition. However, in his defense of unwritten word and traditions and their continuation from apostles times to his day More almost entirely appeals to written texts from the Fathers to even the Scriptures. Pardue claims that More could not show convincing continuity of unwritten tradition from the early Church to his day. Pardue adds that More undermines his emphasis on the unwritten word when he states in the *Confutation* that 'For otherwise than by books can we not know what the people believed a thousand years ago'.³⁸⁸ However, according to Duffy, this was not a battle between spoken and written word but in 'this transmission of life and truth of God, the heart is just as important as the ear or mouth.' Duffy adds that More, in his *Dialogue*, is aiming to prove that Christ is present in the Church mainly through its devotional and sacramental practise and therefore he first defends pilgrimages, saints and miracles. Duffy claims that the

³⁸⁴ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 230-231

³⁸⁵ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 233-234.

³⁸⁶ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 234.

³⁸⁷ Tibor Fabiny *Scripture versus Church in the Debate of More and Tyndale*, 2008, 13-14.

Available at: http://thomasmorestudies.org/tmstudies/DCH_Fabiny.pdf

³⁸⁸ Pardue *Printing, Power, and Piety*, 69; *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 715.

Scriptures, their place, authority and interpretations is therefore investigated after them as a conclusion for the devotional matters.³⁸⁹

It seems that Duffy's explanation captures the essence of More's understanding of God's word. As previously mentioned, More believed that the Spirit teaches the Church with the word of either kind and that God showed Peter 'without outward word or writing' that Christ is the Son of God. Therefore God's Word is not to be divided since it is written in the heart and works through the devotional practises. More does not need to prove continual unwritten tradition from the apostles times since for him the Church in itself is the result of that unwritten tradition as Christ promised to be with it and guide it through the Holy Spirit.

Tyndale believed that all necessary was already written and therefore the Scriptures, the written word, were the highest authority. According to Pardue, Tyndale's strict limiting of God's speech to man only through the Scriptures is in collision with how God spoke to the prophets that Tyndale appealed to, both orally and through written word. Pardue adds that Tyndale, while professing *sola scriptura*, was clearly influenced by tradition since he believed that Mary was a perpetual virgin as did Luther.³⁹⁰ However, Tyndale saw a line of development in the way which God's Word was spread through men: Noah and Abraham performed miracles to confirm their teaching, Moses and the apostles did the same, but were eventually given the Scriptures without which their miracles might have not been believed. Finally, all that was necessary to believe was put in writing to judge all matters of faith.³⁹¹ It seems that Tyndale found no use for unwritten tradition anymore since God chose to speak to his people through writing and it was God's plan all along.

The matter of written and unwritten word leads us to the question that how and by whom are the Scriptures to be interpreted if for More they might have not been even needed and for Tyndale they include all that is necessary for faith?

³⁸⁹ Duffy 'The comen knowen multytude of crysten men', 196-197.

³⁹⁰ Pardue *Printing, Power, and Piety*, 69.

³⁹¹ An Answer to Sirm Thomas More's Dialogue, 26-28.

4.2.4 Interpreting and defining the Scriptures

As we have seen in the previous chapters Tyndale and More interpret and define the Scriptures differently. Therefore we need to examine the relationship of the Scriptures and the Church and how the Scriptures ought to be interpreted and who can determine it. Do the Scriptures dictate the Church or the opposite?

Tyndale pointed out in the *Obedience* that we can judge preachers and doctors only with Scripture 'which only is true'.³⁹² According to Tyndale 'one scripture will help to declare another' and what is in the middle is clarified by reading what is before and after.³⁹³ Tyndale pointed out in his preface of *The Obedience* that the Catholic Church had put earthly matters above the Word of God and its own doctrine and pope's power in dictating it over the Scriptures since it was 'so agreeable unto the world..and the pleasures of the world'.³⁹⁴ For Tyndale this focus of the Church on earthly matters shows in the education of the Universities which he himself found displeasing while at Oxford and Cambridge. Tyndale criticised how students might have to study philosophy, logic and so on from eight to twelve years before beginning studies in Divinity and how it made their judgements 'utterly corrupt'. But even after that they still did not start with studying the actual Scriptures but instead studied the 'sundry doctors'. According to Tyndale, the teaching was not coherent but that each doctor had their own views which became the students 'gospel' which they would maintain even with the corrupting of the Scriptures.³⁹⁵

Tyndale also criticised one key factor concerning the interpreting of the Scriptures in the Church: the four senses of the Scriptures. In the middle ages there was made a clear difference between literal and spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures. The spiritual or allegorical meaning was also divided into two other meanings. The strictly allegorical sense shows the texts value for faith, the tropological sense shows what the text has to teach for a Christians behaviour and the anagogical sense signified hope for Christians.³⁹⁶ Tyndale claims that tropological and anagogical are 'terms of their own feigning and altogether unnecessary' since they are but allegories of manners and hope. For Tyndale allegories are but 'strange speaking or borrowed speech' and therefore the only true sense of the Scriptures is the literal sense. However, according to Tyndale the

³⁹² The Obedience of a Christian Man, 20.

³⁹³ The Obedience of a Christian Man, 105-106.

³⁹⁴ The Obedience of a Christian Man, 3-4.

³⁹⁵ The Obedience of a Christian Man, 22-23.

³⁹⁶ Augustijn *Erasmus*, 99.

pope has taken it from the people and concealed it with his 'traditions, ceremonies and feigned lies'.³⁹⁷ Tyndale did allow the use of allegories but only if the text offered one and it would be used 'soberly and seldom'.³⁹⁸ Luther had held the pope and council's as the highest authority before his debate with Johann Eck in 1519. Eck aimed to prove that Luther was a heretic since his notions were similar to Jan Huss who was condemned as a heretic by the Council of Constance 1415. However, Luther, after reading Hus's writings stated that the Council was wrong and declared that only the Scriptures could be trusted as an authority.³⁹⁹

Concerning the studies of liberal arts Tyndale's criticism in *The Obedience* is reproduced through the Messenger in More's *Dialogue* where he states that logic is 'nothing but babbling' and philosophy is 'the most useless thing of all' and that they together 'had destroyed good theology'. Reason in the eyes of the Messenger leads to blindness from the only light which is the Scripture. Instead of relying on the Church Fathers and commentaries interpreting the texts he favored careful reading and comparing texts with each other.⁴⁰⁰ More was obviously summarizing Tyndale's arguments from *The Obedience* but altered the tone for his own advantage. After all Tyndale did not ban philosophy and Church Fathers entirely. He emphasised the need of vernacular Scriptures so that everyone could evaluate whether they were in line with the Scriptures or not.⁴⁰¹ According to Daniell it is easy for More to prove the Messenger wrong because 'the air of the ridiculous which hovers around everything the Messenger says'.⁴⁰² However, Duffy points out that 'The Messenger, although sometimes presented as thoughtless, is never witless'.⁴⁰³ It seems to me that although the Messenger is under More's control the questions he makes are relevant and not that far from Erasmus critique, especially his dislike of scholasticism.

More answers that some of those who object to the usefulness of studying liberal arts, church fathers and commentaries are doing so partly out of laziness and partly out of pride because they cannot take losing in debates. According to More 'they set out paradoxes and surprising opinions against the common faith of Christ's entire Church' and mock other disciplines because their own research is

³⁹⁷ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 156.

³⁹⁸ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 159.

³⁹⁹ James D. Tracy 'Introduction' in Clarence H. Miller (ed.) *Erasmus and Luther The Battle over free will*, Indianapolis 2012, xx.

⁴⁰⁰ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 54.

⁴⁰¹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 19-20.

⁴⁰² Daniell *William Tyndale*, 263.

⁴⁰³ Duffy 'The comen knowen multytude of crysten men', 192.

insignificant. For More the liberal arts are a gift from God to be used as handmaids for interpreting the Scriptures. But Scriptures when rightly understood would never contradict with Church Fathers, Commentaries or Catholic dogma.⁴⁰⁴ However, Tyndale and Luther were hardly men that fit these descriptions made by More and were anything but lazy.

More and the Messenger also have a discussion of whether the Scriptures speak for themselves. The Messenger claims that 'Christ is only present in the Holy Scripture' and as previously noted that comparing texts together will solve any problems with interpretation. More however brings up the problem that there still is heresy and disagreement over how the Scriptures ought to be interpreted. This leads them to agree that the essentials must be understood correctly and that the Church of Christ must exist continually because Christ has promised to be with it to the world's end. More sums up that 'by the help of Grace (through the Holy Spirit) the right understanding of Scripture is ever preserved in his church from any such mistaking from which could follow any condemnable error concerning faith'.⁴⁰⁵ More even goes as far as claiming that the essentials of faith would have been sustained by the Holy Spirit's guidance even if 'the Gospel had never been written'.⁴⁰⁶ Nevertheless we are to believe that God communicates with us through the Scriptures and without them through his Church and we must 'give diligent hearing, firm credence, and faithful obedience to the Church concerning the sense and understanding of Holy Scripture.'⁴⁰⁷

Tyndale responds in his *Answer* on the matter of Church Fathers and liberal arts by appealing to an authority More might listen, St Augustine. St Augustine said that he had not believed the gospel except the authority of the Church had moved him. Tyndale claims that what turned St Augustine from a pagan philosopher to a Christian was the way Christians followed their doctrine even though they faced persecution and suffering for it. Their faith moved him and made him believe that it is from God. Tyndale points out (referring to 1 Pt 3) that some who do not hear or believe the word at first like St Augustine might be later moved by 'holy conversation'.⁴⁰⁸ According Tyndale everything necessary for us to know how to live and what to believe was written and if we are to believe

⁴⁰⁴ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 150-151, 154.

⁴⁰⁵ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 143-146.

⁴⁰⁶ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 171.

⁴⁰⁷ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 195.

⁴⁰⁸ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 49-50.

things that are not in or depended on the Scriptures it leaves the purpose of them in doubt.⁴⁰⁹

Tyndale points out that we can distinguish false prophets and miracles with true miracles and the Scriptures. Although Tyndale admits that there has not always been Scriptures even then God's prophets from Adam's time to Moses confirmed their teaching with miracles. Tyndale continues that God gave sacraments with significations to Noah and Abraham (a rainbow to show when the rain stops and circumcision) and these sacraments were his word that they could read. Tyndale emphasises the importance of Scripture by pointing out that God eventually gave Scripture to his people starting with Moses and Christ and his apostles even though they performed miracles might not have been believed without Scripture. Tyndale concludes that we have received everything necessary through the Scripture and even if Christ and the apostles were here now they could not preach more than is preached.⁴¹⁰ According to Werrell, Tyndale believed that seemingly irreconcilable parts of the Scriptures could be brought together and harmonised within the Covenant and that it was made for the salvation of God's creation.⁴¹¹ Werrell also points out the difference concerning the Scriptures between Tyndale and Luther: Luther rejected parts of Scripture such as the epistle of James, 'epistle of straw' as he called it, since according to him it was not consistent with Paul and the doctrine of justification by faith. Tyndale on the other hand found all parts of the Bible fully God's word and criticised Luther being biased on his criticism over the Epistles of James and Epistle to the Hebrews.⁴¹²

In his *Confutation*, More is rather blunt over Tyndale's appeal to St Augustine. According to More the Church of 'good living and virtuous conversations' (which made St Augustine believe) was not any unknown church of elects but the known Catholic Church. More adds that St Augustine was not converted firstly by the good living of Christians but instead he first believed the Church and after that that the Scriptures are the word of God.⁴¹³ More turns back Tyndale's criticism of the ungodly life of the clerics by asking whether St Augustine would be converted by the life of such a 'rabble of wedded monks'

⁴⁰⁹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 26.

⁴¹⁰ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 26-28.

⁴¹¹ Ralph S. Werrell *The Theology of William Tyndale*, Cambridge 2006, 53.

⁴¹² Werrell *The Theology of William Tyndale*, 24-25.

⁴¹³ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 730-731.

such as Luther, Lambert and Huessgen. More claims that even in his own time Augustine would have been moved only by the known Catholic Church.⁴¹⁴

More admits that Noah for example confirmed his preaching with a miracle but generally there were not many miracles done from Adam to Moses and therefore preaching was not always proven with miracles. More is still willing to grant that Tyndale is right even without proof because it supports his notion that the Catholic Church's preachers have proved its right faith for the past fifteen hundred years with miracles. More concludes that since there has not been miracles nor saints in the heretic churches throughout the history and on the contrary in the Catholic Church there are saints and continuing miracles it is clear that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ.⁴¹⁵

Tyndale believed that the Scriptures were the highest authority and gave the Church fathers value only if they were in line with the Scriptures and found the heathen philosophers almost entirely useless.⁴¹⁶ More valued the Scriptures but believed that when rightly understood they would never contradict with Church Fathers, commentaries or Catholic dogma and liberal arts were godgiven handmaids for interpreting the Scriptures.⁴¹⁷

For Erasmus, Christ was in the center but he accepted all whose teaching is in line with Christ and the Scriptures including Greek philosophers (especially Plato's name keeps popping up).⁴¹⁸ As noted previously Erasmus wrote in his dedication of *Novum* to Pope Leo X that to with the Scriptures Christ 'still lives and breathes for us and speaks with more efficacy, in my opinion, than in any other way' and that it is 'our chiefest hope for the restoration and rebuilding of the Christian religion'.⁴¹⁹ In his letter to Colet, Erasmus also defined that the Scriptures are not simple to interpret and was therefore against simple fixed interpretations.⁴²⁰ Therefore, Erasmus claimed in his *A Discussion or Discourse concerning Free Will*, that the Scriptures were not quite as clear as the reformers wanted to make it seem. The reformers thought that interpreting the Scriptures was perfectly clear for those who had the Spirit. However, Erasmus claimed that if the Spirit's work through prophecy and charism had remained from the apostles

⁴¹⁴ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 732.

⁴¹⁵ *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, 274-275.

⁴¹⁶ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 19-20.

⁴¹⁷ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 150-151, 154.

⁴¹⁸ *Enchiridion*, 96.

⁴¹⁹ *Kiefer Writing on the renaissance stage*, 28.

⁴²⁰ *Kiefer Writing on the renaissance stage*, 41.

times it must have been passed to those who were ordained by the Spirit.⁴²¹ With this he referred to the Church and the Clergy.

In *Enchiridion* Erasmus suggested reading Fathers such as Jerome, Origen, Ambrose and Augustine whom he saw as the best interpreters of the Scriptures. These four he said to be 'farthest from the letter' and closest to Paul and his idea of the law being spiritual partly against over emphasising the literal interpretations. Erasmus did not give credit to scholastics who he claimed to 'fancy achievements of man, despise the Church Fathers and trust so much in Duns Scotus that they will not read the Scriptures'.⁴²² In the *Praise of Folly* he points out that the apostles did not know anything about transsubstantiation or that they were the least bit interested in how, when, or if Mary had been spared from the original sin.⁴²³ It seems that Erasmus was pointing out with his humorous critique against scholasticism that the Scriptures ought to define theology and not the other way round.

Augustijn points out that although one might expect that Erasmus would have rebuked the allegorical sense as he emphasised 'sober literal exegesis' he did not because he thought it was the only way to understand the Old Testament. He adds that Christ and Paul also used this method which shows for example how Paul used the story of Hagar and Sarah (Gal 4). Augustijn summarises that for Erasmus 'the distinction between a literal and a spiritual sense in Scripture is entirely in keeping with the tension between flesh and spirit that permeates mankind and the world.'⁴²⁴

Augustijn makes a good point and as noted earlier Erasmus explained his preference of Jerome, Origen, Ambrose and Augustine in *Enchiridion* because they were closest to Paul's spiritual understanding of the law. Erasmus was the man in the middle. He was openly critical of the theology of his time and the teaching of the clergy, misgivings of the Church and some of its practises and wanted the Scriptures to be read by all. Although he embraced the Scriptures he also embraced the Greek learning and the Fathers and wanted them to be available also and so he made vast collection of translations and editions of them. Erasmus was in the middle also in the sense that he did his best to avoid extremities, unlike Tyndale and More who eventually faced death because of their unyielding beliefs.

⁴²¹ *A Discussion or Discourse concerning Free Will*, 3.

⁴²² *Enchiridion*, 32.

⁴²³ *Praise of Folly*, 78

⁴²⁴ Augustijn *Erasmus*, 99.

That is why he wrote on the matter of free will against Luther only after years of claims and demands in 1525 and refused Tunstall and More pleas to help them in the English anti-Lutheran campaign.

What was common for these three men was the 'humanistic' approach of going back to the sources. However, it led Tyndale to make the Scriptures the judge of all matters of faith and therefore the Fathers too and rebuke almost entirely other interpretations except the literal. More valued the 'new learning' but held the Church as the judge of all matters of faith and therefore Scriptures also. After all the Church had existed before the Scriptures were written and Christ had promised to be with it to the end of the world, founded the Church on faith, Peter and his successors and give the Holy Spirit to guide it and so had it been for fifteen hundred years.

4.3. Authority on Earth

We have examined what Tyndale and More thought about the authority of the Scriptures and Church. However there was a third authority in the lives of Tyndale and More which was redefining its relation to the authority of Scriptures and the Church: King Henry VIII. Henry's divorce campaign was essentially tied to the question of authority and he finally got the Parliament to make him the Supreme Head of the English Church on scriptural basis. Both Tyndale and More had their part in the matter and they both managed to anger the king with their opinions. They also met their death by the hand of temporal authority. More was sentenced to death for treason because he resisted Henry's divorce and the separation from the Church and was executed after a heresy trial. Tyndale lived in exile for years in the continent and was pursued by Wolsey, Tunstall and More as a heretic. In the end he was caught by the Emperor Charles V's men and executed for heresy against the Catholic Church.

4.3.1 King Henry VIII and his 'Great Matter'

After fifteen years of marriage Henry and his first wife Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536) had only one surviving heir, daughter Mary (1516–1558). Henry had acknowledged one son Henry Fitzroy (1519–1536) but the lack of a legitimate male heir was a problem. The Wars of the Roses (1455–1487) had left insecurity over the dynasty and there was no known example of a queen or bastard son successfully inherit the throne. Henry probably met Anne Boleyn, whose sister had been one of his mistresses, sometime in 1525. Henry's solution to start to seek

an annulment from the pope for his marriage to Catherine was nothing new. Kings had solved their dynastic problems in such way through the middle ages.⁴²⁵

Catherine was originally married to Henry's elder brother Arthur (1486–1502) but he died only five months after the wedding. The Church forbade marrying the wife of a deceased brother based on Leviticus (18:16, 20:21) but Pope Julius II (1443–1513) gave the papal dispensation to Arthur and Catherine's marriage and when Henry was crowned in 1509 he married Catherine. Because his marriage to Catherine had not produced the desperately wanted male heir Henry returned to the biblical basis of the papal dispensation. From Leviticus he read 'If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing; he has dishonored his brother. They will be childless' (20:21) and 'Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness' (18:16). According to Rex, Henry could deduce from the first text that his lack of a male heir was a divine judgement for marrying Catherine.⁴²⁶ Although the Scriptures would support Henry he would have to get the papal dispensation invalidated in order to divorce Catherine. Henry had two options. He could try to get it invalidated by a legalistic approach or to claim that the pope did not have the authority in the first place to rule over the Scriptures. Henry reluctantly chose the latter and his intention was not to degrade the pope. Rex points out that not even the most loyal supporters of papal authority thought it possible that the pope could annul anything that was part of the natural law.⁴²⁷

Henry consulted Bishop John Fisher whether the passages in Leviticus could be interpreted to belong under the natural law. Unfortunately for Henry, Fisher presented him the passage 'If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her' (Dt 25:5). According to Fisher, God could not give an order which would contradict natural law. In a conflict the pope had the jurisdiction to rule the matter and he already had when he gave the dispensation.⁴²⁸ However, a leading Hebrew scholar in England, Robert Wakefield (d. 1537) found a solution. The passage in

⁴²⁵ Richard Rex *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, Hong Kong 1993, 7.

⁴²⁶ Rex *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 8.

⁴²⁷ Rex *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 8-9. In the middle ages natural law was held by the scholastics as the highest law. Other laws might be broken in certain circumstances but breaking the natural law was wrong in all circumstances. Therefore even the pope could not give a dispensation on something that was under natural law.

⁴²⁸ Rex *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 9.

Deuteronomium meant a situation where the marriage had been unconsummated. He claimed that the passage from Leviticus on the other hand with 'uncover thy brother's nakedness' referred to a marriage couple living in a sexual relationship. Therefore Henry appealed to the interpretation of Leviticus through the Deuteronomium throughout the process instead of the other way round as Fisher claimed.⁴²⁹

Henry's 'Great matter' became the main matter of Thomas Wolsey, the lord chancellor, Archbishop of York and Cardinal and he wrote to Pope Clement VII in 1527 and stressed that the unity of Christendom depended on the inheritance of the throne of England. In 1528 Wolsey tightened his grip and suggested that if the pope will not authorise him to handle the divorce England might separate itself under the Holy See. However, the pope was caught in the middle of conflicting interests as Charles V, the nephew of Catherine of Aragon, had made a truce with Francis I in 1529 and Pope Clement VII and Rome was left under the realm of Charles. Henry got impatient and Wolsey was blamed and accused of treason which he confessed in October 1529. He was accused of serving foreign authority over English law and receiving papal authorisation.⁴³⁰

After Wolsey the 'Great Matter' was taken by Thomas Cromwell, future Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) and lawyer Christopher St German (1460–1540). They looked for a new approach. Papal authority was questioned even more and the Parliament passed on *the Act of Annates* that forbade the clergy to make payments to Rome. It was followed by *the Act of Submission of Clergy* that put the Church completely under the jurisdiction of the king when Church submitted its right to pass its own laws. Finally parliament passed the *Act of Convocation* which made it possible to handle the divorce in England. The marriage of Henry and Catherine was annulled in April 1533.⁴³¹ Henry had already secretly married Anne in January and she was crowned in May 1533.⁴³²

As it can be seen the divorce was a matter that led to the evaluation of which was the highest authority in England: the Scriptures, the Church or the king. Since More was the lord chancellor until Spring 1532 he could not avoid

⁴²⁹ Rex *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 8-10.

⁴³⁰ Curtis 'More's Public Life', 81-83.

⁴³¹ Rex *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 12-18.

⁴³² Marshall 'Last Years', 119.

the matter and Tyndale chose to state his opinion in a form of a treatise. Next we will examine the relationship of More and Tyndale with the king.

4.3.2 More, Tyndale, the King and conscience

Tyndale and the king

Anne Boleyn is told to have given a copy of the *Obedience* to Henry who had said that ‘this is a book for me and all kings to read’. Although, the accountability of the story is questionable, Anne is known to have been favourable to the Reformation and her personal copy of Tyndale’s 1534 *New Testament* has been preserved.⁴³³ Tyndale wrote extensively of temporal authority in the *Obedience*. Tyndale founded his understanding of temporal authority mainly on the Romans 13 and the Pentateuch. According to Tyndale all powers are from God and ordained by God. Therefore resisting these authorities, such as the king, is resisting God. Everyone has their duty and because we are commanded to love our neighbour we are not to avenge. God is the only one who has the right to avenge (Dt 32). Tyndale points out that man is not capable of being righteous, equal or indifferent to judge his own cause. Therefore God has ordained kings and rulers to rule for him and bring all causes to them (Ex 22). Tyndale claims that if we keep the obediences in our various relationships as of subject to the king we will be blessed (Lev 18, Rom 10). Even if we receive no reward from man God will reward us with worldly prosperity (Dt 28). And those who do not keep it will be punished.⁴³⁴

Tyndale forbade avenging or resisting a superior because vengeance belongs to God and adds that Christ said that who takes the sword will perish with it (Dt 22, Mt 26). Tyndale reminds also that David could have avenged Saul who was persecuting him unjustly but David did not do so because he would have sinned against God (Kings 1:24). Tyndale summarises that a sinning subject is to be judged by the king but a sinning king is not to be resisted but must be left to the judgement of God.⁴³⁵ However, Tyndale adds that the king must rule after the example of Christ and seek only the best of his subjects.⁴³⁶

Tyndale believed that the king is set by God to rule the world and therefore he is also above the pope and the bishops and other clergy. If they break the laws

⁴³³ Daniell *William Tyndale* 244-246.

⁴³⁴ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 36-38.

⁴³⁵ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 38-40.

⁴³⁶ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 63.

they are for the king to judge. According to Tyndale this is what Paul means with his words that everyone must submit under the higher powers and there is no exceptions. And if the popes, bishops and monks resist the king they resist God and shall be damned.⁴³⁷ Tyndale expressed in his *Obedience* that the 'bloody doctrine' of pope was to blame for the unrest in Europe. According to Tyndale it caused disobedience, rebellion and insurrection because the pope

'teacheth to fight and to defend his traditions and whatsoever he dreameth with fire, water and sword and to disobey father, mother, master, lord, king and emperor: yea and to invade whatsoever land or nation that will not receive and admit his godhead.'⁴³⁸

Tyndale claimed that laymen rise against only because they are not ruled by the kings and officials as they should. Tyndale emphasises that this is not to blame on the Scriptures nor the preachers because Christ taught man is not to resist wrong and how 'man must love his very enemy and pray for them that persecute him and bless them that curse him, and how all vengeance must be remitted to God, and that man must forgive, if he will be forgiven of God.'⁴³⁹ Tyndale claims that even though the king would be the greatest tyrant in the world he is still ordained by God and his subjects should be thankful of him. Tyndale adds that 'it is better to pay the tenth than to lose it all'.⁴⁴⁰ The godgiven power to rule over pope and the bishops must have been appealing to Henry. But how did Tyndale follow his own teaching?

The Disobedient subject

Although the *Obedience* might have fascinated the king the next treatise from Tyndale was sure to make him angry. In 1530 Tyndale published the *Practise of the Prelates: Whether the King's Grace may be separated from his Queen, because she was his brothers wife*. In the *Practise* Tyndale criticised the malpractises of the English Church and accused the clergy of concentrating on the ministering of temporal offices and matters instead of serving and teaching their flock.⁴⁴¹ Tyndale also wrote a history of papacy and many chapters concerning the

⁴³⁷ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 40-41.

⁴³⁸ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 29-30.

⁴³⁹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 28.

⁴⁴⁰ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 40-41

⁴⁴¹ William Tyndale *The Practise of the Prelates*, 393-394. All referances to *Practise* are from *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith* edited by Thomas Russell for Ebenezer Palmer, London 1831 available at: <http://books.google.fi/books?vid=OCLC03504544&id=o1ssQGn1UvEC&pg=PA163&hl=fi#v=onepage&q&f=false>

pope's false power, Scripture and councils.⁴⁴² For Tyndale the divorce was yet another plan by Wolsey to gain more power.⁴⁴³

What made the king angry was Tyndale's writing concerning the divorce. Tyndale concluded that those who are in favor of the divorce interpret that the passage from Leviticus is a law under natural law to be kept under all circumstances and the passage from Deuteronomium is a ceremony which does not bind us after Christ. According to Tyndale, ceremonies should signify 'some benefit of God done already, or some vengeance taken for sin, or some promise, or something that I must do or leave undone at the commandment of God'. And the passage from Deuteronomium does not signify any sign. Tyndale adds that none of Moses' ceremonies are forbidden although they are of no use.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore the passage from Deuteronomium cannot be explained as a ceremony and used to justify the divorce.

Tyndale argues that the passage from Deuteronomium cannot be taken as a permission either for a man to divorce a wife he hates because it is a clear command. According to Tyndale, Moses means that man must not take his brothers or neighbours wife if they are alive. Tyndale claims that similarly John forbade Herod for taking his brothers wife only because he was still alive. Tyndale summarises that if a brother dies childless his brother should marry his wife although it is not a commandment now.⁴⁴⁵ In the end Tyndale argues that after studying the matter himself and consulting other learned man he has come to the conclusion that there is no lawful reason for the king to divorce the queen.⁴⁴⁶

Tyndale exhorted the king to judge the matter himself by studying the laws of God. He also said that he permits the divorce if Henry decides it lawful and prints a little treatise to explain his decision. However, Tyndale reminds the king that if he acts against the law he will put shame on the name of Christ.⁴⁴⁷ Although Tyndale left the final word for the king, he practically gave no choice

⁴⁴² *The Practise of the Prelates*, 404-451.

⁴⁴³ *The Practise of Prelates*, 463-465. According to Tyndale, Wolsey in order to unite England with French started to endorse the idea that the queen is not King's wife. Tyndale adds that if they could have had the sister of the King of France's sister to marry Henry they would have made the divorce happen earlier. According to Tyndale, they have only been waiting for the pope's decision because they fear the emperor. But after the pope was trapped under the emperor's realm Wolsey tried to get the emperor to make him pope. Tyndale adds that after the emperor refused Wolsey came up with the divorce and threatened that he would wage war between princes that have not been seen in ages unless the emperor changed his mind.

⁴⁴⁴ *The Practise of Prelates*, 470-471.

⁴⁴⁵ *The Practise of Prelates*, 472-473.

⁴⁴⁶ *The Practise of Prelates*, 477.

⁴⁴⁷ *The Practise of Prelates*, 466.

by stating that the Scriptures are against the divorce and adding that by making a wrong decision against God's law the king would put shame on Christ's name. No wonder if the king got angry. Tyndale was denounced as a heretic in May 1530 and his brother John was arrested in November for sending William money and possessing his letters.⁴⁴⁸

Surprisingly in 1531 Henry himself or by Cromwell's suggestion started to reconsider the usefulness of having Tyndale on his side. Cromwell recruited his old friend Stephen Vaughan, an English merchant working in Netherlands, to find and persuade Tyndale to return to England.⁴⁴⁹ As previously mentioned after a few months Vaughan was able to meet Tyndale who said that he did not intend to insult the king with *Practise of Prelates* but to warn him of the clergy and especially Wolsey. Tyndale also said that if the king gives his people vernacular Scriptures he will return to England, submit himself under what punishment the king wishes to make and promise to stop writing.⁴⁵⁰ However, Tyndale's expectations were not met and although he had emphasised in the *Obedience* that subjects were not to resist their superiors he did so and did not return.

After Tyndale was betrayed by Henry Phillips in the Spring of 1535 he was arrested probably 21st of May and imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle close to Brussels. Tyndale stayed there for sixteen months for a heresy charge against the Holy Roman Emperor. The English merchants wrote to the court at Brussels and to the English government and asked for help.⁴⁵¹ Cromwell acted and wrote a letter to the court with the king's permission asking for the release and return of Tyndale to England and Thomas Poyntz delivered the letters from Cromwell and Marquis of Bergen-op-Zoom in the end of October 1535 to Emperor's council. However, Phillips intervened and claimed that Poyntz was a heretic like Tyndale and he was acting alone. Poyntz was then arrested and imprisoned but managed to escape. After this Cromwell did not try to help Tyndale even though Stephen Vaughn wrote him in April 1536 that with a letter to privy council Tyndale could be released.⁴⁵² According to Mozley, Tyndale was probably too radical and open with his views and had too many enemies to have been able to avoid burning eventually in England which might be the reason why Cromwell acted no more.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁸ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 209-210.

⁴⁴⁹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 210.

⁴⁵⁰ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 212-216.

⁴⁵¹ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 361-366.

⁴⁵² Daniell *William Tyndale*, 370-372.

⁴⁵³ Mozley *William Tyndale*, 320.

Tyndale declined legal counseling and wished to answer the charges himself. Tyndale also wrote a letter in prison most likely to Marquis of Bergen-op-Zoom in which he asked to have some of his confiscated clothes back because he was suffering cold. He also asked for a Hebrew bible, grammar and dictionary so that he could continue his work. It is not known if he received what he asked.⁴⁵⁴ Tyndale was condemned as a heretic in August 1536, stripped from his priesthood and executed in early October. Foxe reported that before Tyndale was hanged he had said with loud voice that ‘Lord! open the king of England’s eyes’.⁴⁵⁵

Tyndale met his fate under the orders from the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Tyndale had run from the earthly authorities for years but when he was caught he did not resist, ask himself to be released nor change or deny his beliefs. As his years hiding and writing in exile shows he did not seek death or martyrdom. It seems that he mainly wanted to keep writing and complete the translation of the Old Testament, as his letter to the Marquis suggests. Tyndale wished to stay faithful to his God and conscience. His resistance to Henry suggests that he saw his work in intermediating the Scriptures to his fellow Englishmen more important than following the hierarchy of obedience that he had written about in the *Obedience*.

More and the King

Henry’s divorce campaign came to break the relationship of the king and his lord chancellor. Henry consulted More for the first time about his great matter in 1527. More claimed that he was not the right person to answer since he was not a theologian and it would be tempting to simply say what the king wanted to hear than to advice him. However, More promised to look into it and consult the authorities and get to know what the king’s commission had written about the divorce. After he had read up on the matter he stated that he was not convinced of the evidence supporting the divorce.⁴⁵⁶ Henry returned to the matter after he had made More the lord chancellor. More had not changed his mind and Henry said he would not bother More’s conscience on the matter.⁴⁵⁷

More was asked about his own opinion on the divorce by Parliament when he was presenting the report of the approval of the universities concerning the

⁴⁵⁴ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 376-379.

⁴⁵⁵ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 381-383.

⁴⁵⁶ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 31-33.

⁴⁵⁷ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 49-50.

divorce. More evaded the question and responded that he has told his opinion to the king several times.⁴⁵⁸ After the *Submission of the Clergy* was passed in May 15th 1532 More knew that the game was lost. Henry had the Church of England totally under his control and on the next day More gave back the great seal to Henry and resigned.⁴⁵⁹

Evading resistance

More did not stay idle and continued his antiheretical work. As heresy and the present politics were intertwined More's writings touched also politics. He wrote against the common lawyer Christopher St German's writings that had argued in favor of subjugating the church courts under common law courts. This law reform had been part of the *Act of Submission of the Clergy* the previous year. More did not directly criticise the supremacy of the king nor defend the pope. Instead, More defended the right of the English Church to enact its own laws with the independence of the church councils and synods. According to Marshall, More was in fact rebuking the *Act of Submission of the Clergy* and the *Act of Supremacy* by claiming the church independence through the councils. If Henry was not pleased with More after these writings he surely made the king angry when he did not come to the new queen's coronation in June 1533.⁴⁶⁰

Henry had had enough and in early 1534 he demanded three times the House of Lords to accuse More of treason but they refused. The charges were later proved fake. More wrote to both Cromwell and Henry and asked for his case to be handled by the House of Lords but Henry refused. Instead he set a commission to handle the case which included Cranmer, Cromwell, Duke of Norfolk and the new lord chancellor Thomas Audley.⁴⁶¹ More was called before the commission first time in early March. They tried to persuade him first by appealing to all the benefits he had received from the king and how grateful Henry would be if he would change his mind.⁴⁶² When it did not work they started to threaten him but More answered: 'My lordes, these terrours be arguments for Children, and not for me.'⁴⁶³ After the interrogation the Duke of Norfolk came to see More and reminded him that to anger the king is a dangerous thing to do since

⁴⁵⁸ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 140-141.

⁴⁵⁹ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 146-147; Marshall 'Last Years', 116-117.

⁴⁶⁰ Marshall 'Last Years', 118-119.

⁴⁶¹ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 159.

⁴⁶² Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 65.

⁴⁶³ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 66-67.

‘the wrath of the king means death’.⁴⁶⁴ Norfolk was right to warn More since Cromwell had already come up with a way to capture More. The treason laws were tightened to include malicious deeds and writings and there was added a smaller offence for malicious words called misprision.⁴⁶⁵

In July 1534 More was invited among many others to the Lambeth Palace to swear an oath for the king’s new marriage and the change of succession to Henry and Anne’s children. He was willing to accept the *Act of Succession* which was made by the Parliament but not to swear the oath.⁴⁶⁶ According to Cranmer the problem was the foreword of the oath which proclaimed the marriage of Henry and Catherine annulled and against God’s law. It also said that the new marriage was holy and that marriage was in itself under temporal law.⁴⁶⁷ More was persuaded by showing a long list of nobles and statesman that had already sworn the oath and he was threatened. More simply answered: ‘If I may not declare the causes without peril, then to leave them undeclared is no obstinacy.’⁴⁶⁸ Cranmer answered to More that he knows he is bound to obey the king and therefore he must forget his unsure conscience and swear the oath. However, More answered that in this particular event he is bound not to obey his king.⁴⁶⁹

Cranmer was ready to compromise and suggested that More and Fisher could just swear for the succession and the king could keep the exact content of their oath a secret, if the king would so wish. According to Marius, Cranmer probably thought that then people would believe that they had sworn both succession and the preamble. Henry, however, would not accept any resistance. More was then sent to the Tower.⁴⁷⁰

In November Parliament confirmed the *Act of Supremacy* and a new treason law. Now the treason law included denying the king’s supremacy with words or blaming him to be a heretic or usurper. However, these words needed to have been said with malicious intent which More as a lawyer would use for his advantage. He repeatedly said that he wanted no harm for the king nor judged anyone’s conscience. Henry made Parliament accuse More that he had in many

⁴⁶⁴ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 70-71. ‘Indignatio principis mors est’; Wegemer *Thomas More*, 159-161.

⁴⁶⁵ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 162.

⁴⁶⁶ *A Thomas More Source Book*. Edited by Gerard B. Wegemer and Stephen W. Smith. Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004, 312.

⁴⁶⁷ Marius *Thomas More*, 463.

⁴⁶⁸ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 163-164.

⁴⁶⁹ *A Thomas More Source Book*, 314. ‘...in my conscience this was one of the cases in which I was bounden that I should not obey my prince..’

⁴⁷⁰ Marius *Thomas More*, 463-464.

ways served the king unpolitely and ungratefully. This way More could be imprisoned permanently and his wealth could be confiscated and his family had to face poverty.⁴⁷¹

More's resistance was annoyingly direct and public and Henry must have been concerned that More would inspire others with his example. However, at the moment they could only persuade or threaten More since he had not broken the law. In 2nd of May 1535 Cranmer interrogated More in the Tower and demanded him to state his opinion clearly on the Act of Supremacy.⁴⁷² More replied in his political, ambiguous way 'I do nobody harm, I say none harm, I think none harm, but wish everybody good. And if this be not enough to keep a man alive, in good faith, I long not to live.'⁴⁷³

Soon after the Pope Paul III (1468–1549) made the imprisoned Bishop John Fisher a Cardinal to express his support for Fisher and others who resist Henry.⁴⁷⁴ Henry was furious about it and the commission returned to More in 3 June. Henry blamed More of causing discord and damage in his realm and shown malicious will towards him. More was once again asked to give a clear statement of the Act of Supremacy. More compared the law to a two-edged sword and answered in evading manner that '...it were a very hard thing to compel me to say either precisely with it against my conscience to the loss of my soul, or precisely against it to the destruction of my body.'⁴⁷⁵ Bishop Fisher used the same comparison of the *Act of Supremacy* as a two-edged sword in his defense. This made the commission suspicious of conspiracy and More's writing materials and books were confiscated. More and Fisher had been writing each other but had always burned their letters. Cromwell sent his solicitor general Richard Rich (d.1567) to retrieve More's books and writing materials in 12 June. Rich started a conversation in a kind manner but had a hidden agenda to capture More by his words by presenting hypothesis.⁴⁷⁶

Rich reported later that he had asked from More that if the parliament would crown Rich would he be legitimate king. According to Rich, More had agreed that he would because the parliament has the power to do so. More then

⁴⁷¹ Wegemer *Thomas More*, 166; Marshall 'Last Years', 126-127.

⁴⁷² Wegemer *Thomas More*, 162-165.

⁴⁷³ *A Thomas More Source Book*, 345-346. 'I do nobody harm, I say none harm, I think none harm, but wish everybody good. And if this be not enough to keep a man alive, in good faith, I long not to live.'

⁴⁷⁴ Marshall 'Last Years', 127.

⁴⁷⁵ *A Thomas More Source Book*, 349.

⁴⁷⁶ Marshall 'Last Years', 128-129.

asked similarly unlikely hypothesis that could the parliament decide that God is not God. Rich found this of course absurd but made another hypothesis and asked that does the parliament have the power to make the king the head of the Church as it has to make Rich the king. More did not find the cases similar since a member of the parliament could approve as an individual crowning someone or taking the crown away from someone but could not approve making the king the head of the Church. More added that although the kings power in the Church would be accepted in England it would not be approved abroad.⁴⁷⁷ The story of Rich's visit differs in William Roper's biography of More from the report Rich made to Cromwell. According to Roper, More answers straightforward that the parliament cannot make the king head of the Church. Roper's report matches Rich's testimony in the trial of More where More claimed that Rich was guilty of perjury.⁴⁷⁸ William Roper was More's son in law and he wrote the biography twenty years after More's death. He was not present at the trial but compiled the events from the accounts of those who were present.

More's trial and death

Fisher was convicted of denying the *Act of Supremacy* in 17th of June and was executed five days later. More's trial began finally in 1st of July. More was presented with four charges. In the first charge More was claimed of having declined to state his view on the *Act Of Supremacy* with malicious intent on 7th of May. In the second charge More was claimed to have written to Fisher in 12th of May and provoked him to conspiracy with him in treason. According to the third charge More had with malicious intent plotted with Fisher when they both compared the *Act of Supremacy* to a two-edged sword. The fourth charge was about the conversation between More and Rich in 12th of July. More was accused that he had with malicious intent taken the king his title.⁴⁷⁹

More started his defense by stating that the charges did not match the content of the treason law since it did not define malicious intent distinctively. The commission rejected this claim. Then More claimed that the first three charges did not fulfill the content of the treason law since in the civil law silence was interpreted as consenting. More added that the correspondence with Fisher

⁴⁷⁷ Marshall 'Last Years', 128-129.

⁴⁷⁸ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 85-88.

⁴⁷⁹ Marshall 'Last Years', 129-131. In the treason trials it was a custom that the accused was not given a copy of the indictment. The accused had neither a right for a legal council nor could he call for witnesses. Marshall 'Last Years', 130.

could not be used against him since the letters were gone and he could swear an oath that they did not include conspiracy plotting. More admitted that he had used the parable of two-edged sword but only connected to a hypothetical situation. The commission accepted this and the first three charges were overturned.⁴⁸⁰

Concerning the fourth charge Rich was asked to testify. Rich's testimony differed from the report he made to Cromwell about it. According to Roper, Rich made a testimony that More had said openly that the parliament cannot make the king head of the Church. More accused Rich of perjury and said that: 'If this othe of yours, Master Riche, be true, then pray I that I neuer see god in the face'.⁴⁸¹ More also appealed to the commission and asked 'Can it therefore seeme likely vnto your honorable lordshipps that I wold, in so weyghty a cause, so vnadvisedly overshootte my self as to trust master Rich'.⁴⁸² There is no sure answer if Rich was lying or not. Marius suggests that if Rich had told such an obvious lie More would have not immediately suggested that if this kind conversation happened it was without malice and only hypothetical. According to Marshall, More's careful consideration of his words makes Rich's testimony seem untruthful.⁴⁸³ Considering how many years More had resisted the king it is unlikely that he would have been so careless in the company of Rich.

More replied that even though he would have withheld his opinion of the *Act of Supremacy* he could not be charged from it. This was because he had been convicted from it once before and one could not be convicted twice from the same crime. The commission did not accept this defense and the jury withdrew to consider their verdict. The jury soon returned and stated that More was guilty.⁴⁸⁴ While Audley was declaring the sentence More interrupted him. More stated that the *Succession Act* was illegal because it was against God and the laws of his Church and no temporal prince could steal them. More added that the law was against Magna Carta and that Henry had broken his crowning oath where he had promised to defend the Church.⁴⁸⁵ According to Marshall, More probably did not try to affect the verdict but wanted to speak his mind when it was finally possible. More was given a chance to plead for clemency but answered that he prays that

⁴⁸⁰ *A Thomas More Source Book*, 352-354; Marshall 'Last Years', 130-131.

⁴⁸¹ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 86-87.

⁴⁸² Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 88.

⁴⁸³ Marius *Thomas More*, 507; Marshall 'Last Years', 130-131.

⁴⁸⁴ Marshall 'Last Years', 131.

⁴⁸⁵ *A Thomas More Source Book*, 354.

even though their highnesses had convicted him they could still meet with joy in heaven.⁴⁸⁶

More was sentenced to death for treason and he was executed in 6th of July 1535. Only his daughter Margaret Clement was present of his family. Usually those who were sentenced for treason confessed their guilt as their last words and warned the people who gathered to watch not to follow their example. However, More only asked people to pray for him and the king and that God would send Henry good guidance.⁴⁸⁷ According to Roper, More also asked the people to witness as he dies for the holy Catholic Church.⁴⁸⁸ More was a man of conscience who obviously feared God more than the king. Henry had promised More when he joined the court fulltime in 1518 that he could 'fyrst loke vnto God and after God vnto hym'.⁴⁸⁹ More clung to this promise to the end. How did Erasmus relate to the earthly authority?

Erasmus believed that the king does not need to obey any man but only the law. Erasmus described in the *Enchiridion* that this law 'must be correspondent to the original decree of nature or the first example of honesty.' Erasmus added that if the the king and order of society is attacked it will lead to 'perilous sedition or division' in the commonwealth and without God's care and help it could lead to total destruction.⁴⁹⁰ Erasmus set the ideal high for kings as he stated that 'the wisdom of the king should be perfect and pure in every part.' Erasmus believed that this wisdom would show in two ways. Firstly, wise kings would not err in their reason or would lack knowledge. Secondly, they would do only the things that they know to be good and do not act against reason. Erasmus summarises that 'whosoever lacketh any of these two points, count him to be not a king, that is to say a ruler, but a robber.'⁴⁹¹ As previously mentioned Erasmus avoided controversy with rulers and said he did not have the courage to be a martyr and risk his life for truth like Luther had. Erasmus wrote that 'I Fear, if strife were to break out, I shall behave like Peter. When popes and emperors make the right decisions I follow, which is godly; if they decide wrongly I tolerate them, which is

⁴⁸⁶ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 96; *A Thomas More Source Book*, 354; Marshall 'Last Years', 131-132.

⁴⁸⁷ *A Thomas More Source Book*, 354-355.

⁴⁸⁸ Roper *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, 103.

⁴⁸⁹ *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, 495.

⁴⁹⁰ *Enchiridion*, 42.

⁴⁹¹ *Enchiridion*, 44.

safe. I believe that even for men of good will this is legitimate, if there is no hope of better things.’⁴⁹²

Erasmus had his values and ideals but he would not risk his life for them by opposing the authorities. Tyndale and More were a lot more radical than Erasmus. More tried to please the king and probably thought that the best way to do it was to withhold his opinion after retiring from the court. More had a family and he probably chose his cautious approach because he thought that it was the only way to stay alive and keep his conscience clean. Even though More was probably more cautious with his words to protect his family he could not act against his conscience and God even for them. Therefore he kept writing and in the end when would rather die to be sure of his salvation than give in to the king’s demands. His open speech after hearing his sentence would suggest this.

Tyndale opposed the king even though he believed that the king was ordained by God and it was wrong to resist even a bad king. Although Tyndale seemed to wish to serve the king he would not serve him against his conscience. His refusal to return to England on the king’s request would suggest this. On the other hand Tyndale might have presented his understanding of obedience in underlining an unconditional way because he wished to make it clear that evangelical, solely scriptural faith, and the reformers were not to blame for the revolts but exactly the contrary. He might have thought his own situation as an exception.

As noted earlier Tyndale probably saw his translation work of the Scriptures more important than the obedience to a king who did not want to listen to his advice and denied the Scriptures from the Englishmen. Tyndale probably thought similarly to More that if he denies what he believes in, it might lead to the damnation of his soul. Tyndale stated in the *Obedience* that man should not be afraid of temporal sword because of the fear of vengeance but because of conscience. Tyndale wrote that even if a man can resist the temporal authority he cannot have a good conscience because ‘God’s word, law and ordinance are against thee’. Tyndale added that freedom that has been achieved by resisting the temporal power is also wrong because it can lead a brother to follow and then man has on his conscience also the burden he has laid on his brother.⁴⁹³ Nevertheless, Tyndale might have seen his translation work as an exercise of the love for his

⁴⁹² Augustijn *Erasmus*, 125.

⁴⁹³ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 50-51.

neighbor, his own people. After all, Tyndale wrote in his *Answer* that 'I must do my work for the love of my neighbour, because he is my brother, and the price of Christ's blood, and because Christ hath deserved it, and desireth it from me; and then my reward is great in heaven.'⁴⁹⁴ Tyndale and More shared a similar commitment in their faith to always follow God first and the earthly authorities after that even though it meant death for both in the end. The difference was that for Tyndale this meant judging all matters in the light of the Scriptures and for More in the light of the consensus of the Church.

5. Conclusions

Thomas More and William Tyndale were both men of faith and the new learning and shared the love for the Scriptures. But as we have seen they ended up on the opposite sides and disagreed on almost everything. Why was this? Throughout the debate they seem to disagree on what is the highest authority concerning all matters of faith. Therefore the main question chosen for this thesis is whether the Scriptures, the Church or the king was the highest authority for Tyndale and More.

For Tyndale, the Scriptures were the highest authority and all teaching had to be in line with it. He emphasised that literal interpretation of the Scriptures and that seemingly contradictory passages could be explained by reading what was before and after or with other passages.⁴⁹⁵ Tyndale believed that everything necessary for us to know was written in the Scriptures. Although God had taught his people first without writing, he had given the rainbow for Noah and circumcision for Abraham as sacraments, God's word to read. From Adam to apostles God had also confirmed their teaching with miracles. Tyndale deduced the primacy of the Scriptures from the fact that God did eventually give the Scriptures to his people starting with Moses. He added that Christ and his apostles even though they performed miracles might not have been believed without Scripture.⁴⁹⁶

In Tyndale's emphasis on *sola scriptura* there was a minor contradiction. For Tyndale all powers are from God and ordained by God and therefore resisting authorities, such as the king, is resisting God. We are also not permitted to

⁴⁹⁴ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 200.

⁴⁹⁵ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 20, 106.

⁴⁹⁶ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 27-28.

avenge since only God has the right to avenge (Dt 32).⁴⁹⁷ Tyndale summarises that a sinning subject is to be judged by the king but a sinning king is not to be resisted but must be left to the judgement of God.⁴⁹⁸ Tyndale believed that the king is set by God to rule the world and therefore he is also above the pope and the bishops and other clergy.⁴⁹⁹ Tyndale even exhorted the king to judge his 'Great Matter' himself if he find the divorce lawful but yet added that if he acts against the law he will put shame on the name of Christ.⁵⁰⁰ Although Tyndale claimed the king to be the highest authority on earth and ordained to judge over matters of faith he still did not submit himself under the king when he asked him to return.

For Tyndale, the church was meant to be a congregation of those who have a feeling faith and a place to gather to hear the word of God preached and taught in vernacular around the world instead of just the clergy whom he claimed neglected their duty to teach and preach in vernacular and held mass in Latin. The clergy were meant to serve not to rule.⁵⁰¹ For Tyndale faith was the rock that Christ promised to build his congregation and therefore no error nor sin can prevail in the true church. According to Tyndale, the apostles, Scriptures, prophets and miracles and saints testify this faith.⁵⁰² For Tyndale the Church was not the true church since it's teaching was not founded solely on the Scriptures and because the lives of the clergy proved their corruptness. As it can be seen Tyndale derived his theology from the Scriptures which he held as the only authority and that set him apart from More and Erasmus. Tyndale was not a Lutheran either and had many theological differences with Luther although he did not underline their differences.

For More the Scriptures were important but were to be interpreted in the Common corpse of the Church which was the highest authority concerning all matters of faith. More did not set written word over oral tradition and emphasised the continuity of unwritten word from creation to present. According to More there had not been any need for written word if Adam and Eve had not fallen. More claimed that after the Fall faith was transferred from father to son and

⁴⁹⁷ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 36-37.

⁴⁹⁸ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 39-40.

⁴⁹⁹ *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 40-41.

⁵⁰⁰ *The Practise of Prelates*, 466.

⁵⁰¹ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 11-13, 30-31. *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, 152-153.

⁵⁰² *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 31.

proven sometimes with miracles and written word was given to Moses because sin had become customary among the Jews. Although God gave the law to his people he still sent prophets to teach it and proved their teaching with their words, life and occasionally with miracles too. Eventually Christ was sent to redeem us and leave us his new law when the world was 'in a worse state of decline and ruin of all virtue'.⁵⁰³ With the 'law of Christ's faith' More meant especially the substance of faith itself which he said Christ would write in our hearts. Similarly, Christ first revealed his new law and his nature as the Son of God to Peter ('neither flesh or blood has revealed and shown this to you, but my Father who is in heaven') and taught without writing or outward word heavenly mysteries to the apostles later on. Apostles also continued the oral transmission of God's word by spreading the word first only by conversation and preaching.⁵⁰⁴

More believed that because the Scriptures were written after Christ's death his promise 'I am with you' could only mean that he himself will be with the Church instead of just Scriptures. And when Christ spoke that his words will not pass away he meant his promises instead of the Scriptures. More emphasised that Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit and that it has taught us many things which are not written such as that Mary was a perpetual virgin.⁵⁰⁵ More believed that Christ appointed Peter as the 'vicar' to lead his Church and the popes are his successors in an unbroken line. Although Peter, as the first successor whose 'firmly professed faith he would build his church', failed Mary kept the faith as shown in how she stood by her son as he was hanging on the cross. According to More faith continued with Mary and the promise Christ made for Peter meant only his position as the head of the Church.⁵⁰⁶ Because the Church was founded on faith that had been continual through Mary from apostles times to the present, the Church could not be wrong even though some of its practises or theology was not to be found from the Scriptures. Therefore More summarised that 'by the help of Grace (through the Holy Spirit) the right understanding of Scripture is ever preserved in his church from any such mistaking from which could follow any condemnable error concerning faith'.⁵⁰⁷

More had been similarly critical concerning many doctrines and practises of the Church as Erasmus in the 1510s and also through the Messenger raised similar

⁵⁰³ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 165-170.

⁵⁰⁴ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 170-171.

⁵⁰⁵ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 141-143.

⁵⁰⁶ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 134.

⁵⁰⁷ *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 143-146.

matters on the table in his *Dialogue*. Why did he end up on such aggressive approach against Tyndale and other heretics writing about similar matters? According to Moynahan, More wrote because he did not understand Tyndale nor Luther and their view of justification by faith, this feeling faith founded on the Scriptures, and their idea of church as invisible gathering of believers. If More had understood this he had not used some much time and pages to write about saints, pilgrimages et cetera which were almost irrelevant to Tyndale and Luther compared to their emphasis on faith and Scriptures.⁵⁰⁸ Moynahan does capture the essence of why More and Tyndale's thinking does not quite meet. However, for More saints, miracles and pilgrimages were hardly irrelevant. For More, Christ is present in the Church primarily through its devotional and sacramental practice and therefore he defends them forcefully and attends the Scriptures, authority and interpretations after them in the *Dialogue*, as Duffy pointed out.⁵⁰⁹ This is what Tyndale did not seem to understand. Daniell wrote that 'The two men stand on either side of the street and shout at each other. The difference is so great that they can never meet.'⁵¹⁰ Daniell is right. Because More and Tyndale lacked a mutual authority they never quite understood each other.

⁵⁰⁸ Moynahan *Book of Fire*, 249.

⁵⁰⁹ Duffy 'The common knowledge of cristen men', 196-197.

⁵¹⁰ Daniell *William Tyndale*, 280.

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