

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 10 TYNDALE

“Four months after Luther published his theses Erasmus sent them to his English friends John Colet and Sir Thomas More. Thereafter many books were imported into England. Lutheran doctrine invaded the two great English universities of Oxford and Cambridge” (Kuiper, 221). In the town of Cambridge, “there was a pub called the White Horse Inn which served as a gathering place where intellectuals discussed the latest in Reformation thinking. Because of the popularity of Luther’s work there, the pub was given the name ‘Little Germany.’ A number of English reformers were at Cambridge at this time: William Tyndale, Hugh Latimer, Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, and Miles Coverdale. All these men played important roles in establishing the Reformation in England. But the person who had the greatest long-term impact on developing the English Reformation was William Tyndale, ‘the father of the English Bible.’” (Gary DeMar, *Reformation to Colonization*, 216-217).

For a century and half, Wycliffe’s English translation of the Latin Bible had circulated in England. But “copies of Wycliffe’s translation into English were not numerous” (Kuiper, 222). Tyndale, who “came to saving faith in Christ by reading the New Testament in Greek” (Richard Hannula, *Trial and Triumph*, 127), was determined to translate the Bible into English from the original Greek and Hebrew. This he did “in an era when the English Catholic church had in effect a law that made it a crime punishable by death to translate the Bible into English” (*Christian History*, Vol.16).

“Once, in Coventry, England [in 1519], some parents were burned to death for teaching their children the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments in English. Such atrocities drove Tyndale to tears” (*Trial and Triumph*, 127).

Tyndale testified that ‘some of the papists say it is impossible to translate the Scriptures into English, some that it is not lawful for the lay people to have it in the mother-tongue, some that it would make them all heretics’ (quoted in Schaff, 6:726). Tyndale argued that the pope had locked up the plain meaning of the Bible ‘with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies, and feigned lies’ (Ibid.,718).

Once a rich and learned man, “fed up with Tyndale’s habit of quoting the Bible, shouted, ‘We would be better off without God’s law than the pope’s.’ ‘I defy the pope and all his laws,’ Tyndale answered. ‘If God spares my life, in a few years a farm boy shall know more of the Scriptures than you do.’” (*Trial and Triumph*, 128).

In 1524, Tyndale’s bishop refused to let him translate the Greek NT into English. So, he fled from England to the German provinces to translate [along the way he met briefly with Luther]. In 1525, in Cologne, as he prepared to print an English New Testament, he was discovered and escaped with only a few printed portions. In 1526 a printer in Worms, published 6,000 copies of Tyndale’s first edition of the English New Testament. Three months later, smuggled copies were being circulated throughout England. In 1527 English bishops bought and burned thousands of Tyndale’s testaments. Yet Tyndale used the money to finance a revision of his NT. “The revised testaments were smuggled into England in flour sacks” (*Church History Made Easy*, 115). From 1527–1530 Tyndale kept moving, and writing, and hiding. Exciting things were also happening with Luther and Zwingli.

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 10: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, QUESTION 27-28

Question 27: What do you understand by the providence of God? **The almighty, everywhere-present power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth with all creatures, and so governs them that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.**

The word *providence* means ‘to see beforehand,’ or ‘to provide for.’ God knows everything *before* it happens, because in His eternal counsel He *planned* everything (Palm 33:10-11; Acts 15:18). “I am God, and there is none like Me... I have *planned* it; I will also *do* it” (Isaiah 46:9-10). God’s providence (or sovereignty) is His almighty and everywhere present power upholding and working “all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11; cf. Dan. 4:35; Prov. 21:1). God ordinarily works according to the order He has established in nature “as when He sustains us by food and heals us of disease by medicine [Isaiah 38:21]” (Ursinus). God can also work in a manner different than the established order of nature, as when He does His miracles, like parting the Red Sea, or turning water into wine. The greatest miracle is redemption from sin through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. God’s providence includes *all* things – herbs and grass (Psalm 104:14), rain and drought (Amos 4:7), fruitful and barren years (Hab. 3:17), meat and drink (Acts 14:17), health and sickness (Ex. 15:26), riches and poverty (1 Sam. 2:7) – even things that appear to happen randomly or by chance (Ex. 21:13; 1 Kings 22:34; Prov. 16:33). Jesus said not even a sparrow “falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will” (Matt. 10:29). Whatever happens, “whether it be good or bad, comes to pass not by chance, but by the eternal counsel of God, producing it if it be good, and permitting it if it be evil” (Ursinus). God permits evil for the good of His chosen people. So, Joseph could say to his brothers: “you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Gen. 50:20).

Question 28: What does it profit us to know that God created, and by His providence upholds, all things? **That we may be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and for what is future have good confidence in our faithful God and Father, that no creature shall separate us from His love, since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.**

Knowing that God controls all things by His providence has three practical benefits for us as God’s children: (1) it helps us to exercise patience in adversity: “in faithfulness You have afflicted me” (Ps. 119:75); (2) it helps us to be thankful in prosperity. “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other” (Eccl. 7:14); (3) it helps us not to worry but to trust our Father’s perfect plan for our future (Jer. 29:11; Matt. 6:25-34). No creature shall separate us from God’s love in Christ, since all creatures do only what God “determined before to be done” (Acts 4:28). We cannot suffer any harm except what God permits. Then He makes that harm work for our good. “He who did not spare His Own Son... how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31-32).

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