

CHAPTER 2

FROM THE REFORMATION AND THE RENAISSANCE TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter stretches over a period of two and half centuries, a period of momentous changes in literature and culture, inaugurated by the Reformation and the Renaissance. These movements or paradigms are carried forward in no small part by translation: on the one hand biblical translation, on the other translation of Classical Greek and Roman canons of literary and historical writings, along with an increasing emphasis on more recent European literature.

Martin Luther, the most influential figure of the Reformation and one of its most radical thinkers, is the author of one of the most important Bible translations in European history, and his open letter on translation gives valuable insight into the relationship between the theo-political issues and translation matters. In England, William Tyndale is a key Reformation advocate, and a crucial translator of the Bible into English—and a martyr to that joint venture. One need not be a Bible translator, however, to become a martyr to translation, as witnessed by the case of Estienne Dolet, the French scholar and translator, who wrote an early systematic account of the measures of translation. Dolet's is not the only section in the chapter that testifies to the importance of French translation and translation theory during this period (see also Sects. 2.5 on du Bellay and 2.14 on Anne Dacier), France being of course, ever since the twelfth century, Britain's strong literary neighbour. The sixteenth century, a golden age of translation in England, owes a good deal to France, and some of the translated works came via French into English, notably North's famous version of Plutarch. This and other translations were a shaping influence on English as a literary language and even directly on writers of original works, some of which carry distinct traces of translations, as may be seen in some of Shakespeare's plays.

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The strengthening of vernacular tongues and national cultures tends to obscure the view to a cross-cultural linguistic activity which also strongly characterized cultural and scholarly life in Europe in this era. Latin remained an important medium of scholarly and cultural preservation and dissemination, a bridge both across time and space—not least because texts translated into Latin had a potential readership all over Europe. Thus the most glorious period of translation in England was also the scene of much translation into Latin, and readers may catch a glimpse of this below.

Along with the advent of Renaissance humanism, women at last came into sight as makers of written literary culture. Women presumably played a vital role in at least some of the oral traditions that led up to canonical European literary genres and works, but they had been largely excluded from early written literary culture, both religious and secular. For some of them, translation now becomes a means of expression and cultural contribution—a road into the forefront of the literary system.

As we move into the latter part of the period, it becomes clear how translation constitutes a shaping force on English literary and cultural activity. Its two primary flanks are obviously the English versions of the Bible—especially the Authorized (King James) Version, one of the most important texts in English literature—and the translation by Chapman, Dryden, Pope, and many others, of classical works of literature. Methods may vary a great deal, but the line of translators still forms a tradition within the English language, an ever-contested and ever-renewed strand of canonical writing whose significance is thus constantly confirmed even as its previous ‘performances’ continue to be challenged. There is no better proof of a living tradition.

During the Reformation and Renaissance, and on into the eighteenth century, statements on translation are most frequently made in the context of actual practice, the most prominent platform being the translator’s own preface to his or her translation. There are, however, a number of more general and systematic accounts of translation as an act, and of its methods. Such accounts (see Dolet in Sect. 2.4, Laurence Humphrey in Sect. 2.7, and Tytler, who concludes this chapter) need not in themselves provide more of an insight into the act of translation, but they point the way to a more abstract theory, which in turn may help us, as students of translation, to understand this rich field, where translation can never be severed from comments on translation, translation being in itself a form of ‘commentary’ on another text.

2.2 MARTIN LUTHER

Martin Luther (1483–1546), Augustinian monk and theologian, was the German leader of the Reformation. With his ninety-five theses, nailed to the door of Wittenberg University in 1517, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the penitential system of the Roman Catholic Church. By 1521, the breach with the Church had become irreparable. An effective publicist and great writer of treatises, with a rugged popular style, Luther came to emphasize original writing in the vernacular, but it was through his translation of the Bible (the New Testament, published in 1522, and the Old Testament, in 1534) that he was to establish a norm for written German, and to have a radical and lasting influence on German language and literature. He also wrote hymns, which became very popular and have survived.

As a translator, Luther was distinctly reader-oriented; his aim was to put together a Bible text for the general public. His translation, characterized by a combination of popular speech and poetic dignity, became for many Northern Europeans a new ‘original’, and served as such as the basis of some Bible translations into the Nordic languages. Luther’s *Open Letter on Translation* (1530) is an important text in the history of translation theory, not only because it is intimately connected to a groundbreaking translation, but further because it manifests vividly how the choice of words and expressions in a translation is sometimes intimately linked to a whole ideological and institutional matrix. Luther’s choice of the word ‘allein’, for instance (see below), is a good deal more laden with theological politics than he openly admits.

The letter appears here complete (except for its last part which deals with the question whether deceased saints pray for us), in a new translation, followed by Luther’s translation of the Babel story (Genesis 11: 1–9) and a literal rendering into English of Luther’s version.

From *Open Letter on Translation* (*Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen*), translated by Jennifer Tanner

From Wenceslaus Link to all Believers in Christ, God’s Grace and Mercy. Solomon the Wise says in Proverbs 11: 26: ‘He who withholds grain, him the people curse. But blessings will come upon him who sells it.’ This passage should be understood to apply to anything that can be of general use or comfort to Christianity. It is for this reason that the master in the Gospel scolds the faithless servant, the lazy rogue, for burying his money in the earth and hiding it. To escape the curse of the Lord and of the community at large I have not suppressed this open letter, which came into my hands from a good friend, but openly published it. For while much idle talk has come about regarding the translation of the

Old and New Testaments, namely, the enemies of the truth purport that the text has in places been changed or even falsified, so that horror and disgust has come over many simple Christians, as well as over the educated who are not familiar with Hebrew and Greek. It is to be hoped that this letter will at least in part hinder the godless in their slander and lift the scruple of the pious; it may even come about that more will be written on this question or matter. I ask therefore that everyone who loves truth take this work on my best recommendation and ask God in good faith for correct understanding of the Holy Writ for the betterment and surfeit of all Christianity. Amen. Nuremberg, 15 September. Anno 1530.

**To the Honourable and Circumspect N.,
my favoured lord and friend.**

Grace and Peace in Christ. Honourable, circumspect, dear master and friend! I have received your letter with the two questions of which you desire to hear my account: first, why I translated the words of St Paul in 'To the Romans', chapter 3, verse 28: 'Arbitramur hominem iustificari ex fide absque operibus' into German as: 'We hold that man is justified not by the works of law but by faith alone'—and also regarding the note that the papists have worked themselves into a boundless fury because the word 'sola' (alone) is not found in Paul's text and that such additions to God's Word are not to be tolerated from me, etc.; secondly, if the deceased saints also pray for us, since we read that even the angels pray for us etc. Regarding the first question, if it please you, you may answer your papists on my behalf as such:

First of all. If I, Doctor Luther, had been aware that all the papists together were so skilful that they could translate one chapter of the Holy Writ into German correctly and well, then, truly, I would have been humble and asked them for help and advice in translating the New Testament. But since I knew then and still see now that they have no idea how one should translate or speak German, I spared both them and myself the trouble. But one can clearly see that they learn to speak and write German from my translation and my German and steal my language from me, of which they knew so little before; they do not thank me for it, but rather use it against me. But I will grant them that gladly, because it does me good to know that I have taught my ingrate disciples, also my enemies, to speak.

Further, you can say that I have translated the New Testament into German to the best of my abilities and as conscientiously as possible; I have not forced anyone to read it but simply left it available and only done so as a service to those who cannot do any better. No one has been forbidden to make a better one. Whoever does not want to read it can leave it alone; I am not begging or cajoling anyone to read it. It is my Testament and my translation and shall remain mine. If I have made any mistakes in doing so (which I would not consciously do, nor would I wilfully mistranslate a single letter)—on that

I will not tolerate the papists as my judge, because their ears are too long for that and their 'hee-haw, hee-haw' is too weak for them to judge my translation. I know well, and they know less than the miller's beast, what sort of skill, diligence, judgement, and intelligence are needed for translation, because they have never tried it.

It is said: 'He who works on the road has many masters.' So it has been for me. Those who have never yet been able to speak, let alone translate, they are all my masters and I have to be their disciple. And if I were to ask them how the first two words of Matthew 1: 1: 'Liber Generationis', should be translated into German, not one of them could have said as much as 'cluck'—and now they sit in judgement on the entire work, those fine fellows. So it went for St Hieronymus as well, when he translated the Bible: the whole world was his master and he alone could do nothing right, and the work of this good man was judged by those who were not good enough to shine his shoes for him. This is why one has to have great patience in order to openly do something good; because the world wants to remain Master Cleverly and always has to bridle the horse tail-end first, to be master of everything and itself unable to do anything. That is its nature, which it cannot give up.

I would look with kindness on any papist who would come out and translate any epistle of St Paul or one of the prophets into German. As long as he does not use Luther's German and translation, then one ought to see a fine, lovely, praiseworthy German translation! For we have seen, of course, the Bungler of Dresden, who has shown my New Testament a master (I do not wish to name him in my books any more; besides, he has his judge¹ now and is well known otherwise); he recognizes that my German is sweet and good, and saw rightly that he could not make it better and yet wanted to destroy it, went ahead and took down my New Testament, almost word for word as I did, and removed my preface, commentary, and name, wrote his name, preface, and commentary in their place, and so he sells my New Testament under his own name. Oh, dear children, how it hurt me, when his sovereign, with a dread preface, condemned and forbade that Luther's New Testament should be read, and at the same time commanded that the Bungler's New Testament should be read (which is the very same one that Luther did).

And just so that no one should think that I am lying, take both Testaments in front of you, Luther's and the Bungler's, hold them opposite each other, and you will see who is the translator of both. Because although he has patched and changed things in a few places—although it does not always please me, I can easily bear it and it doesn't hurt me much, as far as the text is concerned; that is why I never bothered to write against it, but had to laugh at the great wisdom, that my New Testament has been so terribly slandered, condemned, and forbidden when it was published under my name, but it must be read, when it is published under another name. But what a virtue that is, to slander and sully another man's book, then steal the very thing and publish it under one's own name, and so by means of someone else's slandered work to seek praise and fame for oneself—I will leave that up to his judge. That is enough for me and I am glad that my work (as St Paul

also extols) should also be advanced by my enemies and Luther's book, minus Luther's name, under his enemies' names, should be read. How could I be better avenged?

And to return to the matter at hand: If your papist wants to make a lot of trouble over the word 'sola-alone', then tell him this at once: Doctor Martin Luther wants it that way and says papist and ass are one and the same. *Sic vólo, sic iúbeo, sit pro ratióne volúntas.* For we do not want to be the pupils or disciples of the papist, but their masters and judges. If they want to strut about and boast with their asses' heads; and as Paul sang his own praises against his holy fools, I will sing my own against these asses. Are they Doctors? So am I! Are they educated? So am I! Are they preachers? So am I! Are they theologians? So am I! Are they debaters? So am I! Are they philosophers? So am I! Are they dialecticians? So am I! Are they lecturers? So am I! They write books? So do I!

And I will keep on praising: I can interpret Psalms and Prophets; they cannot. I can translate; they cannot. I can pray, they cannot. And to speak of lesser things: I understand their entire Dialectic and Philosophy better than any of them. And I know, furthermore, that not one of them understands his Aristotle. And if there is even one of them who correctly understands a preface or chapter of Aristotle, then may I be tossed up in a blanket!² I won't say too much now, because I was raised and trained in their art from youth onward and I know quite well, how deep and wide it is. And they know just as well that I know and can do everything they can. But still these ruinous people act against me as if I were a guest to their art who only arrived this morning and has never seen or heard the things they learn and can do; and they come on with wondrous displays of their art and teach me things I stamped to pieces twenty years before; so that I find I have to sing along with that harlot to all their blaring and hollering: I knew seven years ago that horseshoe nails are made of iron.

That is in answer to your first question, and I ask that you tell such asses no more in reply to their useless noise about the word 'sola' than this: Luther wants it that way and says he is a Doctor above all Doctors in the entire papacy; it shall remain as it is. I want, from now on, only to disdain them and have them disdained as long as they remain such people, or, should I say, asses. For there are such shameless dunces among them who have never even learned their own art, that of the Sophists, like Doctor Smith and Doctor Snotspoon and his sort; and they set themselves against me in this matter which is not just about sophistry, but also, as St Paul says, about the wisdom and reason of the whole world. It is true: an ass needn't sing very long: we know him soon enough by his ears.

For you and our people, however, I will explain why I decided to use the word 'sola', although in Romans 3: 28 it is not 'sola' but 'solum' or 'tantum' that I have used. See how carefully these asses scrutinize my text! However, I have used 'sola fide' elsewhere and want both of them, 'solum' and 'sola'. I have taken pains in translating in order to render a pure and clear German. And it often happened that we sought and questioned a single word for fourteen days, three, four weeks, and at times still could not find it. In Job we

worked this way, Master Philips, Aurogallus, and I, so that in four days sometimes we could hardly finish three lines. Rather—now that it is in German and ready, anyone can read and criticize it. Now a person can fly through three, four pages and never stumble once, but is not aware of the sort of stones and stumps that had been there, where he now walks along as on a smooth-planed board, where we had to sweat and fret before we were able to clear such stones and stumps out of the way so that one could walk along so finely. It is a joy to plough a field that has already been cleared. But rooting out the brush and the stumps and preparing the field—no one wants that part. It is a thankless task. If God Himself can get no thanks for the sun, for heaven and earth, or even for His own son's death: the world is and remains the world in the devil's name, because it won't have it any other way.

Furthermore, I knew very well here, in Romans 3, that the word 'sola' is not found in the Latin and Greek text, and the papists did not need to tell me that. It is true: these four letters 's-o-l-a' are not found there and those asses' heads stare at these letters like cows at a new gate. They do not see that it nevertheless speaks to the sense of the text, and if one wants to translate it into German clearly and powerfully it is needed, because my intention was to speak German, not Latin or Greek, when I undertook to speak German in the translation. That is how German is. When two things are being spoken of, of which one is affirmed and the other negated, then one uses the word 'solum' / *allein* along with the word 'not' or 'no'. As when one says: the farmer brings *allein* grain and no money. No, I really have no money, but *allein* grain. I have *allein* eaten and not yet drunk. Did you *allein* write and not proofread? And countless other such ways in daily use.

Whether Latin or Greek have this as part of their manner of speech or not, German does and that is its nature, that the word *allein* is added to make the word 'not' or 'no' fuller and clearer. For while I could also say: 'The farmer brings grain and no money,' the words 'no money' do not sound as full and clear as when I say 'The farmer brings *allein* grain and no money'; and here the word *allein* helps the word 'no' so that we have a full, clear, German sentence. For one need not ask the letters of the Latin language how one ought to speak German, the way these asses do, rather one should ask the mother in her house, the children in the streets, the common man in the marketplace, about it and see by their mouths how they speak, and translate accordingly: then they understand it well and recognize that one is speaking German to them.

So it is when Christ says: 'Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur.' If I were to obey the asses, they would lay the letters before me and translate it like this: *Aus dem Überfluß des Herzens redet der Mund*. [Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.] Tell me: is that German? What German would understand something like that? What is overflow of the heart supposed to be? No German could say that, it would be as if he were trying to say that someone's heart was much too big or that he had too much heart, while that is

still not right either. So overflow of the heart is not German, as little as any of these are: overflow of the house, overflow of the tile stove, overflow of the bench, no, but this is how the mother in her house and the common man would say it: *Wes das Herz voll is, des gehet der Mund über* [What the heart is full of will spill over at the mouth]. That is well-spoken German, which I took pains to come up with and unfortunately could not always attain or find. For the Latin letters make it enormously difficult to speak good German.

Likewise, when the traitor Judas says in Matthew 26: 8: 'Ut quid perditio haec?' and Mark 14: 4: 'Ut quid perditio ista unguenti facta est?' If I were to obey the asses and literalists, then I would have to translate it as: *Warum ist diese Verlierung der Salben geschehen?* [Why has this loss of ointment occurred?] What kind of German is that? What German would say something like that: Loss of ointment has occurred? And if he actually understands it then he will think that the ointment has been lost and someone should look for it, though even that still sounds vague and dubious. If that is good German, why don't they come forward and make us a fine, lovely new German Testament and leave Luther's Testament alone? I think they ought to show their skill the light of day. But a German man would say it ('Ut quid' etc.) like this: *Was soll doch solcher Unrat?* [Why such a waste?] or: *Was soll doch solcher Schade?* [Why such a loss?] No, it's too bad about the ointment—that is good German, from which one can understand that Magdalene had handled the spilled ointment inexpediently and was wasteful; that was Judas' opinion, since he hoped to find a better use for it.

Likewise, when the angel greets Mary and says: *Gegrüßet seist du, Maria, voll Gnaden, der Herr mit dir* [You are greeted, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you]. Now then—there is how it has been translated into German so far, following the Latin letters. Tell me, though, if it is good German as well. Where is the man who speaks that way: you are full of grace? And what German understands what that is supposed to mean: full of grace? He has to think of a keg full of beer or a bag full of money; that is why I have translated it like this: *Du Holdselige* [You blessed woman], by which a German can much better imagine what the angel means by his greeting. But here the papists go mad with fury at me for corrupting the angelic greeting, while I still have not found the best German for it. And if I were to use the best possible German here and translate the greeting into German like this: *Gott grüße dich, du liebe Maria* [Greetings from God, dear Mary] (because this is what the angel is trying to say and this is how he would have said it, if he had wanted to greet her in German), I think they would hang themselves in their colossal fervour over the dear Mary, because I had so destroyed the greeting.

But why should I care if they rage or storm? I do not want to hinder them from translating what they want; but I do want to translate not as they want, but as I want. Whoever does not want it can leave it to me and keep his mastery to himself, for I do not want to see nor hear it; and for my translating they need give neither answer nor account.

Hear me well: I want to say: *du holdselige Maria, du liebe Maria*, and let them say: *du voll Gnaden Maria*. He who knows German knows well what a fine word that is, how it goes straight to the heart: *die liebe Maria, der liebe Gott, der liebe Kaiser, der liebe Fürst, der liebe Mann, das liebe Kind* [the dear Mary, the dear God, the dear emperor, the dear prince, the dear man, the dear child]. And I do not know if one can express the word *liebe* as affectionately and concisely in Latin or other languages, so that it goes straight to the heart and resounds through all the senses, as it does in our language.

For I hold that St Luke, being a master of Hebrew and Greek, wanted to capture and render the sense of the Hebrew word the angel used by using the Greek word 'kecharitoméni'. And I think the angel Gabriel would have spoken to Mary as he spoke to Daniel, calling him 'hamudóth' and 'isch hamudóth', 'vir desideriorum', that is, *du lieber Daniel*. For that is Gabriel's manner of speaking, as we see in the book of Daniel. If I were to translate the angel's words by following the letters, as is the asses' art, I would have to say: *Daniel, du Mann der Begierungen* [Daniel, you man of desires], or, *Daniel, du Mann der Lüste* [Daniel, you man of pleasures]. Oh, there's some good German! A German can hear perfectly well that *Mann, Begierungen*, and *Lüste* are German words, although *Begier* and *Lust*, in the singular, would be much better. But when they are joined together in such a way: You man of desires; then no German knows what is being said and thinks perhaps Daniel is full of wicked desires. That would be a fine translation. Therefore, at this point I have to let the letters go their way and seek the way a German man would express what the Hebrew man calls 'Isch hamudóth': and so I find that the German man speaks as such: *Du lieber Daniel, du liebe Maria*, or: *du holdselige Maid, du niedliche Jungfrau, du zartes Weib* [you blessed maid, you sweet virgin, you gentle woman] and so on. For he who wants to translate must have a great hoard of words, so that he can find them right at hand when one refuses to sound right.

And why should I have to talk so much and for so long about translation? If I were to note the reasons and thoughts behind all of my words, it would take a year of writing. I have learned well what sort of art and work translation is; therefore I will tolerate no papal ass or mule who has not attempted anything as my judge or critic in this. Whoever does not want my translation can leave it be. The devil thank him who doesn't like it or alters it without my will or knowledge. If it needs to be altered, then I will do it myself. If I do not do it myself, then one should leave me my translation in peace and make himself whatever sort of translation he wants and fare well!

I can testify in good conscience that I have demonstrated my highest faithfulness and diligence in this, and never had any false thoughts—for I have neither taken nor sought a farthing for it, nor won any with it. Neither have I sought honour for myself in this, God knows, my lord; rather I did it as a service to Christianity and in honour of one who sits on high, who does me so much good in all hours that even if I had translated a thousand times as much and as diligently, I still would not have earned an hour to live or have

a sound eye: all that I am and have comes from His grace and mercy, indeed, it is from His dear blood and bitter sweat, therefore it should all, God willing, serve to honour Him, with joy and from the heart. Should the bunglers and papal asses slander me, well then, the pious Christians praise me, together with their Lord Christ, and I am all too richly rewarded if just one Christian considers me a faithful worker. I ask the papal asses for nothing, they are not worthy to inspect my work, and I would be sorry to the bottom of my heart if they were to ask that I be pardoned. Their slander is my highest renown and praise. I still want to be a Doctor, an exemplary Doctor, even, and they will not take that name from me until Judgement Day, that I know in truth.

Yet on the other hand, I did not let the letters go too freely, but together with my assistants saw to it with great care that where something depended on it, I kept to the letters and did not deviate from them so freely; as in John 6: 27, where Christ says: *Diesen hat Gott der Vater versiegelt* [God the Father has set His seal on this man]. It would be better German to say: *Diesen hat Gott der Vater gezeichnet* [God the Father has marked this man], or, *diesen meint Gott der Vater* [God the Father intends this man]. But I would rather do injury to the German language than deviate from the word. Oh, translation is not an art just anyone can do, as the mad holy ones believe; it requires a righteous, pious, faithful, diligent, fearful, Christian, educated, experienced, practised heart. Therefore I hold that no false Christian or factionist can faithfully translate; as is clearly seen in Prophets, translated in Worms, where truly great diligence was applied and closely followed my German. But there were Jews taking part in the work there, who had no great love of Christ—there would have been skill and diligence enough there per se.

That much I have said of translation and the nature of languages. But I was not only trusting and following the nature of languages when I added 'solum' (*allein*) in Romans 3: 28. Rather the text and St Paul's meaning forcefully demand and compel it; for he is dealing here with the main part of Christian teaching itself, namely, that we are justified by faith in Christ, without any works of law; and he so completely cuts off all works that he also says: the works of law (which is of course God's law and word) do not help to justify us; and sets Abraham as an example, as this man was justified so completely without works, since even the highest work, which at that time was newly commanded by God above all other laws and works, namely circumcision, did not help to justify him, but he was justified without circumcision and without any works, through faith, as he says in Chapter 4: 2: 'If Abraham was justified by works, then he can boast, but not before God.' When one so fully excludes all works—and that must indeed be the sense of this, that faith alone can justify, and anyone who wants to speak clearly and concisely about such an exclusion of works must say: Faith alone and not works justifies us. The matter itself compels this, along with the nature of language.

Yes, I know they say: It sounds vexing and the people will understand it to mean that they need do no good works. But what else should one say? Is it not much more vexing

that St Paul himself does not say: 'faith alone', but pours it out much more bluntly, kicks in the bottom of the barrel and says: 'without the works of law', and in Galatians 2: 16: 'Not by the works of law' and so on in other places; for the words 'faith alone' could still be glossed, but the words 'without works of law' are so blunt, vexing, and scandalous that no amount of glossing can help. How much more could the people learn from this to do no good works, where they hear it preached of works in such plain, strong words: 'no work, without works, not by works'. Is that not quite vexing, that one preaches 'without works, no work, not by works'—so why should it be so vexing if one preaches 'faith alone'?

And what is even more vexing: St Paul does not reject simple, ordinary works, but those of the law itself. From that one could grow even more vexed and say, the law be damned and cursed by God and one should do nothing but evil, as they would do in Romans 3: 8: 'Let us do evil, so that good may come', as a factionist began to say in our time as well. Should one, merely on account of such vexation, deny St Paul's words or fail to speak frankly and freely about faith? Rather, precisely St Paul and we want to have and teach such vexation for the sake of no other cause so strongly against works and promote faith alone than that the people should become vexed, kick and fall down, so that they can learn and know that they will not become pious through their good works, but through Christ's death and resurrection alone. If they cannot become pious through good works of law, how much less will they become pious through evil works and without law! One cannot conclude that since good works do not help, therefore evil works help, just as one cannot well conclude that since the sun does not help a blind man to see, therefore the night and darkness must help him to see.

It amazes me, though, that one can struggle and baulk so much within this open matter. Tell me, if Christ's death and resurrection is our work, which we do, or not. It is in no way our work, nor is it the work of any law. Christ's death and resurrection alone make us free from sin and pious, as Paul says in Romans 4: 25: 'He died for our sins and is resurrected for our justification.' Further, tell me: What work is it by which we secure and hold Christ's death and resurrection? It could never be an outward work, but can only be the eternal faith in one's heart; which alone, completely alone and without any works grasps such a death and resurrection, where it is preached through the Gospel. What difference does it make if people rant and rage, cry heresy and burn, although the matter at bottom is clearly printed there and proves that faith alone can secure Christ's death and resurrection without any works and that the same death and resurrection are our life and justification. If it is so obvious that faith alone brings, secures, and gives us this life and justification, why then should one not speak so? It is not heresy that faith alone secures Christ and gives life. But it must be heresy, if one says or speaks of such a thing. Are they not mad, foolish, and senseless? They recognize these matters to be right and yet they punish any speech of the same matter as wrong; there is nothing that may at once be both right and wrong.

Furthermore I am not the only one, nor even the first to say that faith alone justifies us. Ambrose, Augustine, and many others have said it before me. And anyone who intends to read and understand St Paul must surely say so and cannot do otherwise. His words are too strong and tolerate no work at all. If it is no work at all, then it must be faith alone. Oh, what a fine, useful, unvexing lesson that would be, if people were to learn that they could become pious through their works along with faith. That would be as much as saying that Christ's death does not take away our sins by itself, but that our works also play a part. What a fine way to honour Christ's death, to say that our works help Him and can also do what He has done, so that we would be just as good and strong as He. That is the talk of the devil, who cannot resist profaning Christ's blood.

Because the matter itself, at bottom, demands that one say: 'Faith *allein* justifies us', as does the nature of our German language, which also teaches us to express it this way. In addition I have the example of the holy fathers and the endangerment of the people forces the matter, in that they keep hanging on works and miss faith and lose Christ, especially in these times, since they have been used to works for so long that they must be torn away from them by force. So it is not only right, but of the highest necessity, that one as clearly and fully as possible state: Faith *allein* without works makes one pious; and I regret that I did not also add *alle* and *aller* [any], as such: *Ohn alle Werk aller Gesetz* [Without any works of any laws], so that it would be fully and roundly said. Therefore it shall remain so in my New Testament, even if all the papal asses go mad and silly they will not make me yield. That is enough about that. I will speak further about this, with God's grace, in my book *De iustificatione*.

As regards the other question, if the deceased saints pray for us [...]

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. i.e., has met his maker.
2. A comical punishment; fifty lashes with a wet noodle.

Luther's translation of Genesis II: 1-9.

Die gantze Heilige Schifft Deudsch (Wittenberg 1545; last edition published in Luther's lifetime), ed. Hanz Volz with Heiz Blanke; text ed. Friedreich Kur (Munich: Rogner & Bernhand, 1972), 41-2

Es hatte aber alle Welt einerley Zungen und sprache. ²Da sie nu zogen gen Morgen / funden sie ein eben Land / in lande Sinear / vnd woneten daselbs. ³Vnd sprachen vntereinander / Wolauff / lasst vns Ziegel streichen vnd brennen / Vnd namen ziegel zu stein / vnd thon zu kalck / ⁴vnd sprachen / Wolauff / Lasst vns eine Stad vnd Thurn bawen / des spitze bis an den Himel reiche / das wir vns einen namen machen / Denn wir werden vielleicht zerstreuet in alle Lender.

⁵Da fur der HERR ernider / das er sehe die Stad vnd Thurn / die die Menschenkinder baweten. ⁶Vnd der HERR sprach / Sihe / Es ist einerley Volck vnd einerley Sprach vnter jnen allen / vnd haben das angefangen zu thun / sie werden nicht ablassen von allem das sie furgenomen haben zu thun. ⁷Wolauff / lasst vns ernider faren / vnd jre Sprache da selbs verwirren / das keiner des andern sprache verneme. ⁸Also zerstrewet sie der HERR von dannen in alle Lender / das sie musten auffhören die Stad zu bawen / ⁹Da her heisst jr name Babel / das der HERR daselbs verwirret hatte aller Lender sprache / vnd sie zerstrewet von dannen in alle Lender.

Literal translation by Jennifer Tanner

1. Now all the world had but one tongue and language.
2. As they moved towards morning [the east], they found a flat land in the land of Sinar, and they dwelt there.
3. And they spoke among themselves: Well then, let us make¹ and burn bricks. And they took bricks for stone and clay for lime.
4. and said: Well then, let us build a city and a tower whose peak will reach as far as heaven,² so that we make a name for ourselves. For we may perhaps be scattered into all lands.
5. Then the LORD came down that he might see the city and the tower that the children of man were building.
6. And the LORD said: See, there is but one people and but one language among all of them, and they have begun to do this; they will not leave off from all that they have undertaken to do.
7. Well then, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that none will discern the language of the other.
8. So the Lord scattered them from there into all lands, so that they had to stop building the city.
9. Therefore its name is called Babel, since in that place the LORD had confused the language of all countries and scattered them from there into all lands.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. The verb is *streichen*, possibly to spread, i.e., spread the mixture of mud and straw into a mould? Bilingual dictionaries define *streichen* as 'make' with regard to bricks. A closer alternative might be 'cast'. At any rate, it is only the first step, the second being to fire the bricks in a kiln.
2. *Himmel* equally means 'heaven' and 'sky' in German; given the context I chose 'heaven'.

2.3 WILLIAM TYNDALE

William Tyndale (c.1494–1536), is by far the most influential Bible translator in the English language. A humanist and theologian, educated at both Oxford and Cambridge, he was determined, in the spirit of the Reformation, to make the Bible widely available in the vernacular to both laymen and clergy. While serving as a tutor, in 1522, he also translated Erasmus's *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* ('The Christian Soldier's Handbook', written in 1502). It was his work on this and subsequent problems with the authorities that persuaded him that ignorance of the Scriptures lay at the root of the theological confusion. In 1524, Tyndale visited Luther in Wittenberg—Luther had published his German translation of the New Testament in 1522—and worked on his translation of the New Testament in Hamburg and Worms, the work being completed in 1525. Much of the commentary is clearly based on Luther's German translation, but Tyndale worked scrupulously from the Greek and Hebrew source texts, using Erasmus's 1522 Greek New Testament. The first English New Testament to be printed, Tyndale's translation was smuggled into England in 1526. Although the bulk of his time went into an extensive revision of his New Testament (1534), he also began work on the Hebrew Bible, producing versions of the Pentateuch and of Jonah. Tyndale, who had spent much of his life in exile, under constant threat of arrest, was eventually captured in Antwerp; he was burned as a heretic at Vilvorde. In 1537, a composite translation of the Bible, containing the work of Tyndale and Coverdale, was issued with the Church's approval.

Tyndale's Bible translation was the dominant stylistic and scholarly influence in the history of English biblical translation. Its mark on the Geneva Bible, the Douay-Reims Bible, and the King James Bible is decisive, although, for doctrinal reasons, not acknowledged. The excellence of his translation, as literature, was increasingly recognized, to the point where its unpedantic directness and idiomatic vigour sometimes served as criteria for more critical evaluation of the elevated style of the revered 1611 Authorized Version, which of course is overwhelmingly indebted to Tyndale's genius.

Tyndale's preface, below, is presented in somewhat modernized spelling. It vividly conveys the passion and conviction that informed Tyndale's activity as a Bible translator, and the physical precariousness of his position, at the very centre of the religious controversies, and the intimidation that he was subject to.

‘W.T. To the Reader’: Tyndale’s Story of His Translation (the preface to Tyndale’s translation of Genesis in his Pentateuch, printed in 1530), included in Dewey M. Beegle, *God’s Word into English: The Adventure of Bible Translation* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1960)

When I had translated the new testament, I added an epistle unto the latter end, in which I desired them that were learned to amend [it] if aught were found amiss. But our malicious and wily hypocrites which are so stubborn and hard hearted in their wicked abominations that it is not possible for them to amend any thing at all (as we see by daily experience when their both livings and doings are rebuked with the truth) say, some of them that it is impossible to translate the scripture into English, some that it is not lawful for the lay people to have it in their mother tongue, some that it would make them all heretics, as it would no doubt from many things which they of long time have falsely taught, and that it is the whole cause wherefore they forbid it, though they other cloaks pretend. And some or rather every one say that it would make them rise against the king, whom they themselves (unto their damnation) never yet obeyed. And lest the temporal rulers should see their falsehood, if the scripture cam to light, causeth them so to lie.

And as for my translation in which they affirm unto the lay people (as I have heard say) to be I wot not how many thousand heresies, so that it cannot be mended or corrected, they have yet taken so great pain to examyne it, and to compare it unto that they would fain have it and to their own imaginations and juggling terms, and to have somewhat to rail at, and under that cloak to blaspheme the truth, that they might with as little labour (as I suppose) have translated the most part of the bible. For they which in times paste were wont to look on no more scripture then they found in their duns [the commentaries of Duns Scotus] or such like devilish doctrine, have yet now so narrowly looked on my translation, that there is not so much as one I therein if it lack a title over his bed, but they have noted it, and number it unto the ignorant people for an heresy. Finally in this they be all agreed to drive you from the knowledge of the scripture, and that ye shall not have the text thereof in the mother tongue, and to keep the world still in darkness, to the intent they might sit in the conscience of the people, through vain superstition and false doctrine, to satisfy their filthy lusts their proud ambition, and insatiable covetousness, and to exalt their own honour above king & emperour, yea and above god himself.

A thousand books had they lever to be put forth against their abominable doings and doctrine, than that the scripture should come to light. For as long as they may keep that down, they will so darken the right way with the mist of their sophistry, and so tangle them that ether rebuke or despise their abominations with arguments philosophy and with worldly similitude and apparent reasons of natural wisdom. And with wresting the scripture unto their own purpose clean contrary unto the process, order and meaning of the text, and so delude them in descanting upon it with allegories, and amaze them

expounding it in many senses before the unlearned lay people (when it hath but one simple literal sense whose light the owls cannot abide) that though thou feel in thine heart and art sure how that all is false that they say, yet couldst thou not solve their subtle riddles.

Which thing only moved me to translate the new testament. Because I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order and meaning of the text: for else whatsoever truth is taught them, these enemies of all truth quench it again, partly with the smoke of their bottomless pit whereof thou readest Apocalypse ix. that is, with apparent reasons of sophistry and traditions of their own making, founded without ground of scripture, and partly in juggling with the text, expounding it in such a sense as is impossible to gather of the text, if thou see the process order and meaning thereof.

And even in the bishop of London's house I intended to have done it. For when I was so turmoiled in the country where I was that I could no longer there dwell (the process whereof were to long here to rehearse) I this wise thought in my self, this I suffer because the priests of the country be unlearned, as god it knoweth there are a full ignorant sort which have seen no more Latin than that they read in their portesses [breviaries or prayers for the canonical hours] and missals which yet many of them can scarcely read (except it be Albertus [i.e. Albertus Magnus] de secretis mulierum in which yet, though they be never so sorely learned, they pour day and night and make notes therein and all to teach the midwives as they say, and Linwood [William Lyndewode's *Provinciale*, a digest of English canon law written in 1433] a book of constitutions to gather tithes, mortuaries [customary gifts claimed from the heirs of dead parishioners], offerings, customs, and other pillage, which they call not theirs, but God's part and the duty of holy church, to discharge their consciences withall: for they are bound that they shall not diminish, but increase all thing unto the utmost of their powers) and therefore (because they are thus unlearned, thought I) when they come together to the alehouse, which is their preaching place, they affirm that my sayings are heresy. And besides that they add to of their own heads which I never spake, as the manner is to prolong the tale to short the time withall, and accuse me secretly to the chancellor [i.e. the Bishop's Chancellor of the diocese] and other bishop's officers. And indeed when I came before the chancellor, he threatened me grievously, and reviled me and rated me as though I had been a dog, and laid to my charge whereof there could be none accuser brought forth (as their manner is not to bring forth the accuser) and yet all the priests of the country were that same day there. As I this thought the bishop of London came to my remembrance whom Erasmus (whose tongue maketh of little gnats great elephants and lifteth up above the stars whosoever giveth him a little exhibition) prayseth exceedingly among other in his annotations on the new testament for his great learning. Then thought I, if I might come to this man's service,

I were happy. And so I got me to London, and through the acquaintance of my master came to Sir Harry Gilford the king's graces controller, and brought him an oration of Isocrates which I had translated out of Greek into English, and desired him to speak unto my lord of London for me, which he also did as he showed me, and willed me to write an epistle to my lord, and to go to him myself which I also did, and delivered my epistle to a servant of his own, one William Hebilthwayte, a man of mine old acquaintance. But god which knoweth what is within hypocrites, saw that I was beguiled, and that the council was not the next way unto my purpose. And therefore he got me no favor in my lord's sight.

Whereupon my lord answered me, his house was full, he had more then he could well find, and advised me to seek in London, where he said I could not lack a service. And so in London I abode almost a year, and marked the course of the world, and heard our praters, I would say our preachers how they boasted themselves and their high authority and beheld the pomp of our prelates and how beside they were as they yet are, to set peace and unite in the world (though it be not possible for them that walk in darkness to country long in peace, for they can not but ether stumble or dash themselves at one thing or another that shall clean unquiet altogether) and saw things whereof I defer to speak at this time, and understood at the last not only that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the new testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England, as experience doth openly declare.

Under what manner therefore should I now submit this book to be corrected and amended of them, which can suffer nothing to be well? Or what protestation should I make in such a matter unto our prelates those stubborn Nimrods which so mightily fight against god and resist his holy spirit, enforcing with all craft and subtlety to quench the light of the everlasting testament, promises, and appointment made between god and us: and heaping the fierce wrath of god upon all princes and rulers, mocking them with false fained names of hypocrisy, and serving their lusts at all points, and dispensing with them even of the very laws of god, of which Christ himself testifieth, Mathew v. that not so much as one title thereof may perish or be broken. And of which the prophet sayeth Psalm cxviii. Thou hast commanded thy laws to be kept meod, that is in Hebrew exceedingly, with all diligence, might and power, and have made them so mad with their juggling charms and crafty persuasions that they think it full satisfaction for all their wicked living, to torment such as tell them truth, and so born the word of their soul's health and else whosoever believe thereon.

Notwithstanding yet I submit this book and all other that I have other made or translated, or shall in time to come (if it be god's will that I shall further labour in his harvest) unto all them that submit themselves unto the word of god, to be corrected of them, yea and moreover to be disallowed & also burnt, if it seem worthy when they have examined it with the Hebrew, so that they first put forth of their own translating another that is more correct.

Tyndale's Old Testament, in a modern-spelling edition and with an introduction by David Daniell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), Genesis, 11: 1–9, pp. 25–26

[See other versions of this passage in the introductory Babel section, and in Sects. 1.3, 2.2, above, and 2.8, 2.9, 4.5, 4.9, 5.20, below.]

And all the world was of one tongue and one language. And as they came from the east, they found a plain in the land of Sinear, and there they dwelled. And they said one to another: come on, let us make brick and burn it with fire. So brick was their stone and slime was their mortar. And they said: Come on, let us build us a city and a tower, that the top may reach unto heaven. And let us make us a name, for peradventure we shall be scattered abroad over all the earth.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of Adam had builded. And the Lord said: See, the people is one and have one tongue among them all. And this have they begun to do, and will not leave off from all that they have purposed to do. Come on, let us descend and mingle their tongue even there, that one understands not what another sayeth. Thus the Lord scattered them from thence upon all the earth. And they left off to build the city. Wherefore the name of it is called Babel, because that the Lord there confounded the tongue of all the world. And because that the Lord from thence, scattered them abroad upon all the earth.