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**The Parentage of William Tyndale, alias Huchyns, Translator and
Martyr**

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THE PARENTAGE OF WILLIAM TYNDALE,
ALIAS HUCHYNS, TRANSLATOR AND MARTYR

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IT is eighty years since Demaus' *Life of William Tyndale* was published, followed seven years later by B. W. Greenfield's 'Notes on the Family of Tyndale of Stinchcombe and Nibley, in Gloucestershire' (1878) (reprinted from *The Genealogist*, O.S. Vol. 2). Meanwhile, apart from J. F. Mozley's *William Tyndale* (1937), which reproduces, with some interesting additions, the original work of these two pioneers, no critical examination of the biographical part of their studies has been undertaken: with the result that certain legendary matter about the family of the renowned translator and certain unfounded assumptions about his history have passed into currency as proven fact.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to clear up some of the resultant fallacies and to open up the way for resolving some part of the obscurity surrounding the unresolved problem of William Tyndale's origin.

The identification of his family with the Tyndale family which flourished at Stinchcombe from the late 15th down to the early 18th century (whose representatives still continue elsewhere), and at North Nibley from the early 16th down to the 19th century, does not seem to admit of dispute.

In making this identification, however, both Greenfield and Demaus missed the important fact that there were Tyndales connected with Melksham's Court in Stinchcombe a century earlier.

The Trye pedigree in the *Visitation of Gloucestershire* (1623) shows a Jone, daughter of John Tindall of Stinchcombe, who married Thomas Purlwent and so, concurrently with one John Trye, became related to the Botelers, or Botillers, of Hardwicke Court.

Collation of this pedigree with the Gloucestershire Inquisitiones *post mortem* conclusively demonstrates that the pedigree is at fault in two respects :—

- (i) It incorrectly identifies the John Trye, who married into the Botiller family, with the grandson of the actual John Trye and makes him marry Elizabeth, the mother of his actual wife.
- (ii) It makes the Katherine Botiller, who married William Purlewent and became the mother of Thomas Purlewent, husband of Jone Tindall, a sister of the said Elizabeth, instead of a contemporary near relative.

Cross references to the names of jurors in other Inquisitions of the dates 1374–1394 substantiate the conclusion that John Trye's wife, Isobel, who was born in 1357, was of the same generation as Jone Tindall.

The advent of the Tyndale family in Stinchcombe (contemporaneously with the appearance at Cirencester in 1385 of one Hugh Tyndale as a juror at the Inquisition *post mortem* on John Taillour of Whittington) must be dated at the latest between the years 1374 and 1400 for the following reasons.

The Inquisition of 1374 assigning dower to Ela, widow of Sir Thomas, son of Robert de Bradeston (mother of Elizabeth de Bradeston, daughter and sole heiress of Sir Thomas de Bradeston, who married Walter de la Pole, to whom the Manor of Stinchcombe thus passed), shows a toft and 2 acres of land as in the tenure of one Richard Holdare.

A Rental of the above Walter de la Pole, lord of the Manor of Stinchcombe, which can, with some confidence, be dated about 1400, shows one John Tendale holding as a customary tenant a toft and two acres of land 'formerly holderes' at a quarterly rent of 13*d.* Also, for the farm of the meadows of the manor of Milkeshames he pays 23*s* 4*d* per quarter.

From this period down to 1478, the date Greenfield took for the first appearance of the family in Stinchcombe, there is a gap in the record. But in that year one Tebota Hochyns appears, holding by Indenture the Manor, with the meadows and pastures and appurtenances thereto belonging, called 'Le

Milsh'mscourt' in Stinchcombe at a yearly rent of £4-13-4, the same rent as that paid by John Tendale for his holding.

Similarly, in the same year 1478, one Richard Tyndale appears as holding of the lord's demesne land in Stinchcombe a croft called 'Holderscroft' at an annual rent of 4s 4d, again the same rent as paid therefor by John Tendale.

Tebota Hochyns' tenancy of Melksham's Court (she was alive in 1485) had passed to Richard Tyndale before his death, and he had died before 22 Jan. 22 Hen. VII (1506/7), since on that date his two sons, Thomas Tyndale *alias* Huchyns and William Tyndale, Thomas's brother, were *joint* farm tenants both of Melksham's Court and of the toft called Holderscroft by Indenture of Lease at a yearly rent of £4-17-8, *i.e.* £4 13-4 and 4s 4d for each property respectively. On 5 April 2 Hen. VIII (1511), however, a fresh lease of the above premises had been granted to the above Thomas *solely*, and his brother William disappears from the scene.

By his marriage to Alice Hunt, heiress of Hunt's Court, North Nibley, Thomas became the progenitor of the Tyndalls of Melksham's Court in Stinchcombe and Hunt's Court in North Nibley, whose descent Greenfield so assiduously traced out.

It will be seen that the fact of the settlement of the family at Stinchcombe by the end of the 14th century explodes, even more effectively than Greenfield thought, the family legend current in the 17th century that the *alias* of Huchyns (which was certainly in vogue in the family in 1478 and was used subsequently for about three generations, after which it disappears), was first adopted at the time of the Wars of the Roses when a Baron de Tyndale, flying from the North where he had backed the losing side, migrated to Gloucestershire and called himself Huchyns as a disguise, only revealing his true name to his children on his deathbed.

This *alias*, or double name, may have originated, as Greenfield suggests, in marriage. It is significant that Tebota Hochyns is succeeded at Melksham's Court by Richard Tyndale *alias* Huchyns, though whether their relationship was that of mother and son, or husband and wife, or more distant still, is not

known. It is also noteworthy that the first known member of the family, John Tendale of Stinchcombe, does not bear the *alias*.

To return to the two sons of Richard Tyndale *alias* Huchyns, Thomas and William. As stated above, they were holding as *joint* tenants Melksham's Court and Holderscroft on 22 Jan. 1506/7, whereas on 5 April 1511 the elder brother, Thomas, has a *sole* lease of the above premises.

Greenfield, despite his patient accuracy of research, appears to have made a cardinal error in identifying the younger brother, William, with another William Tyndall, Warden of the Chantry of St. Michael, Bradston, and asserting that he took Holy Orders before 1518. The said Warden however is proved by the Worcester Episcopal Register to have been, as 'Sir Wm. Hechens,' already in tenure of that post in 1498. He died in 1523, which Greenfield assumes unwarrantably to have been the date of death of his namesake William, brother of Thomas of Melksham's Court. He therefore ruled out on that score the possibility of the latter being identical with William Tyndale *alias* Huchyns the Translator, who did not meet his end till 1536.

The rectification of this error therefore once more admits the possibility of the identity of the Translator with this William, brother of Thomas and second son of Richard Tyndale *alias* Huchyns of Melksham's Court. Moreover, the interruption of his partnership in the lease of Melksham's Court with his elder brother, Thomas, occurred at just such a time as, if he is indeed to be identified with the Translator, the latter was ripe for matriculation at Oxford. It is on record that as a student of Magdalen Hall the Translator took his B.A. degree in 1512 and proceeded to that of M.A. in 1515. The coincidence is arresting and raises to a strong degree of probability the identity of the two William Tyndales *alias* Huchyns.

Two questions now arise.

It has been assumed on the strength of John Stokesley (afterwards Bishop of London), having been Principal of

Magdalen Hall in 1498 and Rector of Slymbridge in Gloucestershire (a parish contiguous to Stinchcombe) in 1509 that he must have been intimately acquainted with William Tyndale. It must however be observed, first, that Stokesley became a Fellow and Tutor of Magdalen College in 1495 and Vice President in 1505, at a time when riotous dissensions had broken out among the Fellows, and Stokesley, under accusation of witchcraft, adultery and other heinous crimes in 1507, must have been far too occupied to take much note of what was going on at Magdalen Hall.

Secondly, in 1506 shortly before his presentation to Slymbridge Rectory, he obtained the living of Willoughby. In view of the fact that there was one curate, if not two, at Slymbridge, and that Stokesley shortly after (in 1509) became Chaplain and Almoner to Henry VIII, it is probable that his sole interest in these two cures was confined to the emoluments derived from them. Later he also held the living of Ivychurch in Romney Marsh, co. Kent, and being very much involved in Henry VIII's machinations about the impending divorce was still less likely to have had much personal knowledge of his several parishes and parishioners.

Much play has been made of the contrary supposition in bolstering up the legend that he was also personally acquainted with Edward Tyndale, who first appears on the scene in a lease (in which he is described as 'of Tewkesbury') of the manor of Hurst in Slymbridge and was appointed in 1519 Receiver General for the Crown revenues for Berkeley's lands. This Edward is mentioned in two letters of Stokesley, then Bishop of London, in 1533. To whom these letters were addressed is not stated but it was probably to Thomas Cromwell, the Secretary of State. Stokesley is anxious to obtain from the Crown the grant of 'the farm of Greenhampter in Gloucestershire' for one of his servants; but there is another suitor for the farm 'who hath a kinsman called Edward Tyndall, brother to Tyndall, the arch-heretic, and under receiver of the Lordship of Berkeley.' Stokesley's statement, which is entirely unsupported by any other evidence, that Edward and William

the Translator were brothers, looks rather like an attempt to prejudice Cromwell against Edward and is therefore suspect. Moreover, there is not a single example of Edward ever using the *alias* Huchyns, as the Translator undoubtedly did.

Apart from Foxe's account of William's migration to Cambridge at a date unspecified, and his subsequent employment as a tutor to Sir William Walsh's children, there is a gap in the information about him. Demaus originated the legend, accepted uncritically by subsequent writers, that in this capacity William came under the gracious influence of Sir William Walsh's first wife, Ann Pointz. That lady had died some years before, and her successor, the second Lady Walsh, was already the mother of two younger children. William's duties evidently had more to do with tutoring the deceased Lady Walsh's only child, Margaret, then in her teens. So falls to the ground the elaborate superstructure, favoured by Demaus, of making William's friendship with Humphrey Monmouth and with his Antwerp protector, Thomas Pointz, follow from Lady Walsh's kind favour. The Pointz family of Essex was in any case only distantly related to the family of Gloucestershire.

William's association with Humphrey Monmouth is difficult to reconcile with Foxe's account of his having a brother, John, prospering as a merchant in London and to be identified with the John Tyndale *alias* Huchyns of the 1530 Star Chamber trial, delated for procuring the sale of his brother William's Bible translations: unless, indeed, the said John, as a younger brother, did not set up in business in London till after 1522.

There were other Tyndales in London at this time :—

- (i) A prosperous merchant who had the farm of the living of St. Olave, Southwark (with a son), Martin, who was admitted to Holy Orders) and later fell on evil days.
- (ii) A William Tyndale who was a Friar Observant of Greenwich, professed in 1508, son of another well-to-do London citizen.

There is no evidence to connect either of these two with the Stinchcombe family, but the question why the Translator found himself so friendless in London remains unanswered.

Having omitted so far any reference to the collateral Tyndale *alias* Huchyns family of Southend in Stinchcombe, it remains to be said that their exact relationship to the Tyndales of Melksham's Court remains obscure.

The third chief source of information on Tyndale family history, J. S. Cooke, who, as Steward to the Berkeley estates, had access to evidence otherwise unavailable, is provokingly inaccurate. Thus, he antedates Edward Tyndale's acquisition of Hurst in Slymbridge by 10 years, makes believe that Southend in Stinchcombe is no longer identifiable—whereas it remains a flourishing farm with field-names identical with those of the Tyndale *alias* Huchyns holding—and so on. Such information, therefore, as he does give has to be taken with reservation. But it effectively disposes of any possibility of making Slymbridge William Tyndale's birthplace, and does not leave much room for connecting him with Southend rather than with Melksham's Court.

It may be said in conclusion that, while the research into Tyndale origins, of which the present paper is a brief summary, has resulted in disposing of a considerable amount of legendary matter which earlier genealogists have interwoven into the Tyndales of Gloucestershire tradition, and disproved much of the accepted story found in Rudder's *History of Gloucestershire*,¹ Burke, and other standard works, it has also resulted in the discovery of a surprising amount of information about individual outcrops of the family of Tyndale, distinct from the well-known Tyndales of Northants, Norfolk and Essex, as well as from the extinct Tyndales of the North and that Gloucestershire branch here discussed.

¹ This is notably the case with Rudder's fictitious identification of Thomas Tyndale of Eastwood's heir with the family of a William Tyndale stated to derive from Tyndale of Hockwold (Norfolk). Research in the Bristol Municipal Archives and elsewhere conclusively proves that the brothers, William (one time Sheriff of Bristol) and Robert Tyndale of Rudder's fictitious pedigree came to Bristol from a Lincolnshire family domiciled at Belton in that County, and had no connection with the above-mentioned Edward Tyndale's son, Thomas Tyndale of Eastwood, whose heir (likewise Thomas) is proved by Chancery Inquisitions held in Gloucestershire in 1605/6 to have been the latter's illegitimate son.

Further research may serve to solve the still unanswered problem as to whether there was any genealogical linkage between those three several and distinct proliferations possessing a common surname: as it may resolve the question whether the other out-crops derive from one or other of these stems. Such considerations, however, are beyond the scope of the present essay. Suffice it to say that at least the search for William Tyndale's origin has been narrowed down, and a very likely candidate for identification with him brought to light in the William, son of Richard of Melksham's Court, who succeeded with his brother Thomas to the latter as joint tenant of Melksham's Court in January 1507.