

## THE DIALOGUE CONCERNING TYNDALE: SYNOPSIS

### THE FIRST BOOK:

#### **INTRODUCTORY** (*Pages 1-3*)

[A right worshipful friend of Sir Thomas More's sent a confidential and learned friend of his, hereinafter called the Messenger, to ask his advice on matters of faith which, though certain enough in themselves, had lately been called in question. More at first thought it enough to give his advice to the Messenger by word of mouth; but after the man had left he judged it more prudent to write out all that had passed between them and send it on to his friend. But even that proved insufficient. For copies of what he had written were carried abroad and were there in danger of being tampered with by enemies of the faith. So, finally, he determined to publish his manuscript. But before doing this he had been careful to take the advice of friends more learned than himself in theological matters about everything he had written. Furthermore he was in doubt as to whether the Messenger's arguments against the Church ought to be published; and also as to whether "certain tales and merry words," usual enough at that time, in private conversation, should be included. And since the friends whom he had consulted on all these points were seldom in full agreement as to what should be changed or omitted, he let nothing stand except by the consent of the greater number.]

#### **THE FIRST CHAPTER** (*Pages 4-12*)

The letter of credence sent from his friend by a trusty secret Messenger with the letter of the author answering the same. The declaration of the credence by the mouth of the Messenger whereupon the matter of all the whole work dependeth.

#### **THE SECOND CHAPTER** (*Pages 12-24*)

Here summarily is declared in what order the author intendeth to treat of the matters purposed unto him. Whereof because the first was an opinion conceived in some men's heads that a certain person late abjured of heresy for preaching against pilgrimages and images and prayers made to saints was therein greatly wronged, the author briefly declareth his mind concerning the confutation of those perilous opinions.

#### **THE THIRD CHAPTER** (*Pages 24-30*)

The objections of the Messenger made against praying to saints, worshipping of images, and going on pilgrimages, with the answer of the author unto the same. And, incidentally, it is by the Messenger moved that there should seem no necessity for christian folk to resort to any churches; but that all were one to pray thence or there. And that opinion by the author is answered and confuted.

#### **THE FOURTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 31-32*)

The author declareth in this comprobation of pilgrimages that it is the pleasure of God to be specially sought and worshipped in some one place before another. And albeit that we cannot

attain to the knowledge of the cause why God doth so, yet the author proveth by great authority that God by miracle testifieth it is so.

#### **THE FIFTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 32-33*)

Because pilgrimages be among other proofs testified by miracles, the Messenger doth make objection against those miracles, partly, lest they be feigned and untrue, partly, lest they be done by the devil, if they be done at all.

#### **THE SIXTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 33-39*)

Because the Messenger thinketh that he may well mistrust and deny the miracles because reason and nature tell him that they cannot be done; therefore, first, the author showeth what unreasonableness would ensue if folk would stand so stiff against all credence to be given to any such things as reason and nature should seem to gainsay.

#### **THE SEVENTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 39-41*)

The author sheweth that neither nature nor reason do deny the miracles to be true; nor do they gainsay but that they may be well and easily done.

#### **THE EIGHTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 42-43*)

The Messenger allegeth that God may nothing do against the course of nature. Of which the author declareth the contrary; and over that sheweth that our Lord in working miracles doth nothing against nature.

#### **THE NINTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 43-44*)

The author sheweth that albeit man may mistrust some of the particular miracles, yet can there no reasonable man neither deny nor doubt but that many miracles hath there been done and wrought.

#### **THE TENTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 44-47*)

The author proveth that many things daily done by nature or craft, whereof we nothing marvel at all, be more marvellous and more wonderful indeed than be the miracles that we most marvel of and repute most incredible.

#### **THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 47-48*)

The author sheweth that a miracle is not to be mistrusted though it be done in a small matter and seemeth upon a slight occasion.

#### **THE TWELFTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 48-49*)

The author somewhat noteth the froward minds of many folk that would be very hard to believe a man in a miracle, upon his oath, and very light in a shrewd tale to believe a woman, on her word.

#### **THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER** (*Page 50*)

The author sheweth the untoward mind of many men, which in miracles so highly touching the honour of God and weal of their own souls will neither believe other folk that tell them nor themselves vouchsafe to go prove them.

#### **THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 51-55)**

The Messenger maketh objection that miracles showed before a multitude may be feigned; and by the author is showed how the goodness of God bringeth shortly the truth of such falsehood to light, with ensamples thereof one or two rehearsed; and further showed that many miracles there be which no good christian man may deny to be true.

#### **THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 55-56)**

The author sheweth that if of those miracles that are told and written to be done at divers pilgrimages, and commonly believed for true, we certainly knew some falsely feigned, yet were that no cause to mistrust the remnant.

#### **THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 56-57)**

The author sheweth that whoso would enquire should soon find that at pilgrimages be daily many great and undoubted miracles wrought and well-knownen. And specially he speaketh of the great and open miracle shewed at our Lady of Ipswich of late upon the daughter of sir Roger Wentworth, knight.

#### **THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 58-63)**

The Messenger layeth forth objections against miracles done at pilgrimages, of which he confesseth many to be true. But he layeth causes and reasons whereby he saith that many men be moved to believe and think that those miracles that be done there be done by the devil to set our hearts upon idolatry by the worshipping of images instead of God.

#### **THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 63-70)**

The author defereth the answer to the foresaid objections, and first by scripture he proveth that the church of Christ cannot err in any necessary article of Christ's faith. And in this chapter be those words of Christ specially touched, *Super cathedram Moysi sederunt, etc., Qui dicunt vobis facite, quae autem faciunt nolite facere*, concerning the authority of the church.

#### **THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 70-72)**

The author proveth that if the worship of images were idolatry then the church believing it to be lawful and pleasant to God were in a misbelief and in a deadly error. And then were the faith failed in the church whereof Christ hath promised the contrary as is proved in the chapter before.

#### **THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER (Pages 72-75)**

The Messenger allegeth that the perpetual being and assistance of Christ with his church, to keep it out of all damnable errors is nothing but his being with his church in holy scripture; where of the author declareth the contrary.

#### **THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER (Pages 75-79)**

The author sheweth that if it so were indeed as the Messenger said, that is, to wit, that Christ continued with his church none otherwise but only by the leaving of his holy scripture to them, and that all the faith also were only therein; then should it yet follow that, as far as the necessity of our salvation requireth, God giveth the church the right understanding thereof. And thereupon followeth farther that the church cannot err in the right faith. Whereupon is inferred eftsoon all

that the Messenger would have fled from by force. And thereon also specially followeth that all the texts of holy scripture which heretics allege against images, or any point of that common belief of Christ's catholic church, can nothing serve their purpose.

#### **THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER** (*Pages 79-83*)

Because the Messenger had in the beginning shewed himself desirous and greedy upon the text of scripture with little force of the old fathers' glosses and with dispraise of philosophie and almost all the seven liberal sciences, the author therefore incidentally sheweth what harm happed sometime to fall to divers of those young men whom he hath knowen to give their study to the scripture only, with contempt of logic and other secular science, and little regard of the old interpreters. Wherefore the author sheweth that in the study of scripture the sure way is, with virtue and prayer, first to use the judgment of natural reason, whereunto secular literature helpeth much. And secondly, the comments of holy doctors. And thirdly, above all thing, the articles of the catholic faith received and believed through the church of Christ.

#### **THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER** (*Pages 84-87*)

The Messenger objected against the counsel of the author in that he would that the student of scripture should lean to the commentators and unto natural reason, which he calleth enemy to faith. And thereupon the answer of the author to those objections, specially proving that reason is servant to faith and not enemy and must with faith and interpretation of scripture needs be concurrent.

#### **THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 87-91*)

The Messenger maketh objections against the author in that he counselled the student of scripture to bring the articles of our faith with him for a special rule to conster (construe) the scripture by. And the author confirmeth his counsel given in that behalf, declaring that without that rule men may soon fall into great errors in the study of holy scripture.

#### **THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 91-103*)

The author, taking occasion upon certain words of the Messenger, declareth the preeminence, necessity and profit of holy scripture, shewing nevertheless that many things have been taught by God without writing. And many great things so remain yet unwritten of truths necessary to be believed. And that the new law of Christ is the law so written in the heart that it shall never out of his church. And that the law there written by God is a right rule to interpret the words written in his holy scripture. Which rule with reason and the old interpreters the author sheweth to be the very sure way to wade with in the great stream of holy scripture.

#### **THE TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 103-109*)

The Messenger saying that him seemed he should not believe the church if he saw the church say one thing and the holy scripture another thing, because the scripture is the word of God; the author sheweth that the faith of the church is the word of God as well as the scripture; and therefore as well to be believed. And that the faith and the scripture, well understanden, be never contrary. And further sheweth that upon all doubts rising upon holy scripture concerning any necessary article of faith, he that cannot upon all that he can hear in the matter, on both the sides, perceive the better and truer part, hath a sure and undoubtable refuge provided him by the goodness of God to bring him out of all perplexity, in that God hath commanded him in all such

doubts to believe his church.

**THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER (*Pages 109-113*)**

The author proveth that God hath commanded us in all things necessary to salvation to give firm credence and full obedience unto his church. And a cause why God will have us bounden to believe.

**THE TWENTY EIGHTH CHAPTER (*Pages 113-120*)**

The Messenger eftsoons objected against this, that we should believe the church in anything where we find the words of scripture seeming plainly to say the contrary, or believe the old doctors interpretations in any necessary article where they seem to us to say contrary to the text, shewing that we may perceive the scripture as well as they might. And the answer of the author proving the authority of the old interpreters and the infallible authority of the church in that God teacheth it every truth requisite to the necessity of man's salvation. Which he proveth by a deduction partly depending upon natural reason.

**THE TWENTY-NINTH CHAPTER (*Pages 120-122*)**

The author proveth by scripture that God instructeth the church of Christ in every truth necessarily requisite for our salvation.

**THE THIRTIETH CHAPTER (*Pages 123-123*)**

Whereas the Messenger had thought before that it were hard to believe anything certainly save holy scripture, though the scripture did agree therein and command it, the author sheweth that saving for the authority of the church, men could not know what scripture they should believe. And here it is shewed that God will not suffer the church to be deceived in the choice of the very scripture of God from any counterfeit.

**THE THIRTY-FIRST CHAPTER (*Pages 126-128*)**

In that the church cannot err in the choice of the true scripture, the author proveth, by the reason which the king's highness in his noble and most famous book objecteth against Luther, that the church cannot err in the necessary understanding of scripture. And finally, the author in this chapter doth briefly recapitulate certain of the principal points that he before proved. And therewith endeth the first book.

**THE SECOND BOOK:**

**THE FIRST CHAPTER (*Pages 129-133*)**

The Messenger recapitulating certain things before proved and for his part agreeing that the church of Christ cannot in any necessary article of the faith fall in any damnable error, doth put in doubt and question which is the very church of Christ, alleging that they peradventure whom we call heretics will say that themselves is the church, and we not. Whereof the author showeth the contrary, declaring whereby we may know that they cannot be the church.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER (*Pages 133-135*)**

The author showeth that no sect of such as the church taketh for heretics can be the church forasmuch as the church was before all them as the tree from which all those withered branches

be fallen.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER (*Pages 135-137*)**

The Messenger moveth that the very church peradventure is not the people that we take for it; but a secret unknowen sort of such only as be by God predestinate to be saved. Whereunto the author answereth and declareth that it cannot be so.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER (*Pages 137-143*)**

The Messenger moveth that though the church be not the number of folk only predestinate to bliss, yet may it peradventure be the number of good and well-believing folk here and there unknowen, which may be peradventure those whom we condemn for heretics for holding opinion against images. Whereof the author proveth the contrary.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER (*Pages 143-144*)**

The author showeth and concludeth that this common knowen multitude of christian nations, not cut off nor fallen off by heresies, be the very church of Christ, good men and bad together.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER (*Pages 144-146*)**

The Messenger moveth that since the church is this knowen multitude of good men and bad together of whom no man knoweth which be the one sort and which be the other, that it may be peradventure that the good sort of the church be they that believe the worship of images to be idolatry, and the bad sort they that believe the contrary. Which objection the author doth answer and confute.

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER (*Pages 146-147*)**

The author somewhat doth corroborate the truth against the heresies holding against images; and recapitulating somewhat briefly what hath been proved, so finisheth and endeth the proof of his part.

**THE EIGHTH CHAPTER (*Pages 147-152*)**

The author entereth the answer to the objections that had been before laid by the Messenger against the worship of images, and praying to saints, and going on pilgrimages. And first he answereth in this chapter the objections made against praying to saints.

**THE NINTH CHAPTER (*Pages 152-159*)**

The Messenger yet again objecteth against relics. And putteth great doubt in canonising. Whereunto the author maketh answer.

**THE TENTH CHAPTER (*Pages 160-162*)**

The Messenger objecteth many things against pilgrimages, and relics, and worshipping of saints, because of much superstitious manner used therein and unlawful petitions asked for them, and harm growing thereupon.

**THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER (*Pages 163-168*)**

The author answereth all the objections proponed by the Messenger in the tenth chapter. And some of them touched by the Messenger more at large in other points before.

## **THE TWELFTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 169-175*)

The author confirmeth the truth of our faith and usage in the worship of images by the consent of the old holy doctors of the church approving the same, as appeareth well in their writings, whom God hath by many miracles testified to be saints. The Messenger eftsoon doubteth whether he can be sure that the miracles told by them were true or not, or themselves saints or not.

Whereupon the author proveth that of any miracles told by any saints we may be most sure of theirs and consequently by their miracles most sure of them that they be surely saints. And in this chapter also proveth that the miracles and consent of those holy doctors do prove that this must needs be the very true church in which they have written and miracles have been done.

Whereupon is finally concluded eftsoons the truth of the principal question, and therewith finisheth the second book.

## THE THIRD BOOK

### **THE FIRST CHAPTER** (*Pages 176-182*)

The Messenger having, in the mean while, been at the university, showeth unto the author an objection which he learned there against one point proved in the first book—that is, to wit, that in the necessary points of faith equal credence is to be given to the church and to the scripture. Which objection the author answereth and dissolveth. [The question of Bilney's trial first raised.]

### **THE SECOND CHAPTER** (*Pages 183-186*)

Incidentally, somewhat is there touched the superstitious fear and scrupulosity that the person abjured [Bilney] did, as it is said, begin with. The weariness whereof drave him to the delight of such liberty as brought him to the contempt of the good devout things used commonly in Christ's church. And in this chapter is somewhat touched the good mean manner between scrupulous superstition and reckless negligence that would be used in the singing or saying of divine service.

### **THE THIRD CHAPTER** (*Pages 187-190*)

The author showeth that men ought not to be light in mistrusting of any judgment given in the court. And that much less ought any man to be bold in the reproving of a common law. And he showeth also the cause why that the law admitteth more slight witness in heinous criminal causes than in slighter matters of covenants or contracts.

### **THE FOURTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 190-195*)

The author showeth upon what ground and cause the man was convict. And also divers other things, not then brought in judgment, whereby it may well appear that he was greatly guilty. And so he showeth, incidently, wherefore it were not reason in a detection of heresy to suffer (the witnesses published and the crime well proved) any new witnesses to be received for the party that is accused.

### **THE FIFTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 195-202*)

The author proveth that the spiritual judges did the man marvellous favour and almost more than lawful, in that they admitted him to such an abjuration as they did; and that they did not rather leave him to the secular hands.

### **THE SIXTH CHAPTER (Pages 202-203)**

The author showeth that the person abjured (Bilney) for his own worldly honesty and for the more fruit of his preaching, if he be suffered to preach in time to come, it were much better for him openly and willingly to confess the truth. And that now by standing still in the denial he both shameth himself and should, if he preached, slander the word of God.

### **THE SEVENTH CHAPTER (Pages 203-206)**

The Messenger moveth a question if a man be sworn by a judge to say the truth of himself in a crime whereof he is had suspect whether he may not lawfully on his oath swear untruth where he thinketh the truth cannot be proved against him. Whereunto the author answereth that he is bounden upon peril of perjury to say and confess [the] truth. And much more sin and folly both was it then for the man (Bilney) that thus was abjured to forswear himself in the thing that he wist well would be proved; and a shameless folly to stand still by his perjury when he saw the matter so clearly proved in deed. And with this he finisheth the matter of his (Bilney's) abjuration.

### **THE EIGHTH CHAPTER (Pages 206-211)**

The author sheweth *why the New Testament of Tyndale's translation was burned*. And sheweth for a sample certain words evil, and of evil purpose changed.

### **THE NINTH CHAPTER (Pages 211-213)**

The author showeth another great token that the translation was perilous; and made for an evil purpose.

### **THE TENTH CHAPTER (Page 213)**

The author showeth that the translation of Tyndale was too bad to be mended.

### **THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER (Pages 213-217)**

The Messenger findeth fault with the clergy in that he saith they have made a constitution provincial that no bible in English should be suffered. And in this chapter, incidently, *the Messenger much reproveth the living of the clergy*. Whereunto the author somewhat showeth his mind, deferring for the while his answer to the objection made against the constitution.

### **THE TWELFTH CHAPTER (Pages 218-221)**

The author toucheth one special prerogative that we have by a priest, be he never so bad, in that his noughtiness cannot take from us the profit of his mass. Whereupon is by the Messenger moved a doubt whether it were better to have fewer priests and better, with fewer masses, or more and worse for to have the more masses. Whereunto the author answereth.

### **THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 221-229 )**

The Messenger moveth that it would do well that priests should have wives. Whereunto the author answereth.

### **THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 230-232)**

The author answereth the doubt moved before in the eleventh chapter concerning *the constitution provincial*; and that the clergy is therein far from the fault that is imputed to them in that point,



*showing also that the clergy hath not forbidden the bible to be made and read in English.*

**THE FIFTEENTH. CHAPTER (Pages 232-242)**

The Messenger moveth against the clergy that, though they have made no law thereof, yet they will indeed suffer none English bible in no man's hand, but use to burn them where they find them, and sometime to burn the man too. And for ensample he layeth one *Richard Hunne*, showing that the Chancellor of London murdered him in prison, and after hanged him, feigning that he hanged himself; and after condemned him of heresy because he had an English bible; and so burned the bible and him together. Whereunto the author answereth.

**THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 142-253)**

The Messenger rehearseth some causes, which he hath heard laid by some of the clergy, whereof the scripture should not be suffered in English. *And the author showeth his mind that it were convenient to have the bible in English.* And therewith endeth the third book.

THE FOURTH BOOK

**THE FIRST CHAPTER (Pages 254-256)**

The author sheweth wherefore it were not well done to suffer Luther's books, or any other heretic's, to go abroad and be read among the people, though there were some good things in them among the bad.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER (Pages 256-265)**

The author sheweth many of Luther's heresies to be abominable, and some part also so peevish that the very bare rehearsal is enough, without any further discussion thereupon, to cause any good man to abhor them, and to be ashamed also to seem so foolish as to hold them. And for a sample, the author rehearseth divers whereof some be now set forth by Tyndale in his English books, worse yet in some parts than his master Luther is himself.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER (Pages 266-268)**

The author sheweth by what occasion that Luther first fell to the devising of these heresies. And that the occasion was such as well declareth, that he was pricked thereto by malice, and ever proceedeth from evil to worse, not witting where to hold him; and that he refuseth to stand to the judgment of any folk earthly concerning the truth or falsehood of his opinions, save only himself.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER (Pages 268-270)**

The author sheweth how that Luther, in the book that himself made of his own acts at the city of Worms in Almaine, doth so madly oversee himself, that he discloseth unware certain follies of himself which a man will well laugh at and marvel much to see it.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER (Page 270)**

The author sheweth the perpetual inconstancy of Luther; and his contrariety and repugnance against himself.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER (Pages 271-272)**

The author sheweth how that Luther hath been fain, for the defence of his undefensible errors, to

go back and forsake all the manner of proof and trial which he first promised to stand to. And now like a man shameful and shameless hath no proof in the world but his own word and calleth that the word of God.

#### **THE SEVENTH CHAPTER (Pages 272-275)**

The author sheweth what things caused the people to fall in to Luther's fond and furious sect. And he sheweth also what mischief the followers of that sect have done in Almayne, Lombardy, and Rome.

#### **THE EIGHTH CHAPTER (Pages 276 - 277)**

The Messenger saith that the malice of the men is not to be imputed to the sect, since that of every sect some be nought. And the author sheweth that in the Lutherans, the sect self is the cause of the malice that the men fall to.

#### **THE NINTH CHAPTER (Pages 277-278)**

The author sheweth that it is a great token that the world is near at end while we see people so far fallen from God that they can abide it to be content with this pestilent frantic sect which no people christian or heathen could have suffered afore our days.

#### **THE TENTH CHAPTER (Pages 279-280)**

The author inveigheth against this detestable article of this ungracious sect, whereby they take away the liberty of man's freewill; and ascribe all thing to destiny.

#### **THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER (Pages 280-298)**

The Messenger saith that howsoever Luther and his followers in Almain believe, yet he cannot think that such as be Lutherans in England, of whom some he saith have seemed good and honest, be so mad and unhappy to believe that all hangeth upon destiny. Whereupon the author sheweth the contrary; and that they be nought indeed seem they never so good. And for proof that, howsoever they colour their words, they mean that all dependeth upon only destiny, he rehearseth a certain discussion had with an heretic, detected to the bishop and examined, the author being present, where the heretic being learned and a preacher, made many shifts to make it seem that in his evil words he meant but well.

#### **THE TWELFTH CHAPTER (Pages 298-301)**

The author inveigheth against the most pestilent sect of these Lutherans, which ascribe our salvation and damnation, and all our deeds to destiny.

#### **THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 301-305)**

The author sheweth his opinion concerning *the burning of heretics* and that it is lawful, necessary, and well done; and sheweth also that the clergy doth not procure it; but only the good and politic provision of the temporality.

#### **THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER (Pages 305-308)**

The author somewhat sheweth that the clergy doth no wrong in leaving heretics to [the] secular hand, though their death follow thereon. And he sheweth also that it is lawful to resist the Turk and such other infidels; and that princes be bounden thereto.

**THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 309-310*)

That princes be bounden to punish heretics; and that fair handling helpeth little with many of them.

**THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 311-314*)

Of simple unlearned folk that are deceived by the great good opinion that they have percease in the learning and living of some that teach them errors.

**THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 314-318*)

The author sheweth that some which be Lutherans and seem to live holily, and therefore be believed and had in estimation, intend a farther purpose than they pretend, which they will well shew if they may once find their time.

**THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER** (*Pages 318-324*)

The author sheweth that in the condemnation of heretics the clergy might lawfully do much more sharply than they do; and that indeed the clergy doth now no more against heretics than the apostle counselleth and the old holy doctors did.

<sup>1</sup> Editor's insertion.

<sup>2</sup> Recapitulate.

<sup>3</sup> Propounded.