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"Stirring" – A Verbal Parallel in the 14th-Century *The Cloud of Unknowing* and in the Writings of the 16th-Century Reformer and Bible-Translator William Tyndale

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It seems appropriate to include a paper¹ on "stirring" in a volume devoted to interdisciplinary approaches to spirituality in the literatures of the English-speaking world. The angle of this essay is partly philological, partly comparative. Firstly, the meaning and significance of the word "stirring" will be explored in the context of spirituality. Secondly, the various shades of the conspicuously frequent occurrences of the word "stirring" in the 14th-century mystical treatise *The Cloud of Unknowing* will be discussed. Thirdly, reflections will focus on the writings of the 16th-century Bible translator and martyr William Tyndale (c. 1494–1536), who used this word not only in his New Testament but in most of his prose works. Fourthly, in assessing the analytical explorations, some light will be shed on the similarities and differences of 14th-century Catholic and 16th-century Protestant spirituality, claiming that the spiritual tradition and the Reformation were not unconnected to one another.²

1 This paper has been completed within the first year of research supported by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund Programme K 62008 (2006–2011).

2 Cf. Hoffman, Bengt R. *Luther and the Mystics: A Reexamination of Luther's Spiritual Experience and His Relationship to the Mystics*. Minneapolis, MA: Augsburg, 1976.

I. What is Meant by "Stirring"?

"Stirring" has got to do with religious emotions. Hans-Jürgen Diller has pointed out that from the point of view of language history, the word "emotion" is a characteristically modern word: we can find its prehistory in terms such as "affection", "passion", "feeling" and "stirring".³ Diller mentions that the deverbal nouns of "stirring" and "feeling" are rendered by reflexive verbs in German: "sich anfühlen" and "sich bewegen" (Diller 179). In Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* "stirring" is used twice, both in the "Parson's Tale" and in both cases in connection with the word "moving": "moeyngre or styryngre of synne, styrynges and moeynges of mannes courage in his herte" (35–60).⁴ What appears in Chaucer, "moeyngre or styryngre" and "styrynges and moeynges", is a peculiar form of linguistic doubling recognised by ancient rhetoricians as "hendiadys", which means: "one through two".⁵ Moreover, the Chaucerean examples foreshadow our further examples that "stirring" is used both in *malum partem* and in *bonam partem*, i. e. both in a negative and a positive sense, as both sin and God can stir the human heart.

The 14th-century author of *The Cloud Unknowing* wrote five further treatises, one of them being "A Pistle of Discreioun of Stirryngs", where the author paternally warns his "goostly freend in God" of the possible double provenance of stirrings:

And therefore beware, and prove well thy stirryngs, and whence they come; for how so thou art stirred, whether from within by grace, or from without on ape's manner, God wote, and I not. Nevertheless this may I say thee in eschewing of perils like unto this: look that thou be no ape, that is to say, look that thy stirryngs to silence or to speaking, to fasting or to eating, to onliness or to company, whether they be come from within of abundance of love and of devotion in the spirit and not from without by the windows of thy bodily wits, as thine ears, and thine eyes.⁶

3 Cf. Diller, Hans-Jürgen. "Affection, Passion, Feeling, Stirring: Towards a Pre-History of the Category 'Emotion.'" *Unmittel(ig)barkeit: Gestaltungen und Lebensart von Emotionen*. Ed. Paul Michel. Zurich: Pano, 2005. 155–91.

4 Cf. Diller 172.

5 Cf. Wright, George T. "Hendiadys and *Hamlet*." *PMLA* 96.2 (1981): 168–93.

6 Hodgson, Phyllis, ed. "A Pistle of Discreioun of Stirryngs." *Deonise Hild Duntithe and Other Treatises on Contemplative Prayer Related to The Cloud of Unknowing*. Ed. Phyllis Hodgson. Early English Text Society. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1958. 68–69.

The term "stirring" is closest to "affection", a term that, in my view, was best defined by Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), the American religious thinker, in his rightly celebrated *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746). In this theoretical and spiritual guide, Edwards, experiencing the zenith and decline of the Great Awakening in America, wanted to clarify the difference between genuine and not necessarily genuine spirituality. "The affections are no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and the will of the soul" (Edwards 96). Affections, Edwards writes, are of two sorts: "either those by which the soul is carried out towards the things that are in view, in approving of them, being pleased with them, and inclined to them; or those in which the soul opposes the things that are in view, in disapproving of them, and in being displeased with them, averse from them, and rejecting them [...]" (Edwards 96).

It is one of the propositions of the present paper that Edwards' idea of affection (disposition, inclination) is ultimately rooted in the medieval and early modern use of "stirring".

II. "This blinde styryngre of love" versus the "styryngre of synne"

The Cloud of Unknowing is a unique mystical treatise and an example of Christian mystagogy. The subject of the book is the "work of contemplation" as it is indicated in the title of the second chapter: "A *schort styryng to meeknes* and to the werk of this booke" (H 3),⁷ in Wolters' translation: "An urgent call to humility and the work of contemplation" (W 53).⁸ Chapter 3 begins with the sentence: "Lift up thin herte unto God with a meek styryng of love; and mene Himself, and none of His goodes" (H 16). This is slightly mistranslated by Wolters: "Lift up your heart to God with humble love; and mean God himself and not what you get out of him" (W 61).

Time is needed for the work of contemplation. The author insists that this is not quantitative but qualitative time, neither longer nor shorter than the atom:⁹ "All the time that is given unto thee, it shall be asked of thee

7 The reference is to the critical edition by Phyllis Hodgson of *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling* (henceforth: H).

8 The reference is to the modern English translation by Clifton Wolters, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works* (henceforth: W).

9 Cf. Hodgson's note to "atomus" (186): "atomus was used in the Greek New Testament to signify 'the twinkling of an eye'. In medieval Latin its time-value was regularly fixed. It was the smallest medieval measure of time and equivalent to 15/94 of a second. According to the table in Du Cange: an hour was equal to 5

how thou hast spent it.' And it is quite right that you should have to give account of it. It is neither shorter nor longer than a single impulse of your will, the chief part of your soul" (W 62).¹⁰ Thus "stirring" comes from the will, the main faculty of the soul.

The author differentiates between two faculties: the intellect and love. In the original it is called "*worthing might*", and in Wolters' translation "faculty", the "*knowyng might*", is translated as the "power of knowing", and the "*lovyng might*", the "power of loving". According to the author of *The Cloud*, for the "*knowyng might*" (power of knowing), God is "incomprehensible", but for the "*lovyng might*" (faculty of love) God is "comprehensible at the fulle" ("completely knowable"). This distinction was also proposed by Jonathan Edwards almost four hundred years later:

The Cloud of Unknowing (c. 1370)

Edwards, *Religious Affections* (1746)

"All rational beings, angels and men, possess two faculties, the power of knowing and the power of loving. To the first, to the intellect, God who made them is forever unknowable, but to the second, to love, he is completely knowable, and that by every separate individual. So much so that the loving soul by itself, through its love, may know for itself him who is incomparably more than sufficient to fill all souls that exist" (W 63).¹¹

The paradoxical nature of this Christian mystagogy is that God can only be known by unknowing, i. e. not by the *via positiva* but only by the *via negativa*.

points, 1 parts, 40 moments, 60 ostents, 22,560 atoms" (H 186).

10 "Alle tyme that is gowen to thee, it schal be askid of thee how thou haste dispended it. And skilful thing it is that thou gewer accompte of it; for it is neither lenger ne shorter, *bot even according to one only steryng that is withinne the principal worthing might of thi soul, the wiche is thi wille*" (H 18).

11 "[...] alle reasonable creatures, aungel and man, hath in hem, lichone by hem-self, o principal worching might, the wiche is clepid a knowable might, and another principal worching might, the wiche is clepid a lovyng might: of the wiche two

The real knowledge of God is a work of grace. Its ultimate source is God and is similar to fire touching a piece of coal which responds with a spark to the fire. The love of God is fire, the human soul is a piece of coal and the spark is the stirring that responds to the fire of divine love. "It is always a sudden impulse (*a sodelyn steryng*) and comes without warning, springing up to God like some spark from the fire" (W 65).¹² The author comforts the reader not to be disappointed if he relapses into thoughts again as this is the working of the corrupt flesh. However, the "*sodeyn steryng*" will rise again, provided this is the work of the "*devoute and meek blinde steryng of love*" and not of the proud "*ymaginatif wite*" (H 22).

God cannot be the subject of intellectual inquiry, he can never be approached by the speculative mind but only by blind love: "he may well be loved, but not thought. By love he can be caught and held, but by thinking never" (W 68).¹³ Though thinking might otherwise be useful in the work of contemplation "it must be put down and covered with a cloud of forgetting. And you are to step over it with a devout and kindling love (*a devoute and a plesyng steryng of love*), and try to penetrate the darkness above you. Strike that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love [...]" (W 68).¹⁴

Much of this meditative work is concerned with the distinction between the lower degree of *vita activa*, represented by Martha in the gospels, and the higher degree of *vita contemplativa*, represented by Mary who had chosen "the better part" and which should be never taken from her. Martha had to be warned that "one thing is necessary" (Luke 10:42) – but what is that "one thing", the author asks: "Surely that God is loved and praised for himself alone, above all else that a man can do, physically or spiritually [...]. For that perfect outreaching of love (*parfyte steryng of love*)

mights, to the first, the wiche is a knowyng might, God, That is the maker of hem, is evermore incomprehensible; and to the second, the wiche is the lovyng myght, in lichone diversly He is al comprehensible at the fulle, insomoch that o lovyng soule only in itself, by vertewe of love, schuld comprehende in it Hyrn that is sufficient at the fulle – and mochel more, withoute comparison – to fille alle the soules and aungelles that ever may be" (H 18–19).

12 "For yf it be trewlich conceived, it is bot a sodelyn steryng, and as it were unavisid, speedly springing unto God as sparke fro the cole" (H 65).

13 "For whi He may wel be loved, bot not thought. By love may He be getyn and holden; bot bi thought neither" (H 25).

14 "And thou schalt step aboven it stalworthly, bot listely, with a devoute and a plesyng steryng of love, and fonde for to peese that darknes aboven thee. And smyte upon that thicke cloude of unknowyng with a scharp darte of longing love" (H 26).

which begins here on earth is the same as that which shall last eternally in the blessedness of heaven; it is all one" (W 87).¹⁵

For the author such things as "spiritual (*geistly*) meditation," awareness of one's wretched state, "sorrow," "contrition" or even a "consideration of Christ's passion" belong only to the higher part of active life which coincides with the lower part of contemplative life, "but the higher part of contemplation [...] is wholly caught up in darkness, and in this cloud of unknowing, with an outreaching love (*with a lovynge steryng*) and a blind groping for the naked being of God, himself and him only" (W 72).¹⁶

It cannot be emphasised enough that the "stirring of love" is never man's work, but is always the work of God. "Obviously it is not in the devout and urgent love (*devoute steryng of love*) that is continually springing up in his will; an urge produced not automatically but by the hand of the Almighty God [...] the urgent movement of love (*the steryng of love*) – is wholly God's work" (W 94).¹⁷

However, there are not only divine but also devilish, demonic stirrings. Chapter eleven is entitled: "Each thought and impulse must be evaluated, and recklessness in venial sin avoided" (W 53).¹⁸ The author is straightforward in declaring what to do if one notices the first stirring of sin in oneself: "I want you to weigh up carefully every such thought and impulse (*iche a steryng*) and to work hard at destroying it as soon as it makes appearance (*to distroie the first steryng*) with its opportunity for you to sin" (W 76).¹⁹

The author contrasts the two ways of stirrings: he shows that human beings may try to oppress their sins: however, fasting, sleeping on boards,

15 "Sekirly that God be loved and preysid by Himself, aboven alle other besines, bodily or goostly, that man may do ... For whi that parfite steryng of love that byginneþ here is even of noubre with that that schal last withouten ende in the blis of heven; for al is bot one" (H 52).

16 "Bot the higher partye of contemplacion (as it may be had here) hongeth al holy in this derkes and in this cloude of unknowynge, with a lovynge steryng and a blinde be-holdynge unto the nakid beyng of God Himself only" (H 32).

17 "Sekirly not in that devoute steryng of love that is conrynely wrought in his wille, not by himself bot by the hande of Almighty God ... the steryng of love – that is the werk of only God" (H 61).

18 "That a man schuld charge iche thought and iche stering after that it is, and al-weis eschewe rechelesnes in venial synne" (H 37).

19 Again, in the modern version the translator misses the emphasis on the double occurrence of the word "stirring" in the original text: "I woude that thou charge-dist iche a thought, and iche a steryng after that it is, and for I woude that thou travailedist besily to distroie the first steryng and thought of thees things that thou maist thus synne inne" (H 38).

plucking out their eyes, or amputating their limbs will not help: "The urge and impulse of sin (*steryng and rising of synne*) would still be with you" (W 77).²⁰ Moreover, even if one is weeping for one's sins or for the sufferings of Christ, or even if one is meditating on heaven, these will not erase sin. It is only the other stirring "the blind outreaching of love" (*this blinde steryng of love*) which "destroys the ground and root of sin" (W 77).²¹

The author seems to be aware of what modern psychology has discovered: forgetting is healing as divine love is therapeutic and instead of a rigorous self-examination or sin-exploration, one should let oneself be covered by the "cloud of unknowing". This idea is especially suggestive in the thirty-first chapter, whose title itself is also significant: "How the beginner should deal with his thoughts and sinful impulses (*sterynges of synne*)" (W 54).²² "If memories of past actions keep coming between you and God, or any new thought or sinful impulse (*steryng of any synne outhert*), you are resolutely to step over them, because of your deep love for God you must trample them underfoot (*step aboven it with a fervent steryng of love*). Try to cover them with the thick cloud of forgetting, as though they have never been committed" (W 90).²³

We could go on quoting further examples of how the author spiritually exhorts the reader "yif God stire thee" (H 77), "yif thou be strid for to preie" (H 99), "lift up thin hert with a blynde steryng of love" (H 81), "lene listely to this meek steryng of love in thin herte" (H 92) and so on.

Last but not least, in *The Cloud of Unknowing* it is admitted that "stirring" has to do with the overall purpose and the subject of the whole book. In chapter fifty-nine, the author explicitly says that the work of this book is called "a moving" (W 133), "the werke of this book be cleid a steryng" (H 103).

The closing, seventy-fifth chapter begins with a careful but deliberate warning of the reader that he might have felt stirred and moved by this book but the pleasant sensation is not yet the real stirring of God's grace:

20 "Yif wil steryng and rising of synne be in thee" (H 38–9).

21 "this blinde steryng of love ... distroieþ not only the grounde and the rote of synne" (H 39).

22 "How a man schuld have hym in beginning of this werk agens alle thoughtes and sterynges of synne" (H 7).

23 "yif it so be that thi fordone specyral dedes wil alweis prees in thi mynde bitwix thee and thi God, or any newe thought or steryng of any synne outhert, thou schalt stalworthly step aboven it with a fervent steryng of love, and tred hem down under thi fete. And fonde to cover hem with a thicke cloude of forgetting, as thei never had ben don in this liif of thee, ne of other man outhert" (H 67).

"Not all those who read this book, or hear it read or spoken of, and as a result think it is a good and pleasant thing, are therefore called by God to engage in this work because of the pleasant sensation (*only for this lyknyng steryng that thei fele in the tyme of this re-dyng*) they get when they read it! The urge (*this steryng*) might well spring from a natural curiosity rather than from a call of grace" (W 150).²⁴

Real stirring points beyond any human intention however noble it may be. Real stirring is not human work, it always comes from above, it is the work of grace.

III. Tynedale's Stirrings

The 16th-century Bible translator William Tynedale (c. 1494–1536) was a key-figure of the first generation of the English Reformation. He has rightly been considered a maker of the English language, someone whose vocabulary (as some eighty-five per cent of Tynedale's translation went into the 1611 *King James Bible*, the Authorized Version) influenced more people than even Shakespeare's. He coined words such as "atonement", "mercy-seat", "scape-goat", and in the age of word-processors one is especially struck by his use of terms such as "the process of the text". David Daniell has pointed out that Tynedale avoided Latinisms, Frenchisms, and preferred Saxon words and the common Gloucestershire speech of his upbringing ("what one might call the koine of Gloucester for the koine of the New Testament").²⁵

True, the conjecturing of something like "Tynedale and the mystical tradition" is most probably not only an arbitrary association but even an oxymoron. In his interpretation of the Scriptures, Tynedale rejected medieval allegory and the mystical sense, saying those who practice it "leave the clear light and walk in the mist".²⁶ Are we not, in Tynedale's phrase, arbitrarily "juggling" when we try to connect the language of *The Cloud of Unknowing* with the language of the reformer who so vehemently rejects ideas of the mystical sense or the mystical body of Christ? It is true that in his 1526 *New Testament*, Tynedale seems to prefer using the words "secret" for the

Greek *mysterion*, especially when it is in the plural sense,²⁷ or sometimes even in the singular sense.²⁸ All these are reconverted into "mysteries" in the *King James Version* but in most cases he does use "mystery" also several times.²⁹ Moreover, in his prose-works he does speak about the "mysteries of Christ",³⁰ and the "mysteries or secrets of Christ".³¹ Therefore, we cannot deny the existence of a form of spirituality in Tynedale though this spirituality is, of course, different from the spirituality of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

Spirituality has to do with experience and Tynedale uses a graphic image of domestic experience to make clear what he means by "feeling faith", a necessary concomitant of spirituality versus "historical faith" which, unlike More, Tynedale considers redundant. Historical faith is the teaching of the church that is communicated without experience. You can learn, for example, that fire is cold when you are taught so. However, if you put a finger into the fire, you will feel it. "Feeling faith" has to do with experience.³² This image of "feeling" takes us back to "stirring". First we are going to turn to Tynedale's 1526 *New Testament* to see how he renders various Greek words with the English word "stir". After that, we shall turn to his conspicuously frequent use of "stirring" in his prose works.

It seems to be helpful to put Tynedale into the context of some other translations. I have chosen the New Testament section of the *King James Bible* of 1611 where I found twelve occurrences of "stir": three times as a verb in the present tense ("stir"), six times as a verb in the past tense ("stirred"), twice as a noun ("stir") and once as a verb in the present tense but in the archaic form ("stirreth"). In the following table I have indicated the words in seven rubrics: the original Greek, Latin, Luther's translation, Tynedale's 1526 translation, the 1560 Geneva Bible, the 1611 King James Bible, and the 1952 Revised Standard Version. I have indicated whether Tynedale uses the word as a verb (V) or a noun (N), whether in a positive (+) or a negative (-) sense:

27 E. g. Matt 13:11; Luke 8:10; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Cor. 13:2; 1 Cor. 14:2.

28 E. g. Eph. 5:32: "This is a great secreete but I speake bitwene Christ and the congregacion."

29 E. g. Mark 4:11; Rom. 16:15; 1 Cor. 15:51, and in most of the passages of Eph. and throughout Rev.

30 *Mammou* 95.

31 *Obediencie* 222.

32 *Answer* 51; O'Donnell, 48, 33–49, 17.

24 "Alle thoo that redyn or heren the mater of this booke be red or spokin, and in this redyng or hering think it good and lyknyng thing, ben never the rather clepid of God to worche in this werk, only for this lyknyng steryng that thei fele in the tyme of this re-dyng. For paraventure this steryng cometh more of a kyndely couristie of write then of any clepyng of grace" (H 130–1).

25 Daniell, "Gold, Silver, Ivory, Apes and Peacocks", 15.

26 *Answer*, 111.

| | GRNT | VULG | LUTH 1522 | TYND 1526 | GEN 1560 | KJV 1611 | RSV 19526 |
|-------------|--|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| 2 Tim. 1:6 | Avnazw-purei/n | resuscites | erweckest | stere vp V+ | Stirre vp | Stir up | rekindle |
| 2 Pet. 1:13 | Avnazw-purei/n | <i>suscitare</i> | erinnern und zu erwecken | to stere you vp by puttyng you in remembrance V+ | To stirre you vp by putting you in remembrance | to stir you up by putting you in remembrance | To arouse you by way of reminder |
| 2 Pet. 3:1 | diegei,rw | excito vestram | erwecke euren lautern Sinn | I stere vp and warne youre pure myndes V+ | I stirre vp, and warne your pure mindes | I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance | aroused your sincere mind by way of reminder |
| Luke 23:5 | avnasei,ei to.n lao.n | commovet populum | Er hat das Volk erregt | <i>He moveth the people</i> V- | He moueth the people | <i>He stirreth up the people</i> | He stirs up the people |
| Acts 6:12 | suneki,nhsa,n te to.n lao.n | commoverunt plebem | bewegten das Volk | <i>They moved the people</i> V- | moued the people | stirred up the people | Stirred up the people |
| Acts 17:13 | Saleu,ontej kai tara,ssontej tou.j o;clouj | commoventes et turbantes multitudinem | bewegten auch allda das Volk | <i>Moved the people</i> V- | moued the people | <i>stirred up the people</i> | Stirring up and inciting the crowds |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| Acts 21:27 | sune,ceon pa,nta to.n o;clon | concitaverunt omnem populum | erregten das ganze Volk | <i>They moved all the people</i> V- | moued all the people | <i>stirred up all the people</i> | Stirred up all the crowd |
| Acts 13:50 | Parw,trunan ta.j sebome,naj gunai/kaj | concitaverunt religiosas mulieres | erweckten eine Verfolgung | <i>Moved the worshipfull and honorable wemen</i> V- | <i>stirred certaine deuoute and honourable wemen</i> | Stirred up the devout and honourable women | Incited the devout women of high standing |
| Acts 17:16 | Parwxu,neto to. pneu/ma auvtou | incitabatur spiritus eius | ergrimmte sein Geist in ihm | His sprete moved in him V-(+) | his spirite was stirred in him | his spirit was stirred in him | His spirit was provoked within him |
| Acts 14:2 | Evph,geiran | Suscitaverunt | erweckten und entrüsteten | <i>steryd vp</i> and vnquyeted the myndes of the Gentylys V- | stirred vp, and corrupted | Stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected | Stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds |
| Acts 12:18 | ta,racoj ouvk ovli,goj evn toi/j stratiw,taij | turbatio inter milites | kleine Bekümmernis unter den Kriegs-knechten | ther was <i>no lyttell a doo</i> amonge the soudyers N-(+) | was no small trouble among the souldiers | there was <i>no small stir</i> among the soldiers | There was no small stir among |
| Acts 19:23 | ta,racoj | Turbatio | Eine nicht kleine Bewegung | <i>No lyttell a do</i> N-(+) | no small trouble | <i>no small stir</i> | no little stir |

What this comparison shows is that in the twelve occurrences in the *King James Bible*, most of the examples use “stir” in a negative context: in the sense of creating disturbance, turbulence, negative excitement, commotion or turmoil. Stirring in this sense is a synonym of subversion, an aggressive, malevolent undermining of a seemingly peaceful order. Such stirring is presented as an unwanted intervention into an established religious, political or social system. It is interesting to note that with one exception (Acts 14:2) Tyndale prefers to use “move” rather than “stir” to express this rather negative connotation of the word, whereas the *King James Version* uses “stir” throughout.

The first three examples in the table, however, show the positive context of “stirring” in a way reminiscent of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. In 2 Tim. 1:6, the laying of hands is a means of stirring up the gifts of God: the Greek *anadzopuro* (i. e. “stir into flame”, “rekindle”) is used by Tyndale: “Whertfore I warne the *that thou stere vp the gyfte of god* which is in the by the puttrynge on of my hondes”. *The Valgate* says “ut resuscites gratiam Dei” and Luther “daß du erweckest die Gabe Gottes”. Both the *Geneva Bible*, the *King James Version*, and the *Revised Standard Version* preserve Tyndale. Here, Paul reminds Timothy that he has the genuine faith of his mother and grandmother and, moreover, that the spiritual gift was conferred upon him by Paul’s laying his hands on him so that the faith should once again be stirred up, rekindled (*anadzopure*), enflamed, “waken up” (Luther), set into motion, put into practice. “Stirring” has here all the connotations of religious affection: a gift coming from above, twisting the soul’s original disposition and converting all the energy into action.

In the second and third examples taken from the second epistle of Peter, the Greek *diegero* (“awake”, “waking up”) is associated with remembrance. The notion is that one can be awakened by remembering (2 Pet. 1:13), as Luther suggests: “euch zu erinneren und zu erwecken”. Tyndale says “Notwithstodunge I thynke that mete (as longe as I am in this tabernacle) to stere you vp by puttrynge you in remembrance”. The same is said in the *Geneva Version* and *The King James Bible*.

2 Pet. 3:1 connotes a third motif: stirring up and remembering is associated with *diainoia* i. e. “pure thinking”. Luther also says: “ich euch erinnern und erwecke euren lauten Sinn”. Tyndale and the *Geneva Bible* have “This is the seconde pistle that I now wryte vnto you beloved wherwith I stere vp and warne youre pure myndes”, while, surprisingly, *The King James Version* omits the “warning”: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance”. Just as in *The*

Cloud of Unknowing, for Paul it is also the grace of God that makes the human being remember, it is this stirring, often disturbing, prevent grace that purifies the mind of the sinner and the apostle is but an instrument of God.

Turning to Tyndale’s prose-works, we may observe that stirring, once again, occurs both in negative and positive contexts. Let us first consider the negative ones.

According to Tyndale natural (i. e. unspiritual) man cannot consent to the law as it “*provoketh him and stirreth him to rail on God, and to blasphem him as a cruel tyrant*”.³³ In his *Obedience of the Christian Man* (1528), written immediately after the horrible aftermath of the Peasants’ Revolt, Tyndale charges those members of the clergy who claimed that the reformers had propagated disobedience to their landlords and those who had attributed insurrection and social upheaval to God’s word:

[...] therefore have I made this litte treatise that followeth, containing all obedience that is of God; in which, whosever readeth it, shall easily perceive, not the contrary only, and that they lie, but also the very cause of such blasphemy, and what stirreth them so furiously to rage and to belie the truth. (*Obedience* 163)

In Tyndale’s view there are times when “the hypocrites themselves stirred up such a sword, to maintain their falsehood”.³⁴ Moreover, he pastorally exhorts his reader that “if the faith of Christ and law of God [...] be written in thine heart [...] then will Satan stir up his members against thee, and thou shalt be persecuted on every side” (Matt. 12).

A dynamism of stirring is also at work in his Lutheran dialectics of the law and the Gospel. On asking what the purpose of the law is, Tyndale answers:

Whertfore serwerth the law then, if it giveth us no power to do the law? Paul answereth them, that it was given to utter sin only, and to make it appear: as a corrosive is laid unto an old sore, not to heal it, but to stir it up, and make the disease alive; that a man might feel in what jeopardy

³³ *Pathway* 18. All quotations from Tyndale’s prose works are from the Parker Society edition. See bibliography.

³⁴ 1 John 2:20.

he is, and how nigh death, and not aware; and to make a way unto the healing plaster. (Prologues to the Bible, 1534, 416)

Tyndale uses “stirring” in the sense of social upheaval and turmoil in the *Practice of Prelates*. He charges the hypocrites who claim that it was Martin Luther who had stirred up the people in Germany. Here is the rhetoric of a passionate polemicist:

Ye will ask me, Who stirred them up then? I ask you, Who stirred up the commons of the Jews to resist the emperor, after that the scribes and Pharisees, with the elders of the people, had slain Christ and his apostles? Verily, the wrath of God. And even so here, the wrath of God stirred them up, partly to destroy the enemies and persecutors of the truth [...] (Practice of Prelates, 244)

Let us now turn to the positive connotations of “stirring” in Tyndale’s prose. Of course, it is the word of God that stirs up faith in the human heart. God stirs up his prophets such as Moses or John the Baptist to proclaim the word: “And out of those unbelievers God stirred up Moses, and brought them unto the faith right again” (*Answer* 43). “Now therefore, when they ask us how we know it is the scripture of God; ask them how John Baptist knew, and other prophets, which God stirred up in all such times as the scripture was in like captivity under hypocrites?” (*Answer* 49).

Tyndale is convinced that the purpose of proclaiming the word is to stir up faith: “And then the gospel, and glad tidings of forgiveness of sins, was preached to stir up our faith” (1 John 2:20). However, stirring has a double effect: faith is stirred up when the gospel is being proclaimed, but at the same moment persecution is also stirred up: “True preaching is a salting that stirreth up persecution” (Matt. 32).

In his *Answer to Sir Thomas More* Tyndale exhorts the reader to read the Scriptures so as to be stirred by it: “thou read both the epistles of Paul to Timothy, that thou mayest see how diligently [...] Paul writeth unto Timothy, to instruct him, to teach him, to exhort, to courage him, to stir him up to be wise, sober, diligent [...]” (*Answer* 19).

Last but not least, not only the word that is proclaimed but also the sacraments are meant to stir up faith. In his polemics with More, Tyndale makes it clear that the signs are not useful by themselves but are effective only through faith: “For our sacraments were once but signs; partly of what we should believe, to stir us up unto faith; and partly what we should do, to

stir us up to do the law of God; and were not works to justify” (*Answer* 48). Tyndale is even more radical at the end of his *Answer*:

The shewing, breaking, and eating of the host, the shewing and drinking of the cup of Christ’s blood, and the words, and the consecration, help us not a pin, nor are God’s service; save only in that they stir up our repenting faith, to call to mind the death and passion of Christ for our sins. (*Answer* 117)

In his *A Treatise on the Sacraments* he recapitulates his ideas: “For it is the covenant only, and not the sign, that saveth us; though the sign be commanded to be put on at due time, to stir up faith of the covenant that saveth us” (350), concluding that “God gave them divers other signs, both to stir up faith in the promise made them, and also to keep the benefit of the mercy of God in mind [...]” (352).

There was a time when *The Supper of the Lord* was also attributed to Tyndale. We shall close our examples of “stirring” with a well-known biblical passage quoted by the author of this treatise: “he shall have life everlasting, and I shall stir him up in the last day”.³⁵

IV. (In lieu of a) Conclusion

The examples presented above speak for themselves. Therefore, instead of offering some general but evident remarks concerning the well-known difference between, what might be termed the “love-oriented” spirituality of the 14th century, and the “Scripture-oriented” spirituality of the Reformation, let us juxtapose two passages from *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Obedience of the Christian Man* by William Tyndale. In both cases these passages have to do with the nature of Christian love. It is no wonder that these authors, having understood the meaning of “stirring”, were able to interpret and radiate the unique character of Christian love:

³⁵ *Supper* 224. John 6:39. All the 16th-century translations use “raise”. Luther uses “aufwecken”.

Chapter 24. *The Cloud of Unknowing*
c. 1370

"Of Prayer" *The Obedience of a Christian Man* 1528

"For charity is nothing else than loving God for himself, above all created things, and loving men in God just as we love ourselves. It is quite right that in contemplation God should be loved for himself alone above all created things, for as we have said already, this work is fundamentally a naked intent, none other than a single-minded intention of our spirit directed to God himself alone.

I call it 'single-minded' because in this matter the perfect apprentice asks neither to be spared pain, nor to be generously rewarded, nor indeed anything but God himself. So that he cares not whether he be grieved or glad, but only that the will of him whom he loves be fulfilled. And so it is that God perfectly loved for himself, and above all his creation. For in this work a contemplative will not permit the least thought of the holiest thing to share his attention. As he does this, he fulfils the second, lower branch of charity (which is love to his fellow Christian) truly and perfectly, as you can prove. For the perfect contemplative holds no man as such in special regard, be he kinsman, stranger, friend, or foe. For all men alike are his brothers, and none strangers. He considers all men his friends, and none his foes. To such an extent that even those who hurt

"Christ is the cause why I love thee, why I am ready to do the uttermost of my power for thee, and why I pray for thee. And as long as the cause abideth, so long lasteth the effect: even as it is always day so long as the sun shineth. Do therefore the worst thou canst unto me, take away my goods, take away my good name; yet as long as Christ remaineth in my heart, so long I love thee not a whit the less, and so long art thou as dear unto me as mine own soul, and so long am I ready to do thee good for thine evil, and so long I pray for thee with all my heart: for Christ desireth it of me, and hath deserved it of me. Thine unkindness compared unto his kindness is nothing at all; yea, it is swallowed up as a little smoke of a mighty wind, and is no more seen or thought upon. Moreover that evil which didst to me, I receive not of thy hand, but of the hand of God, and as God's scourge to teach me patience, and to nurture me: and therefore have no cause to be angry with thee, more than a child hath to be angry with his father's rod; or a sick man with a sour or bitter medicine that healeth him, or a prisoner with his fetters, or he that is punished lawfully with the officer that punisheth him. Thus is Christ all, and the whole cause why I love thee. And to all can nought be added. Therefore cannot a little money make me love thee better, or more bound to pray for

and injure him he reckons to be real and special friends and he is moved (*he is stirred*) to wish for them as much good as he would wish for his very dearest friend" (W 92).³⁶

thee, nor make God's commandment greater. Last of all, if I be in Christ, then 'the love of Christ compelleth me [...] Thus is God and Christ all in all; good and bad receive I of God. Them that are good I love, because they are in Christ; and the evil, to bring them to Christ. When any man doth well, I rejoice that God is honoured; and when any man doth evil, I sorrow because that God is dishonoured. Finally, inasmuch as God hath created all, and Christ bought all with his blood, therefore ought all to seek God and Christ in all, and else nothing (298-99)".

36 "For charité is not ellis to bemene to thin understondyng bot love of God for Him-self aboven alle creatures, and of man for God even with thiself. And that in this werke God is lovyd for Hymself and aboven alle creatures it semith ryght wel. For, as it is seide before, that the substance of this werke is not elles bot a nakid entente directe unto God for Hymself. A nakid entente I clepe it, for whi in this werke a pa-fite prentis askith neither relesing of peyne, ne encresing of mede, ne (shortly tosey) nought bot Hymself, insomoch that nouthur he rechith ne lokith after whetherthat he be in peyne or in blisse, elles that His wille be fulfyllyd that he loveth. And thus it semith that in this werke God is partlyely loved for Hymself, and that aboven alle creatures. For in this werke a parfite worcher may not suffre the mynde of the holiest creature that ever God maad comoun with hym. And that in this the second and the lower branche of charité unto thine even Cristen is verreyly and partlyely fulfillid, it semith by the profé. For whi in this werke a parfite worcher hath no special beholdyng unto any man by himself, whether thathe be sib or fremmyd, freende or fo. For alle men think bym illiche sib unto bym, and no man fremmid. Alle men him think ben his freendes, and none his foen; insomochel that hym think alle thoo that pyen him, and done hym disese in this liif, thei ben his ful and his specyal freendes, and hym thinketh that he is sterid to wilne hem as moche good as he wolde to the homlieste freende that he hath" (H 58-59).

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