

RUSSELL SANDERS

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HISTORICAL PERSECUTION OF BELIEVERS – LESSON 15

WILLIAM TYNDALE

William Tyndale of England was an accomplished scholar and good linguist, well accomplished in Hebrew and Greek. He was a true student of the scriptures who for years came against the false doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). He was personally acquainted with Martin Luther and other key men of the brand-new Protestant Reformation.

He often debated theology with the clergy and bishops, pointing out their errors according to scripture. He felt that the only sure way to correct the false teachings of the RCC, was to get the scriptures into the hands of common people in their own language so they could read it for themselves. This irritated clergy who felt that the common people should never have it to read claiming that they could never understand it. It would cause them to become heretics by falsely interpreting what scripture teaches.

There were at this time some parts of the Bible translated into various local languages across Europe. This had been inspired by the work in the late 1300's by John Wycliffe. A few parts of scripture were even in English, usually translated from Latin, German (Luther's work) or other pieces. None had been translated from the Hebrew or Greek manuscripts. In fact, the Greek had not even been available until after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottoman Empire (Muslims).

Tyndale labored for several years to get the entire New Testament translated into English from the original Greek texts. He then translated the Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy) from the Hebrew. Religious leaders would buy all the copies and burn them. Tyndale would take the money from the sales and print even greater numbers. Other sympathetic scholars assisted in translating some other parts of the Old Testament until it was all completed.

Tyndale's New Testament was completed in 1525 and the Pentateuch in 1530. The full Bible was completed in 1537, one year after his martyrdom, and published as the Matthew Bible.

Among Tyndale's other publications were The Obedience of a Christian Man in 1528 which led Henry VIII to break away from the RCC to form the Church of England under his authority as the head of that Protestant Church.

Tyndale was the first to translate directly from Hebrew and Greek. It was used in subsequent English translations such as the Great Bible and the Bishops Bible. When the King James Bible was published in 1611 it is estimated that Tyndale's words comprised 83% of the KJV New Testament and 76% of the Old Testament. He was the first to use Jehovah as God's name.

We owe the bulk of the English bible versions to the work of William Tyndale who was hung, then burned in 1536 by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.