

It first began in an old school in England where a young man named William Tyndale was studying. He was a scholar skilled in the Hebrew and Greek languages. It was said of him that whichever of seven languages he spoke, the hearer would suppose him to be speaking in his native tongue. After studying at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge between the years 1510 and 1521, and becoming convinced that most of the clergy knew very little of the Bible, indeed no more than was quoted in their Missal (Mass Book), he resolved to give the nation a Bible that even the simplest person could understand.

One day some students were talking about all this new interest in the Bible, and one man said very positively: "The Bible is not necessary. It's all foolishness to talk about translating it into English for the people to read. All they need is the word of the pope. We had better be without God's laws, than the pope's laws!" William Tyndale rose from his chair, and striking his clenched fist on the table, shouted, "I defy the pope and all his laws; and, if God spare us, I will one day make the boy that drives the plow in England to know more of the Scriptures than the pope does!" It was no idle boast. William Tyndale went right to work to produce an English Bible that everyone could read. A rich merchant, Humphrey Mummuth, gave him his home to work in, and day and night he worked, hoping some publisher would print it when he had it ready.

But he soon discovered the Roman Catholic Church would never permit an English translation (or in fact any other translation) to be made and printed in England. Consequently he left and went to Hamburg, Germany. And he could never be sure his life was safe, for the English bishops and priests were so angry with him for going on with his work that they hired spies to hinder him, to keep him from making friends, and to prevent his ever getting his Bible printed.

By 1525, though, he had completed translating the New Testament. There was a printing press at Cologne, where he found printers ready to go to work on his first English Bible. He tried to keep his work a secret for he knew the English bishops would arrest him. One day a warning came to him to flee for his life. A priest had found out from a drunken printer that his English Bible was nearly off the press,

and had come to arrest him. He snatched his precious sheets of paper, and fled from the town, going to Worms, where Martin Luther lived.

There the first English New Testaments were published. The first edition was 6000 copies. In the ten years following, seven editions appeared. Tyndale accomplished this in the face of fierce opposition and persecution. But they had to be moved into England. In barrels all covered with cloth and articles for sale, in bales that looked like cloth, in sacks of flour, in every way that could be found to hide them, they were sent across to England. Did they get across? They did, in large numbers. And the Catholic Church committed to the flames every copy it could find. Every seaport was carefully watched, and many a package of Bibles was found and burned by the bishops. But the Bibles kept coming; they could not stop them.

Finally the bishop of London had a bright idea. He decided he would buy all the copies that were printed through a merchant in Germany. There would then be no more Bibles to come across the water. He didn't know that the merchant he asked to do this was a friend of William Tyndale. This friend thought he saw a way to help Tyndale. He knew at that time that Tyndale needed money more than anything else to pay his printers for the work they had done, and to start a new edition. So he said, "My lord, I will be glad to attend this matter. But it will take money to do it, for the men who have these books in Germany hold them at a high price." "My dear Sir," said the bishop, "do your best to get them for me, all of them. I will gladly pay you whatever they ask, for I intend to burn them all and end this matter."

What a delight it was to the merchant! He went to Tyndale, bought his books at a good price, and brought them over to England, while Tyndale went right to work on a new printing, for he now had plenty of money. The poor bishop thought when he burned all these Bibles, there would never be another English Bible. Imagine how he felt when he learned that more Bibles than ever before were coming into England. So many came that the officers simply could not stop them. "How can this be?" a man was asked who had been arrested for helping Tyndale. "I will tell you truly, my lord," the man replied, "Tis

yourself that gave us the money to print the Bibles!"

The bishop of London was so angry that he stirred up all England against Tyndale. The great preachers began to preach about it, many of them thinking it might not do well to have the Bible in the language of the people. But a few brave and wise men said it was a noble venture and would prove to be a great service for England. At last Tyndale won, for the Bible was everywhere. One old bishop said sadly, "It passeth my power, or that of any man, to hinder it now!"

So the Bible came to England, and from England to all the world. But the man who gave it to the world never knew what a glorious victory he had won. Away in a little German town, afraid to walk in the street for fear some spy of the English bishops should see him, working night and day, he longed for his home in England. He loved England better than life. His enemies sent men to make him believe they were his friends, and persuade him to come home. But he knew what they wanted. He knew, once in England, they would arrest him and kill him.

Not all his enemies were in England, however. There was a man named Henry Philips, whom he believed to be loyal and true. But Philips was a spy sent by the pope to trap Tyndale. One night as Tyndale walked out from his home to enjoy the evening air, a band of men set upon him, and carried him away to a dark prison. There was no trial. They knew they were going to kill him. He knew it too. Gladly he laid down his life, for he had accomplished the work God had given him to do. The Bible was in England in the language all the people could read.

At last, after much reasoning, when no reason would serve, although he deserved no death, he was condemned by virtue of the emperor's decree. Brought forth to the place of execution, he was tied to the stake, strangled by the hangman, and afterward consumed with fire, at the town of Filford, October 6, 1536, crying at the stake with a fervent zeal and a loud voice, "Lord! open the King of England's eyes."

Such was the power of his doctrine, and the sincerity of his life, that during the time of his imprisonment (which endured a year and a half), his keeper was converted to

Christ, the keeper's daughter, and others of his household.

As touching his translation of the New Testament, because his enemies criticized it so much, pretending it to be full of heresies, he wrote to John Frith, as follows, "I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience, nor would do this day, if all that was in earth, whether it be honor, pleasure, or riches, might be given me."

England owes to William Tyndale a very great debt of gratitude. He will ever remain one of the worthiest of her sons. □

"I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"
(2 Timothy 2:9,10)

ROMANUS & THE CHILD

Pitiless Galerius with his grand prefect Asclepiades invaded the city of Antioch, intending by force of arms to drive all Christians to renounce utterly their pure religion. The Christians were at that time congregated together, to whom one Romanus hastily ran, declaring that the wolves were at hand which would devour the Christian flock; "But fear not," said he, "neither let this imminent peril disturb you, my brethren." Brought was it to pass, by the great grace of God working in Romanus, that old men and matrons, fathers and mothers, young men and maidens, were all of one will and mind, most ready to shed their blood in defense of their Christian profession.

Word was brought unto the prefect, that the band of armed soldiers was not able to wrest the staff of faith out of the hand of the congregation, and all by reason that Romanus so mightily did encourage them, that they did willingly offer their naked throats, wishing gloriously to die for the name of their Christ. "Seek out that rebel," quoth the prefect, "and bring him to me, that he may answer for the whole sect." Apprehended he was, and bound as a sheep appointed to the slaughterhouse, was presented to the em-

WILLIAM TYNDALE

About 100 years before Columbus sailed the seas over to the New World, there was a young boy named John Gooseflesh, living in the town of Mentz. His mother helped to make a living for the family by preparing parchment for the priests to write on. John liked very much to carve and cut with his knife. One day he was sitting beside the fire watching a pot of purple dye that his mother was heating, and amusing himself by carving and cutting his name in wood. Suddenly one of the pieces of wood, with a letter cut on it, fell into the dye pot. He snatched at it, caught it, but dropped it again, this time onto a piece of parchment lying nearby. It fell upside down, and when he picked it up, there, on the parchment, was the letter “h” clearly printed.

Years went by. The boy of Mentz did not forget what happened that day by the fire in his old home. It had given him an idea that some way could be found to make books more easily than to copy them all out by hand, as had always been done. So he cut little wooden blocks and dipped them in dye, setting them this way and that, making forms for them to be placed in, and he finally had the first printing press the world had ever seen. You will find his name in every history ever written—John Gutenberg, it’s German.

That happened in 1454. That very same year, a great battle was fought in Constantinople between the Christians and the Turks; and the Christians were driven out of the city, at that time the greatest city in the world, where most of the schools of learning were located. Greek scholars came to live in all parts of Europe. All at once these wise men became very much interested in the Greek New Testament and began to read it instead of the old Latin one they had always read. They made many people think about how wonderful it would be to have the Bible in the language of the people, so everyone could read it. With the new study of the language and the new printing press, things began to happen.

peror, who, with wrathful countenance beholding him, said: “What! art thou the author of this sedition? Art thou the cause why so many shall lose their lives? By the gods I swear thou shalt smart for it, and first in thy flesh shalt thou suffer the pains whereunto thou hast encouraged the hearts of thy fellows.”

Romanus answered, “Thy sentence, O prefect, I joyfully embrace; I refuse not to be sacrificed for my brethren, and that by as cruel a means as thou mayest invent: and whereas thy soldiers were repelled from the Christian congregation, that so happened, because it lay not in idolaters and worshippers of devils, to enter into the holy house of God, and to pollute the place of true prayer.”

Then Asclepiades, wholly inflamed with this stout answer, commanded him to be trussed up, and his bowels drawn out. The executioners themselves more pitiful at heart than the prefect, said, “Not so, sir, this man is of noble parentage; unlawful it is to put a nobleman to so un noble a death.” “Scourge him then with whips,” quoth the prefect, “with knaps of lead at the ends.” Instead of tears, sighs, and groans, Romanus sang psalms all the time of his whipping, requiring them not to favour him for nobility’s sake. “Not the blood of my progenitors,” said he, “but Christian profession maketh me noble.” The wholesome words of the martyr were as oil to the fire of the prefect’s fury. The more the martyr spake, the madder was he, inso-much that he commanded the martyr’s sides to be lanced with knives, until the white of the bones appeared.

The second time Romanus preached the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ His well-beloved Son, and eternal life through faith in His blood, Asclepiades commanded the tormentors to strike Romanus on the mouth, that his teeth being stricken out, his pronunciation at leastwise might be impaired. The commandment was obeyed, his face buffeted, his eyelids torn with their nails, his cheeks scotched with knives; the skin of his beard was plucked by little and little from the flesh; finally, his seemly face was wholly defaced. The meek martyr said, “I thank thee, O prefect, that thou hast opened unto me many mouths, whereby I may preach my Lord and Saviour Christ. Look; how many wounds I have, so many mouths I have lauding and

praising God.” The prefect astonished with this singular constancy, commanded them to cease from the tortures. He threateneth cruel fire, he revileth the noble martyr, he blasphemeth God, saying, “Thy crucified Christ is but a yesterday’s God; the gods of the Gentiles are of most antiquity.”

Here again Romanus, taking good occasion, made a long oration of the eternity of Christ, of His human nature, of the death and satisfaction of Christ for all mankind. Which done, he said, “Give me a child, O prefect, but seven years of age, which age is free from malice and other vices wherewith riper age is commonly infected, and thou shalt hear what he will say.” His request was granted.

A little boy was called out of the multitude, and set before him. “Tell me, my child,” quoth the martyr, “whether thou think it reason that we should worship one Christ, and in Christ one Father, or else that we worship many gods?” Unto whom the lad answered, “That certainly (whatsoever it be) which men affirm to be God, must needs be one; and that which pertains to that one, is unique: and inasmuch as Christ is unique, of necessity Christ must be the true God; for that there be many gods, we children cannot believe.”

The prefect hereat clean amazed, said, “Thou young villain and traitor, where, and of whom learnedst thou this lesson?” “Of my mother,” quoth the child, “with whose milk I sucked in this lesson, that I must believe in Christ.” The mother was called, and she gladly appeared. The prefect commanded the child to be hoisted up and scourged. The pitiful beholders of this pitiless act, could not temper themselves from tears: the joyful and glad mother alone stood by with dry cheeks. It was not long after, the child craved for a draught of cold water: his mother charged him to thirst after the cup that the infants of Bethlehem once drank of, forgetting their mothers milk and paps; she willed him to remember little Isaac, who, beholding the sword wherewith, and the altar whereon, he should be sacrificed, willingly proffered his tender neck to the dint of his father’s sword.

Whilst this council was in giving, the butcherly tormentor plucked the skin from the crown of his head, hair and all. The mother cried, “Suffer, my child! anon thou shalt pass to Him that will adorn thy naked

head with a crown of eternal glory.” The mother counselleth, the child is counselled; the mother encourageth, the lad is encouraged, and receiveth the stripes with a pleasant countenance.

The prefect perceiving the child invincible, and himself vanquished, committeth him to the stinking prison, commanding the tormentors of Romanus to be renewed and increased, as chief author of this evil. Thus was Romanus brought forth again to new stripes, the punishments to be renewed and received again upon his old sores. No longer could the tyrant forbear, but needs he must draw nearer to the sentence of death. “Is it painful to thee,” saith he, “to tarry so long alive? A flaming fire, doubt thou not, shall be prepared for thee by and by, wherein thou and that boy, thy fellow in rebellion, shall be consumed into ashes.”

Romanus and the child were led to execution. When they were come to the place, the tormentors required the child of the mother, for she had taken it up in her arms; and she, only kissing it, delivered her son. “Farewell,” she said, “my sweet babe; and when thou hast entered the kingdom of Christ, there in thy blest estate, remember thy mother.” And as the hangman applied the sword to the child’s neck, she sang on this manner:

*“All laud and praise with heart and voice,
O Lord, we yield to thee:
To whom the death of this thy saint,
We know most dear to be.”*

The innocent’s head being cut off, the mother wrapped it up in her garment, and laid it on her breast. On the other side a mighty fire was made, whereinto Romanus was cast, whereupon a great storm arose and quenched the fire. The prefect at length being confounded with the fortitude and courage of the martyr, straitly commanded him to be brought back into the prison, and there to be strangled. □

*“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,
and by the word of their testimony; and
they loved not their lives unto the death”
(Rev 12:11)*

[Romanus & the Child was taken from Foxe’s Book of Martyrs]