

# William Tyndale



**GOD'S WORD IN OUR  
HEART LANGUAGE**

# Historical Context



- John Wyclif (1330-1384)
  - “Morningstar of the Reformation”
    - ✦ Oxford Professor
    - ✦ Evangelical
  - First full English translation of the Bible
    - ✦ Translated from the Latin Vulgate
    - ✦ Change will come only from the Scriptures in the vernacular

# Historical Context



- Lollards
  - Copied and distributed Wyclif Bibles
- English translations outlawed in 1408
  - “Pernicious error” to read Scripture in English
- Lollards heroic but nearly extinct by 1500
  - 250 Wyclif Bibles (or portions) have survived

# Historical Context



## Three winds of change

- Renaissance
  - Scholars were going to the sources, learning Greek and Hebrew, and studying ancient texts
- Printing Press
  - Johannes Gutenberg invented moveable-type printing in the 1450s
  - Increased literacy and hunger for information

# Historical Context



- **Reformation**
  - Luther posted the 95 Theses in 1517
  - He was excommunicated in 1520
  - Lutheran ideas spread across Europe, especially penetrating the universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge in England



GVLIELMVS

THOMAS MARTYR

OLIV EX

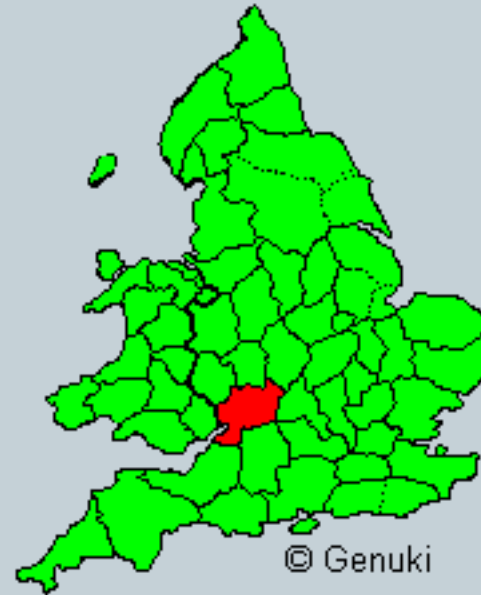
AVLA REGIE

Non est huiusmodi deus qui non sit  
sponte ex se ipso, et non sit  
Socrus

# Early Life



- Born 1493-95 in Gloucestershire near Wales
- Little known of family
  - Yeoman farmers?
  - Admitted to Oxford 1508



# His Early Life and Education



- Completed BA on July 4, 1512
- Completed MA on July 2, 1515
- Possibly went to Cambridge in 1516
  - Influence of Erasmus






# Erasmus



- Greek NT in 1516

I wish they [the Scriptures] were translated into all the languages of all people, that they might be read and known, nor merely by the Scotch and the Irish, but even by the Turks and the Saracens. I wish that the husbandman may sing part of them at his plough, that the weaver may warble them at his shuttle, that the traveler may with their narratives beguile the weariness of the way.



**“In the universities they have ordained that no man shall look on the Scripture until he be nozzled in heathen learning eight or nine years, and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of the Scriptures.”**



# His Calling



- Received teaching position at Little Sodbury Manor, home of Sir John Walsh, in 1522



# His Calling



- Loved by Walsh family
- Regular conversations with traveling clergy
  - Confronted their ignorance and challenged Romanist theology
  - Summoned before Chancellor Bell
    - ✦ “He threatened me grievously, and reviled me, and rated [berated] me as though I had been a dog”
    - ✦ Protected by the Walsh’s

# His Calling



- One ignorant priest:
  - “We were better to be without God’s law than the Pope’s.”
- Tyndale’s response:

“I defy the Pope and all his laws, and if God spare my life ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost.”

# His Calling



- Went to London to get permission from Bishop Tunstall to translate the Bible
  - Tunstall had assisted Erasmus with the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his Greek text
- Printed translations already existed in Spanish, German, Italian, Danish, Polish, Bohemian, and French—but none in English
- Permission politely denied

# His Calling



- Tunstall
  - No books printed without his permission
  - No books imported without his permission
  - He seems to have guessed what Tyndale would do next

# His Work



- Tyndale to the Continent, spring 1524
  - Self-imposed exile
  - Hamburg
  - Visited Luther in Wittenberg
    - ✦ Denied association with Luther
    - ✦ Wanted independence in his work
    - ✦ May have questioned some Lutheran teachings
  - Back to Hamburg
  - Settled in Cologne



# His Work



- Ideally suited for translation work
  - Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek
  - Latin
  - French, Italian, and Spanish
  - German
- Betrayed
  - Betrayed by an Englishman
  - Fled to Worms just ahead of arrest

# His Work



- Completed NT in 1526
  - Printed at Worms
  - Wrote *Prologue* that expresses his philosophy

“I have here translated, my brethren and sisters most dear and tenderly beloved in Christ, the new Testament for your spiritual edifying, consolation, and solace: Exhorting instantly and beseeching those that are better seen in the tongues than I,

# His Work



“and that have higher gifts of grace to interpret the sense of scripture and meaning of the spirit than I, to consider and ponder my labor, and that with the spirit of meekness. And if they perceive in any places that I have not attained the very sense of the tongue, or meaning of the scripture, or have not give the right English word, that they put to their hands to amend it, remembering that so is their duty to do.

# His Work



“For we have not received the gifts of God for ourselves only, or for to hide them, but for to bestow them unto the honoring of God and Christ, and edifying of the congregation, which is the body of Christ.”

- Humble appeal to English scholars

# His Work

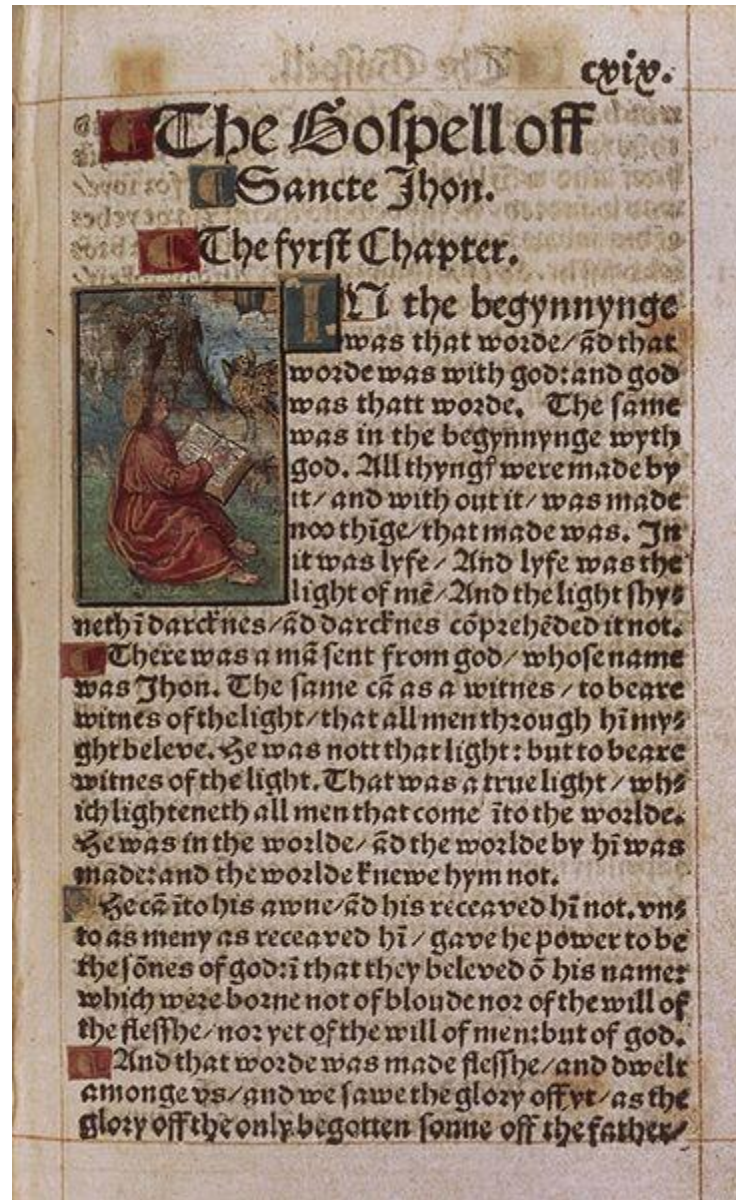


- Smuggled it into England in haysacks (“the hay book”)



- It sold vigorously on the black market in England
  - Three copies have survived to this day

This is the  
first page  
from the  
Gospel of  
John in  
Tyndale's  
NT  
translation  
of 1525-26



# His Work



- Official Response
  - Cardinal Wolsey assembled the bishops
  - Henry VIII issued a ruling

“With deliberate advice of the Cardinal and other reverend fathers of the spirituality determined the said corrupt and untrue translations to be burned with further sharp correction & punishment against the keepers and readers of the same.”

# His Work



- Old tradition (repeated by Foxe)
  - The Bishop had his agents buy up as many copies as possible for a bonfire
  - This financed Tyndale's greatly improved second edition
  - Today, doubted by Tyndale scholars
- Antwerp about 1528



# Expanded Work



- Publications in Antwerp
  - *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528)
    - ✦ Attacks the works-righteousness of the Church
  - *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528)
    - ✦ Argues for submission
      - Of church to Scripture
      - Of individuals to Christ (priesthood of the believer)
      - Of citizens to their King
    - ✦ Introduced to Henry VIII by Anne Boleyn



- Henry VIII liked the book and, ironically, sent agents to find Tyndale and offer him a position at court
- Tyndale recognized
  - That Henry changed his mind often (6 wives!)
  - That he would have to abandon the work of his life

# Expanded Work



- *The Practice of Prelates* (1530)
  - ✦ Attack on the bishops who oppose Scripture
- *Tyndale's Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* (1530)
  - ✦ More became his arch-enemy in England
- *Pentateuch* (1530)
- *Book of Jonah* (1531)
- Joshua through 2 Chronicles (1531)
  - ✦ OT translation was difficult and time-consuming

# Expanded Work



- Preface to Exodus

“If any man ask me, seeing that faith justifieth me why I work? I answer love compelleth me. For as long as my soul feeleth what love God hath shewed me in Christ, I cannot but love God again and his will and commandments and of love work them, nor can they seem hard unto me.”

# Expanded Work



- Traveled constantly to avoid detection
  - “God’s outlaw”
- More condemned Tyndale and sought his arrest
  - “And for heretics, as they be, the clergy doth denounce them; and, as they be well worthy, the temporality doth burn them; and after the fire of Smithfield hell doth receive them, where the wretches burn forever.”

*The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*

# His Work



- *An Exposition upon the V, VI, VII Chapters of Matthew* (Sermon on the Mount) in 1533
- Revised *NT* published in 1534
- Moves into the English House in Antwerp, 1534
- Changes in England
  - More arrested for opposing Henry's divorce
    - ✦ Beheaded in July 1534
  - Henry divorced Catherine and married Anne

# His End



- Henry Phillips
- Phillips found Tyndale in Antwerp and pretended to be a friend
- Ambush on May 21, 1535
  - Orchestrated by More's successor in England, Bishop John Stokesley
  - Apparently, Henry and the government not involved
  - Turned over to imperial authorities

# Vilvorde Castle





# His End



- Imprisoned for 16 months
  - All goods confiscated
  - Friends in Antwerp (Poyntz) and in England (Cromwell) sought his release
  - His character impacted everyone at Vilvorde

# His End



- Foxe reports,

“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) it is said, he converted his keeper, the keeper’s daughter, and others of his household. Also the rest that were with Tyndale conversant in the castle, reported of him that if he were not a good Christian man, they could not tell whom to trust.”

# The End



Tyndale letter discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

“I believe, right worshipful, that you are not unaware of what may be have been determined concerning me. Wherefore I beg your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here through the winter, you will request the commissary to have the kindness to send me, from the goods of mine which he has, a warmer cap;

# The End



“for I suffer greatly from cold in the head, and am afflicted by a perpetual catarrh [symptoms associated with the common cold], which is much increased in this cell; a warmer coat also, for this which I have is very thin; a piece of cloth too to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out; my shirts are also worn out. He has a woollen shirt if he will be good enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth to put on above; he has also the warmer night-caps.

# The End



“And I ask to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. But most of all I beg and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the commisary, that he will kindly permit me to have the Hebrew bible, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may pass the time in study. In return may you obtain what you most desire, so only that it be for the salvation of your soul.

# The End



“But if any other decision has been taken concerning me, to be carried out before winter, I will be patient, abiding the will of God, to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ: whose Spirit (I pray) may direct your heart. Amen.”

W. Tindalus

# His End



- Brief trial
- Execution
  - Strangled
  - Burned at the stake
  - October 6, 1536
  - About 42 years old
- “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.”

# His Legacy



- Henry VIII was strongly opposed to Tyndale and his translation efforts
- Tyndale's assistant, Myles Coverdale, completed the translation of the OT
- Combining it with Tyndale's work, he issued the first complete Bible in modern English in 1535
- Coverdale Bible
- The Great Bible



In 1539 Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell convinced Henry VIII to put a copy of the Great Bible in every church in England. The king did so, not knowing that this Bible was over 80% the work of William Tyndale!



Anonymous-After Holbein the Younger-*Henry VIII*, c.1580-Photo: The Royal Collection(c) 2008, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

# The Great Bible



# His End



- Tyndale's translation was the foundation for
  - The Great Bible (1539)
  - The Geneva Bible (1560)
  - The King James Version (1611)
- Tyndale's legacy
  - Father of the English Bible
  - With Shakespeare, Father of the English Language

# His Words



Anathema

Apostleship

Broken-hearted

Brotherly

Busybody

Castaway

Chastening

Childishness

Excommunicate

Fisherman

Godly

Intercession

Jehovah

Justifier

Long-suffering

Mercy-seat

Mother-in-law

Network

Ourselves

Passover

# His Words



Persecutor

Rose-coloured

Sanctifying

Scapegoat

Sea-shore

Singleness

Sorcerer

Stiff-necked

Stumbling-block

Taskmaster

Two-edged

Unbeliever

Uncircumcision

Ungodliness

Ungodly

Unleavened

Viper

Weakling

Whoremonger

Zealous

# His Renderings



I am the light of the world  
Rise, take up thy bed, and walk  
So then faith cometh by hearing  
For the just shall live by faith  
No room for them in the inn  
Let this cup pass from me  
Take, eat, this is my body  
Blessed are the poor in spirit  
Father glorify thy name

# His Renderings



Christ in you the hope of glory  
From glory to glory  
A thief in the night  
Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs  
I am not ashamed of the Gospel  
A man after God's own heart  
Death, where is thy sting?  
The glory of the Lord  
God is love

List in David Teems, *Tyndale*

# Suggested Reading



David Teems, *Tyndale: The Man Who Gave God an English Voice* (Thomas Nelson, 2012), 307 pp.

Steven Lawson, *The Daring Mission of William Tyndale* (Reformation Trust, 2015), 184 pp.

Brian Edwards, *God's Outlaw* (Evangelical Press, 1987), 188 pp.