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Question 81 - What are the facts regarding the Tyndale Bible?

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101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

81. What are the facts regarding the Tyndale Bible?

- A. Tyndale's Version (1525) – If Wycliffe was known as the “Morning Star of Reformation,” then Tyndale could rightly be called “The Milky Way of the Modern Bible.” No other single man in history perhaps did as much in translating the Word of God for the people of God as did William Tyndale. Tyndale worked in constant danger, for under Catholic King Charles V it was a crime punishable by horrible torture, burning at the stake, or actual burial alive for anyone to read, purchase, or possess any New Testament book. But prior to Tyndale's martyrdom it is estimated that some 50,000 copies of the New Testament were circulated by this fearless and faithful servant of God. Early in 1526, Tyndale's New Testaments began pouring into England concealed in cases of merchandise, barrels, bales of cloth, sacks of flour and corn, and every other secret way that could be found. For every one the devil burned, God would allow Tyndale to publish three more to take its place.

It is thought that Tyndale's New Testament was based on the printed Greek New Testament text of the great scholar Erasmus (first printed on March 1, 1516), and that his Old Testament text was taken in part from the 1488 Hebrew publication. He also consulted the Latin Vulgate and Martin Luther's translation.

- B. Some of the most resonant phrases in the English language – such as “fight the good fight” and “the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” – were coined by William Tyndale, the first Englishman to translate the Bible from its original languages. Tyndale's translation was the basis of all subsequent English Bibles, including the famous Authorized, or King James, Version. Remarkably, Tyndale carried out his work over a mere dozen years, while constantly evading persecution from the church.

(The Bible Through the Ages. Reader's Digest. 1996. p. 308)

- C. Because Tyndale took such an active part in the theological disputations of his day, he was not able to complete the translation of the entire Bible. He had, however, completed and published the translation of the Pentateuch and several other parts of the Old Testament by 1530.

Some of the marginal notes were quite caustic and did not help his translation to gain acceptance. In the margin of Exodus 32:35, where it is reported that many Israelites died because they had worshiped the gold bull/calf, Tyndale wrote, “The Pope's bull slayeth more than Aaron's calf.” When Israel collected more than enough for the building of the tabernacle, the people are told to stop the contributions (Exod. 36:5-7). Tyndale wrote in the margin, “When will the Pope

say 'Hoo!' and forbid an offering for the building of St. Peter's church? . . . Never until they have it all."

The 1534 revision was very carefully done. He went over the earlier translation with great devotion and published it under the title: "The Newe Testament dylygently corrected and compared with the Greke by Willyain Tindale." This was Tyndale's definitive version, even though he did not stop revising his translations. It is estimated that nine-tenths of the King James Version of 1611 is Tyndale, and where the Authorized Version departed from Tyndale, later revisers often returned to it.

This was Tyndale's crowning work. As long as Tyndale stayed in Antwerp he was safe, for Antwerp was a free city. But the Emperor, Charles V, held Tyndale to be a heretic, and one day, in 1535, Tyndale was treacherously kidnapped and imprisoned near Brussels. In August 1536 he was found guilty of heresy and condemned to be executed. When the tragic moment arrived Tyndale was tied to the stake, strangled by the hangman, and then burned.

(*A General Introduction to the Bible*. David Ewert. Zondervan Publishing House. 1993. pp. 188, 189)