

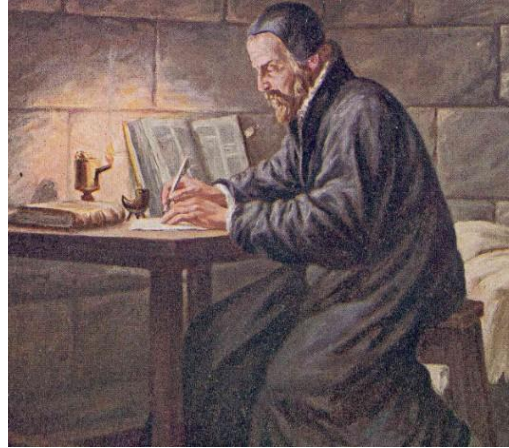
Rev John's article:

William Tyndale

He was a very important local figure in Christianity in this country and beyond:

Dear Friends,

Exactly five hundred years ago, a book was smuggled into England from the continent which was considered so dangerous that the Bishop Tunstall of London had as many copies as he could find burnt in St Paul's churchyard. That book was the New Testament, translated from Greek into English for the first time by a son of Gloucestershire William Tyndale. His work was to cost him his life but twelve years after the Bishop's bonfire, and two years after Tyndale was strangled and burnt at the stake in 1536, Thomas Cromwell ordered a copy of the Bible in English to be placed in every parish church in the land.



William Tyndale was born in Stinchcombe near Dursley around 1494. He was a priest and a scholar, a brilliant linguist who famously vowed to "cause the boy who drives the plough" to know more of the scriptures than the powerful and learned.

But England in the 1520s was a dangerous place for the work of translation. People could die for even saying 'The Lord's Prayer' in the vernacular. Tyndale initially began his translation when tutoring two boys at Little Sodbury Manor off the Bath-Nailsworth Road around 1524. He completed it after escaping to the continent in 1526 never to return.

Someone once said, "There are two miracles in the English language, one in prose the other in verse: the Authorised Version (of the Bible) and Shakespeare." It has been worked out that 84% of the AV is Tyndale's translation, not that he gets the credit or any mention in its preface.

The remarkable thing is the number of words which he invented and have entered our common parlance: 'Jehovah,' 'mercy seat,' 'Passover,' 'scapegoat,' 'atonement.' As for phrases: 'Gave up the ghost,' 'In him we live and move and have our being,' 'Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find,' 'Fight the good fight,' 'A prophet is without honour in his own country,' 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' 'With God all things are possible.' My favourite which is often said at funerals is 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God and believe in me.'

Many of Tyndale's expressions are monosyllabic unlike most other translations, giving them a certain rhyme and balance. Moreover, they make poetic sense which was the whole idea: a translation for the plough boy in memorable and meaningful words to 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' throughout life.

For one thing they can bring about a tremendous sense of God's presence as we can discern through them 'the Word of the Lord.' As the hymn writer put it,

*Beyond the sacred page
I seek thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for thee,
O living Word!*

Let us give thanks to God and take appropriate pride in a local boy who did so much good for the English-speaking world. 'He being dead yet speaketh.'

Rev John