

Getting the Word Out

We still face the challenge of getting the Bible to those who need it.

This month's cover story about those who have been martyred for helping make the Bible available to the common man means a lot to me personally. That's because I am the direct descendant of a man who was martyred for translating the Bible—John Rogers. He was the first English Protestant martyr to be executed by Queen Mary I of England.

I read in a family history that my grandmother was one of Rogers' descendants. I knew nothing about him, so when I was in England, I did some research at the British museum. I learned that, after William Tyndale was martyred in 1536, Rogers carried on the work Tyndale had begun of translating the Bible into English.

At that time, Bible translating was dangerous because the church didn't want people to be able to read Scripture for themselves. It had to be carried out in secret. For this reason, Rogers published his work under the name Thomas Matthew.

His translation was called the Matthew's Bible. I have a copy of one page framed in my office. I like to tell visitors he is my most famous ancestor—and that my roots in Christian publishing go back to him.

Though I might like to brag, what happened to Rogers was no bragging matter. According to an 1887 edition of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, his wife and 11 children met him as he walked to

his death on February 4, 1555. All he had to do to preserve his life was recant his beliefs, but he refused, saying, "That which I have preached I will seal with my blood."

Fast-forward 440 years to the early 1990s when I first visited communist China with missionary Dennis Balcombe. I was asked to smuggle some Bibles into the country in my luggage because so few were available for the fast-growing church there.

I put about 500 copies into two large suitcases. But when we went through security, the authorities opened my bags, and I was arrested. I was detained for a few hours while the authorities decided what to do with me.

Finally, I was released, but my Bibles were confiscated. Balcombe said the guards would resell them on the black market, so they would end up in the hands of someone who wanted the Word of God. But the experience showed me two things: I could see firsthand that the Bible was not wanted by the authorities in China, and I could identify with the suffering church.

The incident also made me so angry that when I wrote about it in *Charisma* (July 1993), I raised enough money to print 50,000 copies of the Bible in China to replace the 500 that were confiscated. That's a hundredfold increase.

Interestingly, this "Ink and Blood" issue of *Charisma* will be handed out at the first *Charisma* Book Expo, to take place in Atlanta from Sept. 27-30. It's said that the Christian products industry is about only one book. And though today we enjoy enormous freedom and have a plethora of Bible translations and editions, we still face the challenge of getting the Bible and other good Christian materials into the hands of those who need them.

The Bible isn't able to change lives unless people actually read it. By encouraging those who make the Bible available through retail stores, we are encouraging more Bible reading and literacy in our culture.

I hope you can attend the Charisma Book Expo. It's open to the public. And though it's a trade show, we believe you will be ministered to by the authors and musicians who will be there, including Martha Munizzi, Zachery Tims and John Bevere. (Learn more at [.com](#).) For the first time, we are using Streaming Faith to cover all the general sessions, so you can log on and be ministered to no matter where you are in the world.

To read Foxe's original account about John Rogers, as well as my column on being arrested in China, go to [.com/Bible](#). At this site you will also find our daily Bible-reading program to help you read through the Bible in a year. I hope you'll use it in your devotional time—because “getting the Word out” is one of the most important things we can do.

Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma. To read past columns in Charisma by Stephen Strang, log on at