

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Little Known Facts About William Tyndale's Theology: The Fatherhood of God—The Blood of Christ

Ralph Werrell

Introduction

When God created everything He saw that it was very good, and only when man chose to believe the Devil rather than God was the purity of creation marred. In order to restore creation to its pristine state the Persons of the Trinity made a Covenant between themselves that entailed man's sin and disobedience to be permanently erased. God the Father covenanted to make those he had chosen to be his children. God the Son covenanted to shed His blood so that God's justice could be satisfied. God the Holy Spirit covenanted to sprinkle the blood of Christ on the elect to cleanse them from all sin and enable them to be children of God. Tyndale's covenant theology differed from that of all the other Reformers because it was between the Persons of the Trinity and not between God and man.

Paul Laughlin wrote of Tyndale's *ordo salutis*: 'The *ordo* was of Tyndale's own devising and contained certain terminology, concepts, and emphases that were unusual for Reformation theology and indeed define a slant on soteriology peculiar to him.'¹ Therefore, wrote Tyndale—

The new testament was ever, even from the beginning of the world. For there were always promises of Christ to come, by faith in which promises the elect were then justified inwardly before God, as outwardly before the world by keeping of the law and ceremonies.²

This fact that the Covenant of Salvation, for Tyndale, is between the Persons of the Trinity, and not between God and man, has to be kept in front of us as we read Tyndale's writings. Equally important is Tyndale's belief that God's plan was for the restoration of creation, and our salvation was to renew the part which had caused the damage and to enable creation to return to its pristine state.

The Fatherhood of God

Although every Trinitarian theology believes in Three Persons in the Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit there are many different ways in which God the Father is understood; He seems to be a Person Who does not fit easily into our theology of salvation.

The Reformers had different ideas about God the Father's relationship with man—whether it is man as created or man as re-created through Christ's blood. Whatever their theological position they all came short of William Tyndale's doctrine of the close relationship between God the Father and his children who, through the blood of Christ, had been born again.

For Martin Luther we find various ideas about God the Father. He was a hidden God. 'Luther finds the Father in the man Jesus Christ and nowhere else.'³ 'Whoever sees Christ with the eyes of faith also sees the Father with those eyes; for he meets the very Person in whom the Father also dwells bodily, as St. Paul states (Col. 2:9), and in whom he reveals His whole heart and will.'⁴ at times he writes of a loving Father who shows his love practically to his children.⁵ We also find God the Father is a judgmental God who is to be feared and who punishes his children when they do wrong. In *The Large Catechism*, and the 'First Article of the Creed', 'I believe in God the Father Almighty', Luther wrote—

If we believed it, this article should humble and terrify all of us. For we sin daily with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and property, and all that we have, especially those who even fight against the Word of God.⁶

When we look at the south German and Swiss reformers we find a different approach to God as the Father. In an *Exposition of the Faith*, Zwingli wrote—

In the Scriptures, as we see, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are all described as God, but they are not creatures or different gods, but the three are all one, one essence, one *ousia* or existence, one power and might, one knowledge and providence, one goodness and loving-kindness. There are three names or persons, but each and all are one and the self-same God.⁷

That is not a very clear statement about God the Father, but, as Peter Stephens

wrote, 'For Zwingli, however, when you speak of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, "you speak of one and understand all three."' ⁸

Bullinger has a different view; he wrote that our approach to the Father is through Christ alone—

Whereupon we do necessarily gather, that only Christ is the mediator or intercessor with the Father. For principally Christ may set himself in the midst between God and men, because he only is partaker of both natures....Let us therefore draw near and come to God by Christ, the only mediator of our redemption and intercession, our only intercessor and advocate. We cannot but be acceptable unto God the Father, if we be commended unto him by his only-begotten Son.⁹

Generally, the Reformers thought of God the Father as someone who was remote from us. As Latimer preached—

Again, what is to be understood by this word, 'Father'; namely, that he beareth a good will towards us, that he is ready and willing to help us. 'Heavenly', that admonish us of his potency and ability, that he is ruler over all things. This, I say, remember, and follow it: then we shall receive all things necessary for this life; and finally everlasting joy and felicity. Amen.¹⁰

When we turn to William Tyndale we find we enter a new theological world—a world which leaves behind that the Father is in heaven and we are on earth with a great gap between us; into a world of a true, living, personal relationship between God the Father and his child.

William Tyndale

The Fatherhood of God is one of the main planks of Tyndale's theology of the Covenant. For God the Father covenanted to make the elect his children. Tyndale wrote that even if everyone including 'all the angels of heaven' were against him—

yet would I hold me by the testament that my merciful and true Father hath made me in the blood of my Saviour, and so come unto all that is promised me, and Christ hath purchased for me, and give not a straw for them all.¹¹

For God ‘hath made appointment betwixt him and us, in Christ’s blood;...that he will be a father unto us;’¹² and he ‘hath sworn that he will put off righteousness, and be to us a father, and that of all mercy, and hath slain his most dear son Jesus, to confirm his oath’.¹³ Therefore ‘God the Father of mercy, which for his truth’s sake raised our Saviour up again to justify us’.¹⁴ For it is only through Christ, who ‘is called Emmanuel, God is with us: for he only maketh God our God, our strength, power, sword and shield, and shortly our Father’.¹⁵ Therefore God, for Christ’s sake ‘will be a father unto them’¹⁶ and ‘take them for his sons, and to love them as well as though they were full righteous’.¹⁷

There are many places Tyndale gives us a picture of the way this relationship works out in the Christian’s life. Many of the illustrations Tyndale uses appear to be based on his own experience as a boy growing up in a loving family in south Gloucestershire. Some of these illustrations make us realise Tyndale considered that ‘God the Father’ had a broader meaning than ‘father’ in an earthly sense and it included the attitude of ‘mothers’ to their children.

William Tyndale considered that God’s elect became God’s children through the Holy Spirit sprinkling the blood of Christ on those who were ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’¹⁸ But Tyndale never enters into any discussion about who is and who is not chosen by God to be his children—although he refers to the elect as a ‘little flock’,¹⁹ he leaves the number of those who are elect to God, and in places he says it refers to a small number; but in others he infers that it could be everyone. He wrote that through creation every human being was a child of God, ‘God hath made them after the likeness of his own image, and they are his sons as well as we, and Christ hath bought them with his blood, and made them heirs of everlasting life as well as us’.²⁰ Concerning the position of rulers who were not Christians, Tyndale wrote—

For the room that they are in, and the law that they execute, are God’s; which, as he hath made all, and is God of all, and all are his sons, even so is he judge over all, and will have all judged by his law indifferently, and to have the right of his law, and will avenge the wrong done unto the Turk or Saracen:²¹

because ‘we be all equally created and formed by one God our Father, and indifferently bought and redeemed with one blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ’.²² Being children of God through creation gives everyone the

responsibility to keep God's laws and commandments, even if they have not been cleansed by the blood of Christ. 'For though they be not under the everlasting testament of God in Christ, as few of us which are called Christian be, ... yet are they under the testament of the law natural'.²³

The true Christian, the elect, are 'under the everlasting testament of God in Christ'; they are God's 'double possession, by creation and redemption, and therefore ought (as I said) neither to move heart or hand without his commandment'.²⁴ The Christian, therefore, has a double responsibility, as a child of God through creation and as a child of God through redemption. This meant, for Tyndale, that everyone was our neighbour and we have a responsibility to each one. This reached out across the world to relieve those who are in need. If thou 'hearest necessity to be among the brethren a thousand miles off, to them art thou debtor. Yea, to the very infidels we be debtors, if they need, as far forth as we maintain them not against Christ, or to blaspheme Christ'.²⁵ In fact, 'I am bound to love the Turk with all my might and power; yea, and above my power, even from the ground of my heart, after the ensample that Christ loved me; neither to spare goods, body, or life, to win him to Christ'.²⁶

With this evangelistic approach, Tyndale has, for Christians, a very moving prayer, 'O Father, seeing thou art Father over all, pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh, and make all men to fear, and dread, and love thee as their Father, and in keeping thy commandments to honour thee and thy holy name'.²⁷ It is not just to the Turk, the infidel, or the worshippers of other gods, that we must do good to win them for Christ, it reaches to all—

even so provoke thou and draw thine evil brethren to goodness, with patience, with love in word and deed; and pray for them to him that is able to make them better and to convert them. And so thou shalt be thy Father's natural son, and perfect, as he is perfect.²⁸

The terminal point when we stop loving and helping others comes 'when thy neighbour hath shewed thee more unkindness than God hath love, ... and not before'.²⁹

God, our Father

God's love for man goes back to the creation, and Tyndale frequently stresses this fact, a fact that takes away any idea that our salvation has anything to do with

our reception of the gospel; whether by faith, our good works, or by anything that God sees in us. The first thing we notice about the relationship between God the Father and his children is the warmth, the tenderness and the love he shows to them. ‘As affirmeth Paul sayinge: whych loved vs in his beloved before the creation of the worlde. For the love that god hath to Christ / he loveth vs / and not for oure awne saiks.’³⁰ Tyndale expands this in his *Answer*—

God is ever fatherly-minded toward the elect members of his church. He loved them, ere the world began, in Christ. (Eph. i.) He loveth them while they be yet evil, and his enemies in their hearts, ere they be come unto the knowledge of his Son Christ, and ere his law be written in their hearts; as a father loveth his young son, while he is yet evil, and ere it know the father’s law to consent thereto.³¹

And we experience the work of the Father in our lives as we become alive to him and his will for us. ‘In Christ God chose us, and elected us before the beginning of the world, created us anew by the word of the gospel, and put his Spirit in us, for because that we should do good works. A Christian man worketh, because it is the will of his Father only.’³²

The first step in our salvation has to be the new birth, for until that happens we are—

‘dead in trespasses and sins’... The text is plain: we were stone dead, and without life or power to do or consent to good But God, of his grace only, quickened us in Christ; and raised us out of that death, and made us sit with Christ in heavenly things: ... And finally we are, in this our second birth, God’s workmanship and creation in Christ; so that, as he which is yet unmade hath no life nor power to work, no more had we, till we were made again in Christ.³³

The *Prologue to the Book of Exodus* has a long section on ‘the new testament’.

And when this testament is preached and believed, the Spirit entereth the heart, and quickeneth it, and giveth her life, and justifieth her ... of the very power of the Spirit, received through faith, as thou readest, John 1. ‘He gave them power to be the sons of God, in that they believed on his name.’³⁴

The 'power to be the sons of God' is, therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit in us

which changeth us, turneth us into a new nature, and begetteth us anew in God, and maketh us the sons of God, as thou readest in the first of John; and killeth the old Adam, and maketh us altogether new in the heart, mind, will, lust, and in all our affections and powers of the soul; the Holy Ghost ever accompanying her, and ruling the heart.³⁵

Being born again as God's children we grow as Christians as members of God's family, showing that we are indeed God's children through the way we live and grow in our Christian life.

If thou believe in Christ that he is thy Saviour, that faith will lead thee in immediately, and shew thee God with a lovely and amiable countenance; and make thee feel and see how that he is thy Father, altogether merciful to thee, and at one with thee, and thou his son, and highly in his favour and grace, and sure that thou pleasest him, when thou dost an hundred things which some holy people would suppose themselves defiled if they should but think on them. And to see God is the blessing of a pure heart.³⁶

Love is the key to Tyndale's theology of the Fatherhood of God, and of the Christian being a child of God.

The love of God to us-ward is exceeding great, in that he hath made us his sons, without all deserving of us; and hath given us his Spirit through Christ, to certify our hearts thereof, in that we feel that our trust is in God, and that our souls have received health and power to love the law of God; which is a sure testimony that we are sons, and under no damnation.³⁷

Throughout his writings, Tyndale describes how Christians show they are children of God through the things they do and their attitude to other people. But there are also times when we do things which are wrong and have to go to our Father and confess our misdoings. Often Tyndale's words give us a picture of William growing up as a boy in south Gloucestershire, and having to go to his father to confess either to something he has done, or has not done; wondering whether he would be punished but hoping his father will let him off with a warning not to do it again.

As a good child, whom the father and mother have taught nurture and wisdom, loveth his father and all his commandments, and perceiveth of the goodness shewed him, ... and loveth all his commandments, and doth them with a good will, and with good will goeth to school: and by the way haply he seeth company play, and with the sight is taken and ravished of his memory, and forgetteth himself, and standeth and beholdeth, and falleth to play also, forgetting father and mother, all their kindness, all their laws, and his own profit thereto: ... Fear and dread of rebuke, and of loss of his father's love, and of punishment, wrestle with the trust which he hath in his father's goodness, and as it were give his faith a fall ... And he believeth that his father will not cast him away, or destroy him, and hopeth that he will no more do so. And upon that he getteth him home, dismayed, but not altogether faithless. The old kindnesses will not let him despair. Howbeit, all the world cannot set his heart at rest, until the pain be past, and until he have heard the voice of his father, that all is forgiven.³⁸

Tyndale's biographical comments which he makes and links to God's parental care for us relate both to a mother's love in feeding her children, and to a father's love in clothing them. He also wrote of the way parents give extra care to children who are handicapped than to their more able children. God looks after and cares for us so that we are 'tended as young children are by the care of their fathers and mothers'.³⁹ Again, Tyndale wrote a long passage in the *Exposition of Matthew*—

See ye not that the father and mother have more right to the child, and to all it can do, than to an ox or a cow? ... And though it be not able to do his duty, for the blindness to know his duty, yet the father and mother promise more gifts still without ceasing And when it hath done amiss, though it have no power to do satisfaction, ... yet their love and mercy abideth still so great to it ... they not only forgive that is past, and fulfil their promise nevertheless, but promise greater gifts than ever before, and to be better father and mother to it than ever they were.⁴⁰

There are many other passages where Tyndale writes in a similar vein, and of ways God as father or mother supplies the child's needs.

The Blood of Christ

Whereas for other Reformers the Cross of Christ has a theological importance, William Tyndale rarely mentions the Cross when he is writing about our salvation. For Tyndale the important thing about Christ's sacrifice on the Cross lay in his blood which was shed, and 'the blood of Christ' is found over 400 times in a theological sense in his writings. This ties Tyndale's theology into the doctrine of both the Old and the New Testaments. It was the Passover blood that led the Children of Israel out of their Egyptian slavery, as Christ's blood brings us out of slavery to the Devil.⁴¹ The sprinkling of the sacrificial blood was the important factor in the Old Testament to keep the Israelites safe as God's children. There are also many places in the New Testament which speak of the importance of Christ's blood for our salvation,⁴² and, for Tyndale, the blood of Christ is important for every aspect of our Christian life.

We start with man being a sinner, separated from God and from the power to do anything that is pleasing to God. Since the Fall, man is dead in trespasses and sins.⁴³ 'The text is plain: we were stone dead, and without life or power to do or consent to good. The whole nature of us was captive under the devil, and led at his will.'⁴⁴ 'For it is not possible for a man, till he be born again, to think that God is righteous to make him of so poison a nature', to keep God's laws, 'his wit, reason, and will being so fast glued, yea, nailed and chained unto the will of the devil. Neither can any creature loose the bonds, save the blood of Christ only'.⁴⁵ God, therefore 'created us again, in the blood of his beloved Son'.⁴⁶

God the Son's part in the covenant was to satisfy God the Trinity's justice and so enable God the Father, through God the Holy Spirit's sprinkling Christ's blood on the elect, to be their Father and they his children. 'Christ, and his body, and his blood, and all that he did, and suffered, is a sacrifice, a ransom, and a full satisfaction for our sins; and God for his sake will think no more on them.'⁴⁷ We become God's children for 'the blood of Christ hath obtained all things for us of God. Christ is our satisfaction, Redeemer, Deliverer, Saviour, from vengeance and wrath'.⁴⁸ It is the key that opens the door for us to come to the Father as his children. For it is through Christ 'we have fellowship with God, and are his sons and heirs, and are purged from all sin through Christ's blood'.⁴⁹ As 'the Scripture saith, Christ is our righteousness, our justifying, our redemption, our atonement, that hath appeased God, and cleanseth us from our sins, and all in his blood, so that his blood is the satisfaction only'.⁵⁰

Before we are born again through the blood of Christ we are powerless to hear or respond to the gospel for our will is bound to the will of the devil who ‘blindeth us with lusts, and occasions that we cannot see the goodness and righteousness of the law of God, and the means how to fulfil it’: Tyndale then quotes 2 Corinthians 4:4.⁵¹ Once we are re-created by the blood of Christ we have a free will and are able to hear and respond to the gospel when it is preached. Free will also means that we can, as Adam did, choose the way of sin and unrighteousness.

The newly re-created soul hears the gospel, which word ‘signifieth good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that maketh a man’s heart glad, and maketh him sing, dance, and leap for joy.’⁵² It also contains the promises of God and calls us to submit ourselves to be God’s children. ‘In the gospel, when we believe the promises, we receive the spirit of life; and are justified, in the blood of Christ, from all things whereof the law condemned us.’⁵³

Although Justification by Faith was commonly used by the Reformers they did not always understand the theology behind it in the same way. Alister McGrath wrote, “Tyndale’s emphasis upon the renewing and transforming work of the Holy Spirit within man is quite distinct from Luther’s emphasis upon faith, and clearly parallels Augustine’s transformational concept of justification.”⁵⁴ Tyndale’s emphasis is also on the blood of Christ, without which there is no salvation or Christian life. Tyndale’s short definition of justification by faith is found in his Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue, where he wrote, ‘Hereof ye see what faith it is that justifieth us. The faith in Christ’s blood, of a repenting heart toward the law, doth justify us only; and not all manner faiths.’⁵⁵

Tyndale continues this thought in *Mammon*, ‘for faith bringeth pardon and forgiveness freely purchased by Christ’s blood’; but also a liberation from the power of the devil, for we must ‘remember that he is the God of mercy and of truth, and cannot but fulfil his promises. Also remember, that his Son’s blood is stronger than all the sins and wickedness of the whole world.’⁵⁶

Although Tyndale seems to be agreeing with Luther that as Christians we are *simul justus et peccator* (at the same time both righteous and sinners) when he wrote ‘after our conversion we have two wills, fighting one against the other’,⁵⁷ and ‘thus are we sinners and no sinners’;⁵⁸ Tyndale differs from

Luther in his understanding the Christian's position. Whilst, for Luther, it is the unregenerate will fighting against the regenerate will, and we sin when the unregenerate will is on top; for Tyndale, the unregenerate will is dying and the Christian sins because of 'the frailty of our flesh'.⁵⁹

Sinners we are, because the flesh is not full killed and mortified: nevertheless, inasmuch as we believe in Christ,...and would fain be perfect, God is so loving and favourable unto us, that he will not look on such sin; but will deal with us according to our belief in Christ, and according to his promises which he hath sworn to us, until the sin be full slain and mortified by death.⁶⁰

There is no way for man to be saved from his sin and made a new-born child of God

save with the holiness of God's word; which only speaketh unto the heart, and sheweth the soul his filthiness and uncleanness of sin, and leadeth her by the way of repentance unto the fountain of Christ's blood, to wash it away through faith.⁶¹

It is the task of the Christian to 'expound the law truly, and open the veil of Moses to condemn all flesh; and prove all men sinners, and all deeds under the law, before mercy have taken away the condemnation thereof'⁶²

and teach all men repentance to God and his holy law, and faith unto our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the promises of mercy made in him, and obedience unto all that God commandeth to obey And to restore again Jesus our Saviour unto his possession and inheritance bought with his blood.⁶³

In this way 'the preacher comforteth them, and sheweth them the testament of Christ's blood'.⁶⁴

Throughout our Christian life the blood of Christ is essential, not only for our continual need for faith and for repentance, but also for every other way in which we live and grow as the children of God. Tyndale wrote of this in *The Prologue* to his 1525 translation of the New Testament—

Even so nowe sence y am copled to god by Christes bloud / doo y well / nott for hevens sake : but be cause y am heyre of heven by grace and Christs purchesyng / and have the spyrit of god ... He bought it of his father derely with his bloud / ye with his moost bitter death and gave his lye for hit. What soever good thyng is in vs / that is geven vs frely with oute oure deservyng or merretts for Christs blouds sake. That we desyre to folow the will of god / it is the gyfte of Christs bloud. That we nowe hate the devylls will (where vnto we were so fast locked / and coude nott but love hit) is also the gyfte of Christes bloud / vnto whom belongeth the preyse and honoure of oure good dedes / and not vnto vs.⁶⁵

Tyndale taught the importance of the summary of the law, we are to love God with our whole being, and our neighbour as we love ourselves. Therefore ‘Every Christian man ought to have Christ always before his eyes, as an ensample to counterfeit and follow, and to do to his neighbour as Christ hath done to him’.⁶⁶ Tyndale continues with the basic divisions in Paul’s Epistles, the first is the law. He continues—

Then preacheth he Christ, the gospel, the promises, and the mercy God hath set forth to all men in Christ’s blood: which they that believe, and take it for an earnest thing, turn themselves to God, begin to love God again, and prepare themselves to his will, by the working of the Spirit of God in them.⁶⁷

Tyndale nearly always wrote that our love to God is seen through our love to our neighbour.

And so he that loveth his neighbour unfeignedly is sure of himself, that he knoweth God, and is of God unfeignedly: and contrariwise, he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God in Christ’s blood is such a love, that if a man saw it, it were impossible that he should not break out into the love of God again, and of his neighbour for his sake.⁶⁸

Tyndale answers the question, Who is my neighbour? quite simply by saying, Every human being.

Because he hath created us, and both heaven and earth for our sakes, and made us lord thereof; and our neighbours (yea, our enemies) as ourselves,

inwardly, from the ground of the heart, because God hath made them after the likeness of his own image, and they are his sons as well as we, and Christ hath bought them with his blood, and made them heirs of everlasting life as well as us.⁶⁹

Although that passage, in isolation, reads as if Tyndale had a universal view of man's salvation, the context shows that universal salvation was not Tyndale's meaning, but that Christ's blood was, in itself, sufficient for the salvation of every person.

With the Turkish Empire threatening Vienna at the time Tyndale was writing, he wrote—

If I be able, I will do thee service freely: ... For God careth for his, and ministereth all things unto them, and moveth Turks, and Saracens, and all manner infidels to do them good: ... Finally, inasmuch as God hath created all, and Christ bought all with his blood, therefore ought all to seek God and Christ in all, and else nothing.⁷⁰

Apart from it being God's commandment to us, to love our neighbour as ourselves Tyndale gives an additional incentive to us, 'Them that are good I love, because they are in Christ; and the evil, to bring them to Christ.'⁷¹

The Church, its structure, its worship, and the sacraments are all dependent on the blood of Christ. Tyndale wrote, 'So now the church of God is double, a fleshly and a spiritual: the one will be, and is not; the other is, and may not be so called, but must be called a Lutheran, an heretic, and such like.'⁷² 'The small flock of Christ cometh to the word and promises of God.'⁷³ and in this church—

the preacher setteth the law of God before them; and they offer their hearts, to have it written therein ... The preacher comforteth them, and sheweth them the testament of Christ's blood; how that for his sake all that is done is forgiven, and all their weakness shall be taken a worth, until they be stronger, only if they will repent, and will submit themselves to be scholars, and learn to keep this law.⁷⁴

The church comprises the Christians who ‘have fellowship in Christ’s blood’,⁷⁵ for it is our Christian experience that enables us to worship God,

For whosoever feeleth the just damnation of sin, and the forgiveness and mercy that is in Christ’s blood for all that repent and forsake it, and come and believe in that mercy, the same only knoweth how God is to be honoured and worshipped, and can judge between true serving of God in the spirit, and false image-serving of God with works.⁷⁶

We can therefore pray with confidence, for—

Christ is my Lord, and hath deserved and also obtained power, to give me all that can be desired for me, and all that other desire for me, is desired in Christ’s name, and given at the merits of his blood.⁷⁷

The sacraments are signs of remembrance of God’s mercy, and Tyndale linked the Old and the New Testament sacraments. The Israelites, on the night of the Passover were ‘to strike the door-posts with the blood, to be a sign to them, and a seal of the promise that God would deliver them that night In whose stead is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ come, as baptism in the room or stead of circumcision’.⁷⁸ Tyndale makes a link between the Passover and the Lord’s Supper, ‘The blood stricken on the posts saved them, ... And the blood of Christ stricken on the posts of our consciences with a sure faith, delivereth us from the captivity of Pharao the devil.’⁷⁹

Tyndale makes many links between the sacraments of the Old and the New Testaments, for both represent our commitment to be God’s people. Regarding Circumcision and Baptism, both are acts of God making us God’s children through the covenant he has made with his elect. A covenant made even before we are born, ‘for as the covenant made to the faith of Abraham went over his seed as soon as it had life, and before the sign was put upon them; even so must needs the covenant, made to all that believe in Christ’s blood, go over that seed as soon as it hath life in the mother’s womb, before the sign be put on it’.⁸⁰ For all the sacraments are God’s witness to us of his love, and that Christ’s blood was shed for our deliverance from thralldom to the devil; and as a witness that we have accepted the responsibility God has placed on us to be his people. The words of institution of the Lord’s Supper remind us to ‘cleave fast

to the profession of our baptism', Tyndale then quotes the words from 1 Corinthians 11—'Here ye see by these words, that it was ordained to keep the death of Christ in mind, and to testify that his body was given and his blood shed for us.' Tyndale reminds us of the healing power of—

the brasen serpent hanged up by Moses in the wilderness, which looking on only healed them; even so, if the sting of death, which is sin, have wounded the soul with the working of the law in the consciences, there is none other remedy than to run to Christ, which shed his blood, hanging on the cross, and to his everlasting testament and merciful promise, that it was shed for us for the remission of our sins.⁸¹

The brasen serpent was kept as a memorial to the Israelites of their healing when they had sinned in the wilderness. After quoting the words of institution in Mark and Luke, Tyndale wrote, 'Here is also to be noted, that the cause of the institution was to be a memorial, to testify that Christ's body was given, and his blood shed for us.'⁸²

Our life as Christians depends on the blood of Christ, In his *Prologue to Titus*, Tyndale wrote 'He teacheth all degrees, old, young, men, women, masters, servants, how to behave themselves; as they which Christ hath bought with his blood, to be his proper or peculiar people, to glorify God with good works.'⁸³ In fact, we see the importance of Christ's sacrifice for our Christian life in *Mammon*, 'The kingdom is the deserving of Christ's blood; and so is faith, and the Spirit, and good works also.'⁸⁴ It is also the grounds of eternal life 'seeing the faith of the testament in Christ's blood is the life of the righteous, from the beginning of the world to the end'.⁸⁵

Conclusion

We have seen the importance of the Fatherhood of God and the blood of Christ in Tyndale's theology, an importance that we do not find stressed in other theological positions. Yet both of them have an importance in the teaching of the Bible. The Fatherhood of God is found in the Old Testament on only a few occasions, i.e., Psalm 89:26: but it is clearly portrayed in the New Testament. William Tyndale realised that the New Testament does not introduce a new relationship between God and man which marks a break between the two halves of the Bible. As we read the Epistle to the Hebrews, we see that the

blood of Christ is foreshadowed in the sacrifices of the Old Testament (Heb. 10:1). For the blood of the animals sacrificed before Christ was only effective because it represented the blood of Christ—who died and shed his blood on the cross in time, but the names of the faithful were written ‘in the book of life of the lamb, which was killed from the beginning of the world’. (Rev. 13:8; see also 1 Pet. 1:19, 20).

Tyndale’s God was the Triune God of Creation, the God of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and all who believed and trusted him for their salvation from the beginning of time and would continue to the end of time. God chose his elect in Christ before the foundation of the world; and from the Fall until Christ’s return in glory, God’s people could only have redemption through Christ’s blood.⁸⁶

Revd. Dr. RALPH S. WERRELL is a retired clergyman and an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham.

ENDNOTES

1. Laughlin, “The Brightness of Moses’ Face”, p. 68 (unpub. PhD diss., Emory University, 1975).
2. Tyndale, *Prologue, Exodus*, PS1, p. 417 (References from the Parker Society are referred as PS(vol)).
3. Althaus, P., *The Theology of Martin Luther*, p. 182. Fortress Press, 1966.
4. Luther, *Works*, vol. 24. p. 59 (Luther’s Works, American Edition).
5. Luther, *Book of Concord*, p. 354: “God has given me and still preserves my body and soul....In addition, God daily and abundantly provides” our material and physical needs, “God protects me... and reserves me....And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy.” *The Small Catechism* Kolb, R. & Wengert, T. J. (eds.) (Fortress Press, 2000).
6. Luther, *Book of Concord*, p. 433.
7. Zwingli, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, p. 349 (Westminster Press, 1953).
8. Stephens, Peter, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, p. 80 (Clarendon Press, 1986).
9. Bullinger, *Decades, The 4th Decade*, Sermon 5. PS4, p. 214, 219.
10. Latimer, *Sermons by Hugh Latimer*, PS1, p. 340.
11. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 89.
12. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 166.
13. Tyndale, *Tracy*, PS3, p. 282.

14. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 167.
15. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 182.
16. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 123.
17. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew*, PS2, p. 90.
18. Ephesians 2:1.
19. Luke 12:32.
20. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 18.
21. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 204.
22. Tyndale, *Jonas*, PS1, p. 464.
23. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 204.
24. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 24.
25. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 99.
26. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 96.
27. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew 5-7*, PS2, p. 82.
28. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew 5-7*, PS2, p. 71.
29. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew 5-7*, PS2, p. 47.
30. Tyndale, *1525 Prologe*, p. 4.
31. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 111f.
32. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 77.
33. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 199f.
34. Tyndale, *Prologue Exodus*, PS1, p. 417.
35. Tyndale, *Prologue, Romans*, PS1, p. 493.
36. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew 5-7*, PS2, p. 26.
37. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 186.
38. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 34f.
39. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew*, PS2, p. 8.
40. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew*, PS2, p. 74, 75.
41. Tyndale, *Sacrament* PS1, p. 353f.
42. Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 5:9; etc.
43. Ephesians 2.
44. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 199.
45. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 18.
46. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 24.
47. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 278.
48. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 15.
49. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 149.
50. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 157.

51. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 191.
52. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 8.
53. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 11.
54. McGrath, Alistair, *Iustitia Dei*, vol 2, p. 99. (Cambridge University Press, 1986).
55. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 196.
56. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p.48.
57. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew*, PS2, p. 76.
58. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 32.
59. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 32.
60. Tyndale, *Prologue Romans*, PS1, p. 492.
61. Tyndale, *Jonas*, PS1, p. 462.
62. Tyndale, "Letter to Frith", in Foxe, A&M, vol. v pt1, p. 133. (Seeleys, 1857).
63. Tyndale, *Practice of Prelates*, PS2, p. 242.
64. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 108.
65. Tyndale, *1525 New Testament Prologue* (Cologne fragment), p. 14 (Arber facsimile, 1871).
66. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 96.
67. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 97.
68. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 198.
69. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 18.
70. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 298f.
71. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 299.
72. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 107.
73. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 108 marginal note.
74. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 108f.
75. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 100.
76. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 56.
77. Tyndale, *Tracy*, PS3, p. 278.
78. Tyndale, *Sacrament*, PS1, p. 353f.
79. Tyndale, *Sacrament*, PS1, p. 354.
80. Tyndale, *Sacrament* PS1, p. 350.
81. Tyndale, *Sacrament*, PS1, p. 356f.
82. Tyndale, *Sacrament*, PS1, p. 365.
83. Tyndale, *Prologue Titus*, PS1, p. 520.
84. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 83
85. Tyndale, *Sacrament*, PS1, p. 374
86. See, for example, Ephesians 1.