

Little Known Facts About William Tyndale's Theology: The Work of the Holy Spirit and the Covenant with Man

Ralph Werrell

Introduction

This article looks at the last two aspects of Tyndale's Trinitarian Covenant where there are differences between his theology and that of other Reformers. In the previous two articles we considered Tyndale's theology of the Covenant between the Persons of the Trinity, and God's plan to restore creation to its pre-Fall state, through the salvation of man from bondage to Satan.

This is the captivity and bondage, whence Christ delivered us, redeemed and loosed us. His blood, his death, his patience in suffering rebukes and wrongs, his prayers and fastings, his meekness and fulfilling of the uttermost point of the law, appeased the wrath of God; brought the favour of God to us again; obtained that God should love us first, and be our Father, and that a merciful Father, that will consider our infirmities and weakness, and will give us his Spirit again (which was taken away in the fall of Adam) to rule, govern, and strength us, and to break the bonds of Satan, wherein we were so strait bound.¹

We have looked at the covenant made by God the Father and God the Son. In this article we are considering God the Holy Spirit's part in the covenant, and how creation, damaged by man's sin, can be restored to its pristine goodness.

The Word of God was all important for Tyndale, and he stuck completely to the humanist position of *sola scriptura*. This meant that he was not prepared to try to find an answer to some of the difficulties we find in the Bible. It also means that, at times, his theology appears looser than other Reformation theologians for he stated that we must not try to probe into the secret things of God. Tyndale wrote of the Scriptures—

For as they came not by the will of man, so may they not be drawn or expounded after the will of man: but as they came by the Holy Ghost, so must they be expounded and understood by the Holy Ghost. The scripture

is that wherewith God draweth us unto him The scriptures spring out of God and flow unto Christ, and were given to lead us to Christ.²

As I want Tyndale to speak to us in his own words, there will, at times, be an overlap, or seeming repetition, as I develop Tyndale's theology of the Holy Spirit's work in our salvation and growth as Christians. Repentance and faith are essential if we are to be children of God. Also repentance and faith are essential every day of our life if we are eventually to enter heaven.

The Holy Spirit

God the Holy Spirit made a covenant with God the Father and God the Son. His part in the covenant was to apply the blood of Christ to those whom God the Father had elected to be children of God.

God the Son became man and 'God anointed his son Jesus with the Holy Ghost, and therefore called him Christ; which is as much to say as anointed'.³ In his *Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John*, Tyndale goes into this at length—

Jesus is God, and Almighty. He took our nature upon him, and felt all our infirmities and sicknesses, and in feeling learned to have compassion on us, and for compassion cried mightily in prayers to God the Father for us, and was heard. And the voice of the same blood that once cried, not for vengeance as Abel's, but for mercy only, as was heard, crieth now and ever, and is ever heard ... He is also called Christus, that is to say, king anointed with all might and power over sin, death and hell, and over all sins. ... He is anointed with all fullness of grace, and hath all the treasure and riches of the Spirit of God in his hand, with which he blesseth all men, according to the promise made to Abraham.⁴

God the Father chose and elected from fallen man those who were to be brought back to life and made children of God for 'whom God chooseth to reign everlastingly with Christ, him sealethe he with his mighty Spirit, and poureth strength into his heart, to suffer afflictions also with Christ for bearing witness unto the truth'.⁵ It is as we love God and our neighbour, even though he is our enemy, we realise this love testifies and certifies 'our consciences, that we are the sons of God; and that God hath chosen us, and washed us in Christ's blood; and hath put his Spirit in us'.⁶ We realise that Christ has kept

his promise to his disciples 'to send them a Comforter to be with them for ever, the Spirit of truth which the world knoweth not'.⁷

The fact that we can be God's children is all the work of God, even though we have to respond to his love and serve him in loving obedience, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit which enables this to take place. 'For grace, that is to say, God's favour, bringeth us the Spirit, and maketh us love the law: so is there now no more sin, neither is the law now any more against us, but at one and agreed with us, and we with it.'⁸

The Holy Spirit's part in the Trinitarian covenant was to enable the elect to become children of God the Father. Thus, for Tyndale, the Holy Spirit's work is most important for man's salvation, but it is done behind the scene. His task is to apply the blood of Christ and enable those 'dead in trespasses and sins' to be restored to wholeness so that God's creation could once again be to the glory of God. The gospel 'bringeth the Spirit of God; which looseth the bonds of Satan, and coupleth us to God and his will, through strong faith and fervent love, with bonds too strong for the devil, the world, or any creature to loose them'.⁹

New Life in Christ

The new birth, by which we are brought from death and Satan's bondage by the working of the Holy Spirit, is the first step in our salvation.

In Christ we are sons. In Christ we are heirs. 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.¹⁰

But before we can do good works the Holy Spirit has to prepare us, and so the new-born children of God 'have the law of God written in their hearts, and are taught of the Spirit to know sin and to abhor it, and to feel the power of the resurrection of Christ'.¹¹

Finally, that life becomes a reality when, through the Holy Spirit applying the blood of Christ, we take hold of that life through repentance and faith; and we receive 'the ministration of righteousness, and of the Spirit. For faith bringeth pardon and forgiveness freely purchased by Christ's blood'.¹² This has an

impact on the value God places on our good works, and so Tyndale compared the work of a kitchen-page with the preaching of the word of God, and wrote—

If thou compare deed to deed, there is difference;...but as touching to please God, none at all: for neither that nor this pleaseth, but as far forth as God hath chosen a man, hath put his Spirit in him, and purified his heart by faith and trust in Christ.¹³

The good works a Christian does are a measure of our love to our neighbour, of our faith, and of our obedience to God's will.

It hath pleased God of his exceeding love (wherewith he loved us in Christ, as Paul saith, before the world was made, and when we were dead in sin, and his enemies, in that we did consent to sin, and to live evil) to write with his Spirit two conclusions in our hearts, by which we understand all things; that is to wit, the faith of Christ, and the love of our neighbours.¹⁴

For that to be true we must have had the new life implanted in us so that we become a new creation and the selfish desires of the flesh are overcome by the spiritual desires implanted in us by the Holy Spirit. However, like any child we have a lot to learn, not only at the beginning of our Christian life, but throughout our life on earth.

Peace is made between God and us, we love his laws, and believe and trust in him as in our father, and have good hearts unto him, and be born anew in the Spirit, yet we are but children and young scholars, weak and feeble; and must have leisure to grow in the Spirit, in knowledge, love, and in the deeds thereof, as young children must have time to grow in their bodies.¹⁵

At the beginning of our new life in God we find there is a close link between repentance and faith, as Tyndale wrote at the start of his *Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*.

The grace of our Lord, the light of his Spirit to see and to judge, true repentance towards God's law, a fast faith in the merciful promises that are in our Saviour Christ, ... be with thee.¹⁶

It is only as we grow stronger in our faith that, although repentance cannot be without faith, faith has a greater importance, for every detail of our Christian life depends on faith. The Holy Spirit—

certifieth me that I love God; for faith and love are inseparable. The Spirit through faith certifieth my conscience that my sins are forgiven, and I received under grace, and made the very son of God, and beloved of God'.¹⁷

Through faith we must be born again as children of God, and although Tyndale recognises that there are many kinds of faith we can have, yet a saving, or right, faith is the work of the Holy Spirit in us.¹⁸

But right faith is a thing wrought by the Holy Ghost in us, which changeth us, turneth us into a new nature, and begeteth 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 heart, mind, will, lust, and in all our affections and powers of the soul; the Holy Ghost ever accompanying her, and ruling the heart.¹⁹

At the same time, because the Scriptures (John 3:18) speak of our faith as a response to the gospel which 'bringeth favour, the Spirit, power to do good, and everlasting life', Tyndale follows that passage by quoting John 7:17, and wrote, 'This text meaneth not that any man of his own strength, power, and free will, (as they call it,) can do the will of God, before he hath received the Spirit and strength of Christ through faith.'²⁰

For it is written (John, the first,) 'He gave them power to be the sons of God, in that they believe in his name.' Now, to be the son of God is to love righteousness, and hate unrighteousness, and so to be like thy Father. Hast thou then no power to love the law? so hast thou no faith in Christ's blood. And (Rom. iii), 'We set up and maintain the law through faith.' ... And the Spirit looseth the bands of Satan, and giveth power to love the law, and also to do it. For, saith Paul (Rom. viii), 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus dwell in you, then will he that raised up Jesus quicken your mortal bodies by the means of his Spirit dwelling in you.'²¹

Once we have been born anew by the Holy Spirit our eyes and our ears are opened and we can then see the truth and the way forward to be Children of God in truth.

Note now the order: first God giveth me light to see the goodness and righteousness of the law, and mine own sin and unrighteousness; out of which knowledge springeth repentance. Now repentance teacheth me not

that the law is good, and I evil; but a light that the Spirit of God hath given me, out of which light repentance springeth. Then the same Spirit worketh in mine heart trust and confidence, to believe the mercy of God and his truth, that he will do as he hath promised; which belief saveth me. And immediately out of that trust springeth love toward the law of God again.²²

Tyndale continued by telling us that it all started with God's love for us which was so great that he gave his Son to die for us—

which love of God to us-ward we receive by Christ through faith, saith Paul. ... 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.²³

This is true because God has promised it, and 'If thou believe the promises, then doth God's truth justify thee, ... In a surety whereof, and to certify thine heart, he sealeth thee with the Spirit'.²⁴

Whereas before we are born again we are unable to hear the gospel, the new birth enables us to hear and respond to it. The gospel is 'an open preaching of Christ, and the holy testament and gracious promises that God hath made in Christ's blood to all that repent and believe'.²⁵ For—

When a true preacher preacheth, the Spirit entereth the hearts of the elect, and maketh them feel the righteousness of the law of God, and by the law the poison of their corrupt nature; and thence leadeth them, through repentance, unto the mercy that is in Christ's blood.²⁶

The Christian Life

The Christian life is the work of God the Trinity enabling us to be God's children.

For as Christ is the whole cause why we do all thing for our neighbour, even so is he the cause why God doth all thing for us, why he receiveth us into his holy testament, and maketh us heirs of all his promises, and poureth his Spirit into us, and maketh us his sons, and fashioneth us like unto Christ, and maketh us such as he would have us to be. The assurance that we are sons, beloved, and heirs with Christ, and have God's Spirit in us, is the consent of our hearts unto the law of God.²⁷

The Christian life starts when God begins his great work in the salvation of his elect, and 'after we be created anew by the Spirit and doctrine of Christ, we wax perfecter alway, with working according to the doctrine, and not with blind works of our own imagining'.²⁸

Tyndale ends his Preface to his *Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, 'Herewith farewell in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Spirit be thy guide, and doctrine thy light to judge withal.'²⁹ For every aspect of the Christian's life is filled and guided by the Holy Spirit. The Christian's faith leads him in the right pathway of life, a path of peace, a clear conscience, and a deep love to God and his neighbour, and 'the gyftes of the Spryt are geuen vs to do seruice as oure brethren';³⁰ and they are to equip us to bring forth spiritual fruits in our life. For, 'Where the Spirit is, there it is always summer, and there are always good fruits, that is to say, good works'.³¹

As young Christians we have been 'born anew in the Spirit, yet we are but children and young scholars, weak and feeble; and must have leisure to grow in the Spirit, ... as young children must have time to grow in their bodies'.³² One of the ways in which the Holy Spirit helps the Christian in his life is by helping him to know and to understand the Christian faith. Tyndale wrote, you have 'the Spirit of Christ in your souls: which Spirit teacheth you all truth in Christ'.³³ Then, 'as we be taught in the Spirit, we cannot but seek and will the pleasure and glory of God only';³⁴ 'and to walk in the plain and single faith and feeling of the Spirit; and to love one another after the ensample of Christ, even as Christ loved us'.³⁵ As we have seen, God assures us inwardly and 'sealeth thee with the Spirit'.³⁶

Tyndale, following Jesus' example, considered the 'Summary of the Law' was important for us in our Christian life; to love God with the whole of our being (Deuteronomy) and love your neighbour as yourself (Leviticus). We see this most clearly in the introduction to 'The Parable of the Good Samaritan'. In this article we can only look at the work of the Holy Spirit as he helps us to fulfil these precepts. We cannot love our neighbours as ourselves until we have a right relationship with God, and so we start with the ways in which the Holy Spirit helps us in our Christian life to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength.

Although Tyndale taught that we were to meet together to pray, to hear God's word preached, and to be baptized and share in the Lord's Supper, the Church

building only served the purpose of providing shelter for these activities to take place. The Church ‘signifieth a congregation; a multitude or a company gathered together in one, of all degrees of people’.³⁷ But—

the temple wherein God will be worshipped, is the heart of man. For ‘God is a Spirit’ (saith Christ, John iv), ‘and will be worshipped in the spirit and in truth’: that is, when a penitent heart consenteth unto the law of God, and with a strong faith longeth for the promises of God. So is God honoured on all sides, in that we count him righteous in all his laws and ordinances, and also trust in all his promises. Other worshipping of God is there none, except we make an idol of him.³⁸

Our desire to pray comes from our faith, and it is through Christ that we pray to God our Father.

Whensoever the elect call for aught in his [Christ’s] name, he sendeth help, even of the power which he hath received: yea, ere they ask, he sendeth his Spirit into their hearts to move them to ask: so that it is his gift that we desire aught in his name.³⁹

Tyndale, as most of the Reformers, only believed there were two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Christ—

ordained the sacrament of baptism, to be his witness unto us. and he ordained the sacrament of his blood, to be his witness unto us. And he poureth his Spirit into the hearts of his, to testify and to make them feel that the testimony of those two sacraments are true.⁴⁰

‘And the sacraments which Christ ordained preach God’s word unto us, and therefore justify, and minister the Spirit to them that believe.’⁴¹ But the important thing about both these sacraments is not the outward deed but the state of our hearts. ‘And as all they that have their hearts washed with this inward baptism of the Spirit are of the church, and have the keys of the scripture...and do not err;’ but those who ‘sin of purpose, and will not hear when their faults be told them, ... and maintain ceremonies, traditions and customs, to destroy the faith of Christ, the same be members of Satan’.⁴² Baptism has an importance for the Christian because of what it signifies to us, and we are to ‘remember that we are washed in Christ’s blood: which thing our baptism doth represent and signify unto us’.⁴³

As with all the Reformers, William Tyndale gave an importance to preaching, and he wrote that even if Paul were there ‘what good could he do for me or wish me, but preach Christ and pray to God for me, to open mine heart, to give me his Spirit, and to bring me unto the full knowledge of Christ?’⁴⁴ The only thing a preacher can do is to ‘preach you that which bringeth the Spirit of life unto your breasts, which Spirit writeth and graveth the law of love in your hearts, and giveth you lust to do the will of God’.⁴⁵ But, as always with Tyndale, it is through the blood of Christ, which is to be preached, that the Holy Spirit enables us to be saved. The Holy Spirit—

leadeth them, through repentance, unto the mercy that is in Christ’s blood; and as an ointment healeth the body, even so the Spirit, through confidence and trust in Christ’s blood, healeth the soul, and maketh her love the law of God.⁴⁶

To love the law of God means not only loving God with the whole of our being, but also loving our neighbour as ourselves; and this is beyond our unaided power. Tyndale wrote, ‘of a man’s own strength is the law never fulfilled; we must have thereunto God’s favour, and his Spirit, purchased by Christ’s blood’.⁴⁷ In this way Christ—

anointeth our souls with the Holy Ghost, and with all the gifts of the same
Ye are not anointed with oil in your bodies, but with the Spirit of Christ in your souls.⁴⁸

The Holy Spirit’s anointing of God’s elect ‘maketh us kings and sealet us and maketh us his sure and several kingdom,...with which he changeth us into the image of Christ (2 Cor. iii)’.⁴⁹ Because the Holy Spirit is poured into our hearts we have the assurance that our repentance and faith is real.⁵⁰ Although the Holy Spirit anoints all the elect, there is a special anointing of those, like the apostles, God calls to the ministry of the Church ‘to preach the atonement and peace which Christ had made between God and man’.⁵¹

Our anointing as Christians is to enable us to do good works, and therefore Tyndale wrote—

Good works are called the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v, for the Spirit worketh them in us; and sometimes fruits of righteousness, as in the second epistle to the Corinthians and ninth chapter.⁵² The Spirit also maketh the law a lively thing in the heart; so that a man bringeth forth good works of his

own accord, without compulsion of the law, without fear of threatenings or cursings, yea, and without all manner respect or love unto any temporal pleasure, but of the very power of the Spirit, received through faith, as thou readest, John i. 'He gave them power to be the sons of God, in that they believed on his name.'⁵³

One of the important aspects of the Christian's good works is to reach out with the gospel to everyone, for he knows that God—

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. For though they be not under the everlasting testament of God in Christ, as few of us which are called Christian be, and even no more than to whom God hath sent his promises, and poured his Spirit into their hearts to believe them, and through faith graven lust in their hearts to fulfil the law of love; yet are they under the testament of the law natural.⁵⁴

Therefore, it is the duty of every Christian to tell the good news to all. Tyndale, therefore, draws our attention to John 20—

where he gave them the keys after his resurrection, and thou shalt see that he gave them unto all indifferently, saying, 'As my Father sent me, so send I you.' Whither sent he them? Unto all the world, and unto all nations. What to do? To preach the law, that the people might repent; and the promises, that they might believe in Christ for the remission of sins; saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost: whosoever's sin ye forgive, they shall be forgiven.' By which Holy Ghost he gave them understanding of the scripture, and of all that they should preach.⁵⁵

As we seek to follow Christ in our Christian life we find that we are faced with many difficulties.

The Spirit through tribulation purgeth us, and killeth our fleshly wit, our worldly understanding, and belly-wisdom, and filleth us full of the wisdom of God. Tribulation is a blessing that cometh of God, as witnesseth Christ: 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'⁵⁶

Later Tyndale returns to this subject, 'Whether, therefore, we complain of the intolerable oppression and persecution that we suffer, or of the flesh that cumbreth and resisteth the Spirit, God is merciful to hear us and to help us.'⁵⁷

Although the Christian has been born again and is a new creation, and therefore fully justified in God's sight, the flesh has not completely been destroyed. In *The Prologue upon Romans*, Tyndale wrote, 'In the sixth he setteth forth the chief and principal work of faith; the battle of the Spirit against the flesh, how the Spirit laboureth and enforceth to kill the remnant of sin and lust, which remain in the flesh after our justifying.' He wrote about the watchfulness the Christian must keep against sin. Tyndale continued—

Yet there is sin remaining in us, but it is not reckoned, because of faith and of the Spirit which fight against it. Wherefore we have enough to do all our lives long, to tame our bodies, and to compel the members to obey the Spirit and not the appetites.⁵⁸

Finally, we need to consider the clergy of the papal Church. Their ordination was to an office in the Church, and it did not convey any special powers to them. Tyndale wrote, concerning the supposed sacrament of orders, 'There is no promise coupled therewith. If they minister their offices truly, it is a sign that Christ's Spirit is in them; if not, that the devil is in them.'⁵⁹ Tyndale wrote of the priests of Christ's day who condemned Jesus to death, 'For love of the world the old Pharisees blasphemed the Holy Ghost, and persecuted the manifest truth, which they could not improve.'

It was the same in Tyndale's day, and the priests—

are become the antichrist of Rome's mamelukes, and are waxen the most wicked enemies unto the truth, and most cruel against it. They know the truth, but they love the world: and when they espied that the truth could not stand with the honours which they sought in the world, they hated it deadly, and both wittingly and willingly persecuted it, sinning against the Holy Ghost.⁶⁰

The Covenant with Man

Tyndale differed from the other Reformers about God's covenant of salvation. Instead of a federal covenant where the elect had a righteousness imputed to them, Tyndale believed in a natal covenant where the elect, being a new

creation, were righteous, for God could not create anything, nor could a child of God, being born anew of God, be unrighteous. He considered the legal aspects were settled within the Trinity, and that man, because he 'was dead in trespasses and sin', could not have pleaded Christ's death in a court of law.⁶¹ There was no seat of judgement where a man pleaded Christ's sacrifice on the Cross for his justification.

Tyndale believed that our justification was because the Holy Spirit had sprinkled the blood of Christ on us, who 'were dead in trespasses and sin' and we had been born anew as children of God. Man's salvation was the fulfilment of God's eternal purpose to restore creation to its pristine condition. To do this the three Persons of the Trinity covenanted with each other to restore creation damaged by man's sin through a new birth for mankind. God covenanted with his elect to be their Father and they covenanted with him to be his children. At the same time there were a multiplicity of covenants by which God the Father set the parameters of the Christian life. Many of these, but not all, take the form of a conditional contract, I will/if you.

As a result we find the salvation of man is the fulfilling of the Trinitarian Covenant between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The clearest statement of God's 'new (sic) Testament, or covenant made with us of God in Christ's blood',⁶² is found in Tyndale's *Prologue upon the Gospel of St. Matthew*.

The general covenant, wherein all other are comprehended and included, is this: If we meek ourselves to God, to keep all his laws, after the example of Christ, then God hath bound himself unto us, to keep and make good all the mercies promised in Christ throughout all the scripture. ... Now if we love our neighbours in God and Christ, that is to wit, if we be loving, kind, and merciful to them, because God hath created them unto his likeness, and Christ hath redeemed them and bought them with his blood, then may we be bold to trust in God, through Christ and his deserving, for all mercy. For God hath promised and bound himself to us, to shew us all mercy, and to be a Father almighty to us, so that we shall not need to fear the power of all our adversaries.

Faith now in God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the covenants and appointment made between God and us, is our salvation. Wherefore I have ever noted the covenants in the margins, and

also the promises. Moreover, where thou findest a promise, and no covenant expressed therewith, there must thou understand a covenant; that we, when we be received to grace, know it to be our duty to keep the law.⁶³

Tyndale's statement, 'God hath created them unto his likeness, and Christ hath redeemed them with his blood', has led some to claim that Tyndale was a universalist. However, Tyndale is quite clear that Christ's blood is able to save all mankind, but also that only God's chosen will respond to the gospel. It is not for us to try to find out how many, or who, God has chosen; our task is to preach the gospel to all.

Conclusion

There is very little more to say. Our salvation depends entirely on what God has done for us. But once we have been born again we have to choose to obey God in everything and at all times: for as God has bound himself to us to be our God and Father, so we have to bind ourselves to him to be his loving and obedient children. Our task is to win others for Christ; and, to look after and care for God's creation, which was God's command to Adam at the beginning.

The three articles I have written on "Little Known Facts about William Tyndale's Theology" have opened up some of the ways in which William Tyndale's theology differed from that of both the scholastic theologians and his fellow Reformers. As I did my research into Tyndale's theology, piecing together what he had written in order to discover his theological teaching, I found the Scriptures came alive in a new way with a clarity I had never seen before, and I felt, 'If only I had known this before I started my parochial ministry, what a difference it would have made in me, and to the people I served.' Of course there are problems, and sometimes in the Scriptures God leaves us with questions but no answers. Tyndale faces up to this problem—

Why doth God open one man's eyes and not another's? Paul (Rom. ix) forbiddeth to ask why; for it is too deep for man's capacity. God we see is honoured thereby, and his mercy set out and the more seen in the vessels of mercy. But the popish can suffer God to have no secret, hid to himself. They have searched to come to the bottom of his bottomless wisdom: and because they cannot attain to that secret, and be too proud to let it alone, and to grant themselves ignorant, with the apostle, that knew no other than God's glory to the elect; they go and set up free-will with the heathen philosophers.⁶⁴

My book, *The Theology of William Tyndale*, opens up Tyndale's thinking and understanding of the Scriptures. But Tyndale did not ask us to believe him, but wrote—

And when I allege any scripture, look thou on the text whether I interpret it right: which thou shalt easily perceive by the circumstance and process of them, if thou make Christ the foundation and the ground, and build all on him, and referrest all to him; and findest also that the exposition agreeth unto the common articles of the faith and open scriptures.⁶⁵

Let God's word try every man's doctrine, and whomsoever God's word proveth unclean, let him be taken for a leper. One scripture will help to declare another. And the circumstances, that is to say, the places that go before and after, will give light unto the middle text. And the open and manifest scriptures will ever improve the false and wrong exposition of the darker sentences.⁶⁶

Sola scriptura is the key which governed all of Tyndale's thinking and he refused to turn from the Scriptures for his theology. Where he referred to what other theologians had written he made sure that it was in agreement with God's word (or he would use it to show how it deviated from the Scriptures).

But it was not only the clergy who should read the Bible but every Christian, as Tyndale believed, even the ploughboy should know the Scriptures by heart. Only in this way could the Christian know God and all that he had done for us and what he required of his people.

God is not man's imagination; but that only which he saith of himself. God is nothing but his law and his promises; that is to say, that which he biddeth thee to do, and that which he biddeth thee believe and hope. God is but his word, as Christ saith, John viii. 'I am that I say unto you;' that is to say, That which I preach am I; my words are spirit and life. God is that only which he testifieth of himself; and to imagine any other thing of God than that, is damnable idolatry. Therefore saith the hundred and eighteenth psalm, 'Happy are they which search the testimonies of the Lord;' that is to say, that which God testifieth and witnesseth unto us.⁶⁷

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

ENDNOTES

1. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 18f: 1525, *Cologne Fragment*, p. 10.
2. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 317.
3. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 228.
4. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 153.
5. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 139f.
6. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 72.
7. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew*, PS2, p. 19.
8. Tyndale, *Prologue Romans*, PS1, p. 501.
9. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p.22: 1525, *Cologne Fragment*, p. 13.
10. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 77.
11. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 99.
12. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 48.
13. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 102.
14. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 55f.
15. Tyndale, *Prologue Jonas*, PS1, p. 454.
16. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 5.
17. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 207.
18. Tyndale often writes of the many other kinds of faith we can have which are not saving faith – historical, faithless, false, carnal, dependent.
19. Tyndale, *Prologue Romans*, PS1, p. 493.
20. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 111.
21. Tyndale, *Tracy*, PS3, p. 276.
22. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 195f.
23. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 196.
24. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 193.
25. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 213.
26. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 183f.
27. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 300.
28. Tyndale, *Pathway*, PS1, p. 23.
29. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 10.
30. Tyndale, Marginal Note, 1 Corinthians 12.
31. Tyndale, *Prologue Romans*, PS1, p. 499.
32. Tyndale, *Prologue Jonas*, PS1, p. 454; quoted also footnote 15.
33. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 180.
34. Tyndale, *Prologue Jonas*, PS1, p. 460.
35. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 97.

36. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 193; see also footnote 24.
37. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 12.
38. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 106.
39. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 168.
40. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 209.
41. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 283.
42. Tyndale, *Exposition Matthew*, PS2, p. 12.
43. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 263.
44. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 288.
45. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 309.
46. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 184.
47. Tyndale, *Prologue Romans*, PS1, p. 503.
48. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 180.
49. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 187.
50. See Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 113.
51. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 229.
52. Tyndale, *Mammon*, PS1, p. 73.
53. Tyndale, *Prologue Exodus*, PS1, p. 417.
54. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 204.
55. Tyndale, *Practice*, PS2, p. 283.
56. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 138.
57. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 293.
58. Tyndale, *Romans*, PS1, p. 500.
59. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 255.
60. Tyndale, *Exposition 1 John*, PS2, p. 177.
61. Which is why Tyndale stressed that fallen man was ‘stone dead’ and could do no more than any natural corpse: the federal theologians had to allow that fallen man was not completely dead, but had at least a glimmer of light (Calvin, Commentary, Ephesians 2 and Synod of Dort, 3rd and 4th Heads, Article 4), otherwise they could not have responded to the gospel.
62. Tyndale, *Prologue Matthew*, PS1, p. 468.
63. Tyndale, *Prologue Matthew*, PS1, p. 470 f.
64. Tyndale, *Answer*, PS3, p. 191.
65. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 167.
66. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 250.
67. Tyndale, *Obedience*, PS1, p. 160.