

EDITORIAL: REMEMBERING WILLIAM TYNDALE (1494-1536)

This *Bulletin*, as many of our readers will be aware, is the organ jointly of Rutherford House, Edinburgh, and the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society. The editor's column should before now have welcomed to the Wardenship of the House (and therewith to membership of the *Bulletin's* Editorial Board), in succession to Dr Nigel Cameron, the Revd David Searle, who comes from singularly fruitful pastoral teaching ministries in Aberdeen, Larbert and Bangor, Northern Ireland. We now make amends for our oversight, and wish the new Warden every encouragement in the Spirit as he develops the multi-faceted activity of the House under the banner 'Encouraging Effective Ministry'.

From the next issue we will also welcome to the ranks of our Associate Editors Dr David Bebbington, Reader in History, Stirling University, Professor Donald Macleod of the chair of Systematic Theology, in the Free Church College, Edinburgh, Dr Donald Meek, Professor of Celtic Studies in Aberdeen University and Dr Kevin Vanhoozer, Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies, New College, University of Edinburgh. In addition, Dr Campbell Campbell-Jack of Munlochy, Ross-shire, will join the Editorial Board. As editor, I gladly take this opportunity to thank all who share the editorial burden, and particularly Professor Stephen Williams, who leaves our lists as he assumes the chair of Systematic Theology in Union Theological College, Belfast.

Since the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society evolved, by maturation and a change of name, out of the Scottish Tyndale Fellowship, it is only appropriate for *SBET* to note the jubilee of the Tyndale Fellowship and Tyndale House, Cambridge. They were both founded in 1944 by a visionary band that included Dr Douglas Johnson, the (first) General Secretary of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now U.C.C.F.), Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, F.F. Bruce, John W. Wenham, Alan M. Stibbs, W.J. Martin (of Liverpool University and later Regent College, Vancouver – perhaps the single most influential initiator), and Professor Donald Maclean of the Free Church of Scotland College. Others involved were those two very different translators of Karl Barth, G.T. Thomson and Geoffrey Bromiley. So the Scottish contribution was weighty.

This is not the place to rehearse the role that the Tyndale Fellowship and House have played in the post-World War II resurgence of evangelical biblical and theological scholarship in Britain. A brief history by Tom Noble will shortly tell the essence of the story, and there are other measures of their accomplishments, such as the *Tyndale Bulletin* and numerous monographs and co-operative publications. A fine representation of Tyndale scholarship is to be found in the volume of essays edited by Joel B. Green and Max Turner, *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1994; 536pp., £29.99; ISBN 0 85364 560 4). The collection honours Professor Howard Marshall of Aberdeen University, who is the President of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society. The *Bulletin* is delighted to add its own word of congratulations.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Tyndale Fellowship was marked by a conference at Swanwick under the title, 'A Pathway into the Holy Scripture', taken from a small treatise by William Tyndale – in reality, an enlarged version of the prologue to his first attempt at publishing his New Testament. By a happy conjunction, the quincentenary of Tyndale's birth also falls in 1994. He was the first English translator of the Bible to work direct from Hebrew and Greek, and his was the first New Testament to be printed in English. Since sixteenth-century Scotland produced no counterpart to Tyndale, it was his New Testament (first published 1526) that kindled and fanned reforming fires in Scotland from as early as 1527. He appears often in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* of the mid-1540s ('My New Testament thay wald keip downe, / Quhilk suld be preicheit fra towne to towne'), and earlier in David Lindsay's *Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*. The Pardoner, i.e. the indulgence-pedar, laments that

Of all credence, now I am quyte,

For, ilk man halds me at dispyte,

That reids the New Test'ment...

I give to the Devill, with gude intent,

This unsell wickit New Testament,

With thame that it translaitit.

So the Scottish churches must join in thanksgiving for William Tyndale, who eventually paid with his life for his commitment to the open Bible for all to read.

Tyndale was also concerned about the interpretation of the Scriptures. As a tribute to his pioneering contribution to the tradition of biblical learning in which all the institutions and associations mentioned in this editorial stand, we reproduce here a couple of paragraphs from the section on the senses of Scripture in his largest work, *The Obedience of the Christian Man* (1528).

Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense, thou canst not but go out of the way. Neverthelater, the scripture useth proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle or allegory signifieth, is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently: as in the English we borrow words and sentences of one thing, and apply them unto another, and give them new significations....

God is a Spirit, and all his words are spiritual. His literal sense is spiritual, and all his words are spiritual. When thou readest (Matt.i.), "She shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins:" this literal sense is spiritual, and ever-lasting life unto as many as believe it. And the literal sense of these words, (Matt.v.) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall have mercy," are spiritual and life; whereby they that are merciful may of right, by the truth and promise of God, challenge mercy. And like is it of these words, Matt. vi. "If you forgive other men their sins, your heavenly Father shall forgive you yours." And so is it of all the promises of God. Finally, all God's words are spiritual, if thou have eyes of God to see the right meaning of the text, and whereunto the scripture pertaineth, and the final end and cause thereof.