

Foreword

by Dr Rowan Williams,
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With every year that passes, Tyndale's stature as an independent Christian thinker becomes more and more evident. It is no longer possible to see him as a rather prosaic adapter of Luther, or as a moralist whose main concern is practical exhortation. Dr Werrell in this excellent introduction to Tyndale's theology establishes beyond doubt that Tyndale is indeed a serious and creative intellect, following through a systematic and original vision, not Lutheran or Calvinist or Zwinglian, but distinctive, comprehensive, profoundly biblical.

The essence of this theology, as Dr Werrell demonstrates is a set of convictions about covenant; and Tyndale's originality lies in the place he gives to God's covenant with himself, the covenant between the three Persons of the Trinity whereby God the Father establishes eternally how he will be the father of his creatures, through the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son and the gift of the Spirit. Thus – although Tyndale might have been rather surprised to be told this – his theology is aligned with some of the profoundest themes of patristic and early mediaeval theology in insisting on the nature of salvation as incorporation into the trinitarian relations; but he is quite distinctive in grounding this so firmly in the biblical concept of covenant,

In this light, the whole of his theological vision unfolds with impressive coherence. We see how his doctrine of creation allows a positive valuation of social order and lawful community, insofar as it sets all human beings on the same level, as potential children of God; and we see also how his very radical convictions about our universal moral obligations, to unbelievers as well as believers, are a natural consequence of this. We can understand why he so rarely resorts to forensic metaphors in discussing salvation, because his central concern is with how God shows himself a father to his children. We are helped to grasp his sacramental theology as a further exploration of covenanted relationship, the visible signs renewing in us the awareness of the eternal disposition of the covenanting God towards us, the God who has

determined that by the death of the Son our sins are removed and the Spirit set free to work in us. Mediaeval abuses are seen in the light of a breaking of the covenant, replacing the fatherly generosity of God to us with a self-interested scheme of power-broking for the clerical elite.

This study, in allowing Tyndale largely to speak for himself conveys vividly the richness and the warmth of Tyndale's thinking. 'I understand my father's words as they sound', wrote Tyndale. 'and after the most merciful manner'. The whole of this book helps us see why this is always Tyndale's method and goal. I hope it will stimulate more of the research that Tyndale so abundantly deserves, and meanwhile that it will introduce many people to a true theological master.

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