

Tens of thousands of animals were killed in the 1953 flood.



dozens of swollen animal carcasses floating in the filthy grey water. I saw household effects bobbing up and down or stuck in the mud: tables, chairs, cupboards. I remember seeing bicycles, carts and even joints of meat washed out of the brine-barrels in which they were stored – there were no fridges in those days.

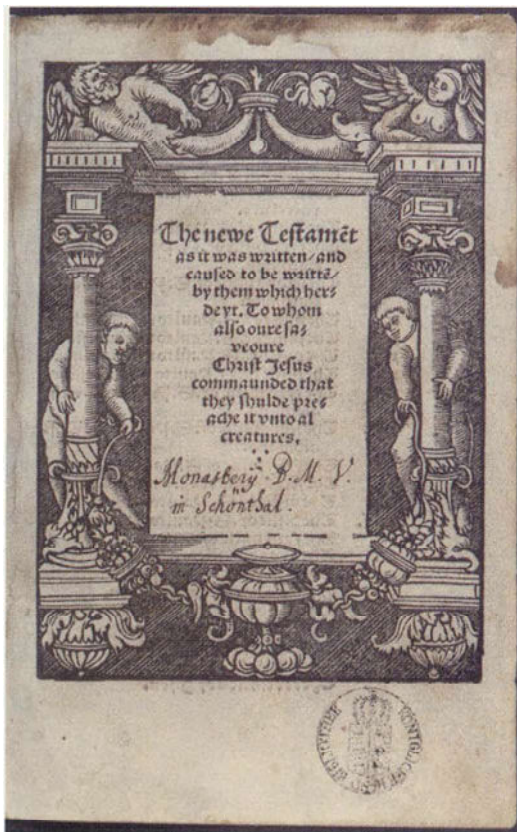
With some difficulty, for the wind had remained high since the disaster, I reached the Scheldt Dike. The sloping sides, the black wooden posts and the concrete walls of the dike had proved unable to withstand the abnormal ferocity and height of the waves. In the immediate neighbourhood of Baalhoek I saw drifting fishing boats that had broken loose from their moorings. But by far the worst hit was the hamlet of Duivenhoek, which didn't even lie on the banks of the Scheldt. Everywhere there was water, muddy sludge, a howling wind and dozens of helpful, agitated people. In Duivenhoek the water had broken through the inner dike. Three houses built into the embankment had been swept away. In one of them four family members lost their lives, in another three: a young woman of thirty-three and her two young children of six and eight. I can still see the father walking around in a daze; his clothes were greyish brown and he was wearing muddy boots and a cap. The tidal surge had hit without warning while he and his neighbours were attempting to close the gaps in the dike. *'Hurry up and get dressed. I'll be back for you in a minute'*, he had called to his wife and children. In the little hamlet of Duivenhoek alone the survivors were left to mourn eight deaths. Duivenhoek or 'Doves Corner', it sounds so peaceful ... But in my East-Flemish dialect Duivenhoek is called Duvelsoek, 'Devil's Corner'. On 1 February 1953 that was a more appropriate name.

ANTON CLAESSENS
Translated by Chris Emery.

Tyndale's Testament

Who is the father of the English language? Chaucer, as is usually claimed? William Shakespeare? Or was it William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English? No other English writer has reached so many people as Tyndale. His work has had ten thousand times more readers than Chaucer, and the British Library describes his translation of the New Testament as *'the most important printed book in the English language'*. Which is why it was willing to spend over £1,000,000 on one of the two surviving complete copies. Most of the rest had either been burned or literally read to pieces.

Tyndale was born in about 1494, probably in Gloucestershire. He studied in Oxford and Cambridge and entered Holy Orders. At some point he resolved to translate the Bible into English and tried to obtain the support of the Bishop of London, but in vain. So he crossed to the continent and completed his translation of the New Testament in 1525. After a failed attempt to get it printed in Cologne, it was eventually published in 1526 in Worms. Later that year he left for Antwerp, which was relatively safe and where he hoped it would be easier to have his translations published. The city authorities there were comparatively tolerant, and so long as he enjoyed the protection of the English merchant community Antwerp would be less dangerous than elsewhere in Catholic Europe. Furthermore, translation of the Bible into the vernacular had given rise to feverish printing activity by about half a dozen Antwerp presses, most of which were concentrated in the same neighbourhood. When Tyndale arrived they had already published three different translations of the New Testament, based on versions by Erasmus and Luther and on the Vulgate. The first Dutch Bible had just been printed and the first French Bible was nearing completion.



The only extant title page of a printed version of William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament (1526).
 Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart.

A small group of English Bible translators gathered around Tyndale in Antwerp, among whom were George Joye, Miles Coverdale and John Rogers. Tyndale worked on his polemical writings, corrected his translation of the New Testament and translated parts of the Old Testament. In all this, the proximity of Leuven was important. Not only was it the only university town in the Low Countries and a bulwark of Roman Catholic belief, but from 1517 to 1521 it had also been the home base of Erasmus who with like-minded colleagues had driven the university in a more progressive direction. Indeed, there are echoes of Erasmus in Tyndale's famous statement '*... I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou dost*'.

But Leuven played yet another part in Tyndale's life. It was a student of this university, the Englishman Henry Phillips, who in May 1535 tricked Tyndale into leaving his safe haven in Antwerp and betrayed him to the soldiers of Emperor Charles V. He was taken to the castle of Vilvoorde, near Brussels. From his cell Tyndale wrote a letter asking for some warm clothes and also for a Hebrew Bible, grammar and dictionary. This letter is the only surviving manuscript that is quite cer-

tainly written in Tyndale's own hand. In September 1536, Tyndale was strangled and burned.

A year earlier, in 1535, Miles Coverdale, a collaborator and assistant of Tyndale's, produced the first complete English Bible (which is usually thought to have been published in Cologne, but it is argued in *Tyndale's Testament* that it was actually printed in Antwerp, possibly by Merten de Keyser, where Coverdale also worked as a corrector). Since Coverdale could not understand Greek or Hebrew, he drew heavily on Tyndale's work and translated the rest from existing German and Latin versions. But about half of the Old Testament and the whole of the New were essentially the work of Tyndale. Nevertheless, by omitting Tyndale's more controversial passages and annotations the Coverdale Bible met with some degree of official acceptance in England and paved the way for John Rogers' Matthew Bible which was published a few months after Tyndale's death. The Matthew Bible was the first complete English version of the Bible to receive Henry VIII's official approval, but again, apart from a few small changes, it was based solidly on Tyndale's published and unpublished work. According to the Fleming Guido Latré its printer was probably Matthias Crom of Antwerp. Then in 1539 Thomas Cromwell issued an injunction that every parish church should acquire a copy of the 'Great Bible', Miles Coverdale's revised version of the Matthew Bible. This in turn heavily influenced the King James version of 1611. It has been calculated that about eighty per cent of Tyndale's Old Testament and ninety per cent of his New Testament appears in the Authorised Version.

The biblical and polemical work of Tyndale not only furthered the growth of standard English, both written and spoken, it also influenced political thinking. The ordinary man and woman in England now had direct access to the Bible, the book that in Tyndale's age was seen as the ultimate justification of all earthly power.

In 1913, the Trinitarian Bible Society financed the erection of a monument to William Tyndale in Vilvoorde. (The liberal, free-thinking mayor of Vilvoorde seized on the event as an opportunity to show the Catholic Church in a bad light rather than to honour Protestantism.) In 1986, a small Tyndale Museum was opened. In 2002, from 3 September until 1 December, the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp devoted an exhibition to Tyndale. The museum is an ideal venue for such an exhibition since it also houses the oldest printing presses in the world and provides a picture of the role played by Antwerp in the sixteenth-century world of typography and printing. To accompany the exhibition it published a book, the above-mentioned *Tyndale's Testament*, which includes not only the exhibition catalogue but also a range of contributions on Tyndale and the Antwerp printers, Tyndale's importance for language and culture, the Bible and the early Reformation, the smuggling of forbidden books from Antwerp to England and finally the Antwerp roots of the Coverdale Bible, still a controversial subject. There

are Dutch and English versions of the work. It is a small tribute to a relatively little-known man who made an important contribution to the formation of the English language and culture.

DIRK VAN ASSCHE
Translated by Chris Emery.

Paul Arblaster, Gergely Juhász, Guido Latré (eds.), *Tyndale's Testament*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2002: 195 pp. ISBN 2-503-51411-1.

Dutch Jewry

In 1997, two years after the publication of the Dutch edition of *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, a conference was held at University College London. There leading experts in the field of Dutch Jewry reassessed and investigated further the issues discussed in that volume, which was received with much acclaim and enthusiasm. This new volume consists of seventeen studies on the history and literary culture of the Jews in the Netherlands and Antwerp, divided into two parts: nine contributions deal with a range of subjects in the early modern era, eight are included under 'modern Dutch Jewry'. The division itself is arbitrary and serves no clear purpose with regard to the themes of the contributions.

In the first article of *Dutch Jewry. Its History and Secular Culture* Arend H. Huussen deals with the legal position of the Jews in the Dutch Republic during the period 1590-1796, the year that the old federal Republic of the United Provinces collapsed and was subsequently transformed into a new state in 1813 through the impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon, events which greatly affected the organisation of the Jewish community. Hubert P.H. Nusteling presents some figures on the number and dispersion of Jews living in the Republic, showing that Jews have always preferred to live in the cities and particularly in Amsterdam. Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld has investigated the financing of poor relief in the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yosef Kaplan discusses the moral panic in the eighteenth-century Sephardi community of Amsterdam. Cases of adultery, clandestine marriages, and premarital sexual relations rocked the community leadership, who tried to avert this 'threat from Eros' by ordinances and punishments like excommunication, mostly to no avail. Jonathan Israel deals with the question of Spinoza's immersion in philosophy alongside his life within the community and in commerce. Spinoza's expulsion from the Amsterdam Portuguese-Jewish community in 1656 had relatively little to do with the recent changes in his intellectual outlook, a view endorsed by Odette Vlessing's re-evaluation of archive materials. She adduces convincing arguments for the financial and secular reasons that led to Spinoza resigning his community membership, an embarrassment 'solved' by a formal excommunication. Alan Cohen grapples with the relationship between Rembrandt

and the Jews in his interpretation of various biblical scenes which suggest a Jewish connotation, exemplified in a more detailed manner by the Hebrew script in some of his paintings. Hetty Berg turns to the eighteenth-century Yiddish theatrical tradition of Amsterdam as a preparation for the leading role Jews were to play in the development of the entertainment industry in the Netherlands. Marion Aptroot discusses the role of Yiddish within the Amsterdam Jewish community in the so-called *Diskursn*, pamphlets published in 1797 and 1798 shortly after the Dutch Jews were granted emancipation. Very recently these *Diskursn* have been published in a separate volume.

Part Two opens with J.C.H. Blom's article on Dutch Jewry, which is entirely based on two previous articles on the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands published in *The History of the Jews* and in *European History Quarterly*. Selma Leydesdorff reconsiders the integration of Dutch Jews, using much argumentation from her important book *We lived with Dignity, The Jewish Proletariat of Amsterdam 1900-1940*, published in Detroit in 1994. Piet H. Schrijvers offers a far from complete picture of the life of David Cohen, Professor of Ancient History at Amsterdam University and a notorious president of the Jewish Council in the Netherlands during the Second World War. This article too largely derives from Schrijver's biography of David Cohen, published in Groningen in 2000. Peter Romijn deals with the inability of Dutch society to respond adequately and promptly to the restrictive measures and terror of the Nazi persecutors. He creates a well-balanced picture of this catastrophic period, which led to a large-scale destruction of Jewish life. One great merit of this book is the presentation of the post-war Jewish history of the Netherlands, discussed in a comprehensive and partly updated study by Chaya Brazz. Despite the many problems, external as well as internal, Jewish institutions were re-established in line with pre-war patterns, but by the end of the twentieth century the number of Jews in the organised community must be considerably lower than their total number. Ludo Abicht presents a short survey of historical facts and events concerning the Jews of Antwerp. He concludes that today's community in Antwerp is remarkably varied: it consists of two religious denominations, ranging from Orthodox and Hassidic to elements of Liberal or Reform Judaism, surrounded by a secular fringe. Thus, Antwerp is a fascinating example of a pluralist diaspora community, in which Jews can successfully survive and even thrive in a multicultural city.

The volume concludes with two literary essays on the diaries of Anne Frank and the novels of Marga Minco. Together with the second publication, the English version of *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, the book adds momentum to the increasingly widespread and intense interest in the history and culture of Dutch Jewry. Like *Dutch Jewry*, the second book too is a set of varied contributions in a chronology of successive periods involving the collaboration of various leading authorities and showing a consistency of thematic approach. Nowhere do these books aim to