

## Tyndale Thought for the Day

17th July 2020

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Slavery and its abolition are being much discussed everywhere. Bristol comes out pretty badly, and not just because of Edward Colston. Clearly much of Bristol's prosperity came from the slave trade. But not all Bristolians were 'baddies'. Mary Estlin, an international figure in the abolition movement, was the leader of the Clifton Ladies' Anti-slavery Society. She was a Unitarian and they, with the Quakers, were probably the most prominent activists. But there were Baptists too – Caleb Evans of the Baptist College in the 18th century and most notably William Knibb of the Broadmead church in the 19th century. From the start it was evangelical Christians who took the lead – most famously William Wilberforce. That's surprising in a way. After all, we evangelicals reckon to base our theology on the Bible, and where does the Bible condemn slavery? I forget who said "the Bible is God's word, but not his last word". For me that's the clue, summed up in George Rawson's hymn "We limit not the truth of God..." with its refrain "The Lord hath yet more light and truth / To break forth from his word." Not all Christians past or present see it as their duty to right the wrongs they perceive in society, rather they live out their faith within the given context of the society in which they find themselves. But if we believe our mission includes our social responsibility, what is God saying to us now? I wonder what aspects of society today that we accept will lead those who come after us to wonder why we didn't do something about it.

*David Roberts*