

Book Reviews

WHICH BIBLE? A Guide to English Translations

David Dewey

Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2004 218pp £8.99pb ISBN 1844740358

This is a wide-ranging and informative book, covering the issues involved in translating the Bible, and the history of its translation into English. It looks at many individual translations, including a great many modern ones.

It is generally reliable on facts but not invariably. For example, the author is apparently unaware that *Codex Vaticanus* includes the Old Testament. But what is more serious is that it maintains many disputable opinions, without arguing the case in any serious way, if at all. It defends the use of ‘inclusive language’ by Bible translators, despite the fact that the Bible itself does not use it, claiming that this is the way people now speak (much more true of the U.S.A. than of Britain); so even *accuracy* demands that we follow suit! Any fashionable pressure-group could make this sort of claim, and distort the Bible still further.

The author assumes without discussion that modern critical texts of the Bible are more reliable than the Massoretic text and the *Texus Receptus*. He may be right, but this is a very big assumption to make in a book on such a subject, and he is not entitled to infer that translations based on other principles are guilty of poor scholarship.

The author distinguishes translations as either ‘form-driven’ or ‘meaning-driven’ and prefers the latter; but since every translation aims to be meaning driven, and ‘form-driven’ is a meaningless phrase, the distinction is misleading and question-begging. By ‘form-driven’ he really means what is usually called ‘word-for-word’ and by ‘meaning-driven’ what is usually called ‘paraphrastic’; and though these descriptions require some qualification, they are much more helpful than the author’s substitutes. A word-for-word translation aims to be a precision tool, and only resorts to paraphrase where it would otherwise be unintelligible. This was the accepted policy of English translators until modern times.

Holding the views that he does, the author naturally prefers the NIV, and particularly the recent feminization of it, and the NRSV, to older translations or to the ESV. Incidentally he accuses the ESV of outdated scholarship because

it does not adopt all the variants discovered at Qumran. It would be becoming in a popular writer to show more modesty.

All things considered, this is a publication of which IVP may find it difficult to be proud.

ROGER BECKWITH
Oxford

SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH Pauline Allen and C. T. R. Hayward (eds.)
London & New York: Routledge, 2004 200pp £16.99pb
ISBN0-415-23402-6

The latest addition to Routledge's series *The Early Church Fathers* breaks new ground. Previous volumes have concentrated on the leading figures of the Greek and Latin churches, many of whom are well-known and catered for in other series. Now, for the first time, we are taken beyond the generally-recognised boundaries of the orthodox mainstream, into the Monophysite churches of the east. These are the communities which rejected the Council of Chalcedon, and which by the beginning of the sixth century were starting to form their own, separate ecclesiastical bodies. Severus was part of this drift away from Constantinople and the West, and the period of his episcopate in Antioch (512-18) was the last time when it was possible for someone of his theological persuasion to occupy recognised episcopal office in what was still the Roman Empire.

Severus wrote in Greek, but it is symptomatic of the church politics of his time that his writings have been preserved for the most part in Syriac, Coptic and Arabic. Unfortunately, this makes them much more difficult to access today, and this volume makes us aware that new discoveries of Severan material are still being made. Only by the most painstaking research, which is inevitably underfunded, is it possible to untangle what may plausibly come from Severus himself from what was more likely added by later admirers and commentators, and the restoration of the original Greek text, which may be crucial in certain places, remains hazardous at best.

Given these inescapable difficulties, the editors of this volume have done an outstanding job in bringing to life an important, if semi-forgotten figure in

patristic thought. There can be no doubt that Severus was strongly anti-Chalcedonian in his thinking, though not as unbending as both his followers and his detractors have made him out to be. His room for manoeuvre was never great, and it was constantly shrinking during his lifetime. In the end, he had to vacate his see at Antioch because imperial policy in Constantinople shifted decisively in favour of the Chalcedonian position, and although he continued to receive discreet help from such important figures as the Empress Theodora, the last two decades of his life were spent in hiding from the authorities. Two years before he died in 538, his works were officially condemned at Constantinople, and this is the main reason why only fragments of the original texts now remain. It was the point of no return, and in 542 the first openly Monophysite bishops were consecrated in the east, leading to a schism which has endured to the present time.

The scholarship behind this introduction to Severus' thought is first-rate and the selections from his works have been chosen with consummate care. Alongside his dogmatic and polemical works, we are treated to a generous dose of his sermons, hymns and letters, which give us a more-rounded picture of his life as a bishop and pastor to his people. This book fills an important gap in patristic literature, and will be of immense interest to anyone concerned with non-Chalcedonian eastern Christianity, where Severus remains a revered figure to the present day. The translations are well-done and the sense of the original is easy to follow, making this volume an outstanding addition to even a well-stocked theological library.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

AN ARAMAIC APPROACH TO Q

SNTS Monograph Series 122

Maurice Casey

Cambridge University Press, 2002 210pp £45hb ISBN 0521 81723 4

Many of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written in Aramaic, which has now provided us with much more Aramaic literature from the time of the New Testament and the years preceding than we previously possessed. Maurice Casey is one of the very small band of scholars who have been applying this fresh knowledge to New Testament studies. As Aramaic was the main spoken

language of Palestine, and Jesus probably made more use of it in his teaching than of Greek, Hebrew or Latin, such research is very relevant, and Professor Casey has grounds for complaining that most New Testament scholars seem content to be ignorant of it.

In 1998 Casey published a book entitled *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, and he has now addressed the more complicated problem of *An Aramaic Approach to Q*. In Synoptic source criticism, Q is conveniently regarded as a single Greek document, mainly or wholly consisting of sayings, which no longer exists, but was used by Luke and Matthew as the source of most of their non-Markan material. The chief alternative theory hitherto has been to suppose that Matthew draws this material from Luke or Luke from Matthew. Casey concludes from his examination that the alternative theory is wrong, in both its forms, but that the conventional form of the Q hypothesis is also wrong. Q was not a single document but several, originating in Aramaic, and more than once translated into Greek. Where Matthew and Luke use the same words, they are probably following the same Greek translation, but in other places they may be using different translations or the Aramaic original, to which Matthew usually comes nearer than Luke. That Casey has demonstrated this, as he believes, will not convince every reader, but he has certainly shown that it is a serious possibility. His challenge needs to be treated with the respect it deserves.

ROGER BECKWITH
Oxford

**THE PASSION THAT SHAPES NATIONS: Catching Hold of the
Courage of Martyrs from Paul to the Present**
Charlie Cleverly

Eastbourne: Victor, 2005 176pp £7.99 pb ISBN 1842912135

Triumphal books about heroic Christian martyrs from bygone centuries are usually the preserve of reformed evangelicalism. Tales of sixteenth century Protestants burned at the stake, or of Victorian missionary pioneers hacked to death by African tribesmen, are a staple diet of some of their publishers. What a surprise and delight, therefore, to find this book by a leading charismatic evangelical, Charlie Cleverly, Rector of St. Aldate's in Oxford. It bears

recommendations from charismatic heavyweights such as Bishop David Pytches, John Coles (director of the New Wine Network) and John Arnott (senior pastor of Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship).

In a dozen brief chapters, Cleverly recounts a variety of martyrdoms, ranging from Peter, Paul and Polycarp in the early church; through Tyndale, Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer at the Reformation; to the sufferings of Christians in recent days – Bishop Hannington and Archbishop Luwum in Uganda; Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Schneider in Nazi concentration camps; and the modern church under Chinese and Islamic oppression. As Cleverly enthusiastically proclaims, these are stories which ‘set our hearts thumping’ (p. 164). He intends the book to be ‘a trumpet to awaken those who sleep to their responsibility’ (p. 8) and ‘an incitement to courage’ (p. 33). Cleverly is an able communicator with his feet firmly rooted in the local church. He writes with passion and verve, drawing lessons at every stage about the need to take risks, to preach boldly, to love the persecutors, to hold fast to Christ and the Bible, to pray earnestly, to speak out, to live consecrated lives. This is church history on fire. Again and again his exhortations strike to the heart, as he appeals: ‘The Church has been lulled into a false sense of security and assimilated with the culture, but in fact Jesus calls us to be radically, bravely, lovingly counter-cultural, whatever it takes ... intimidation is only to be expected: Take courage!’ (p. 163).

So what are the book’s weaknesses? The first is a minor hesitation about historical accuracy. Cleverly is a busy pastor and therefore only has time to dip his toes in the sources, but the book would have benefited from being proof-read by an historian. There are a few slips, for example that Cranmer’s *Book of Common Prayer* was ‘eventually published in 1662’ (p. 8); or that Tyndale was ‘consecrated’ (p. 48); or that Ridley was given a bag of gunpowder at the stake by his brother (p. 74 – actually it was by his brother-in-law, George Shipside). These are minor flaws, but they jar.

The second weakness is more serious, and that is the inclusion of a chapter on Edmund Campion, the Jesuit priest who was hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn in 1581 for treason. It comes immediately after a chapter on Cranmer which quotes the controversial declaration of Oxford Martyrs’ Memorial that the archbishop was burned ‘bearing witness to the sacred truths ... against the

errors of the Church of Rome'. Campion was an able propagator of those Roman errors. He fought passionately against gospel preaching and an open Bible for the English people. He was executed (brutally and unjustly, it is true) not for his faith but for his politics. In what sense, then, does he have the right to be ranked alongside Cranmer as a Christian martyr? Cleverly rightly observes that there is a dichotomy between 'old Catholicism' and 'biblical Christianity' (p. 72). He rightly rebukes Sir Thomas More (canonised, remember, by the Pope) for saying that Tyndale and his evangelical friends should have 'a hot iron thrust through their blasphemous tongues'. The author admits that Campion died to restore 'Roman heresy', and yet inexplicably he includes the Jesuit in the martyrs' roll call for his 'courage and Christ-likeness' (p. 87). This is the more ironic in the light of a quotation from another executed Jesuit, Robert Southwell: 'For if all were martyrs that die for their religion, then many heresies both contrary among themselves, and repugnant to the evident doctrine of Christ, should be truths, which is impossible' (p. 16). Southwell was claiming the title of 'martyr' for Jesuits like Campion, while denying it to evangelicals like Cranmer. These men saw clearly that they were fighting on different sides, and we must make our choice.

ANDREW ATHERSTONE
Eynsham

AFTER THE LOCUSTS

Meg Guillebaud

Oxford: Monarch Books, 2005 208pp £7.99pb ISBN 1854247179

The sub-title well explains the purpose of this book: how costly forgiveness is restoring Rwanda's stolen years. The name Guillebaud will always be associated with Christian work in that country, and Meg has written this as a sequel to her earlier *Rwanda: the Land God Forgot!* in which she narrated the circumstances of the genocide that led irrevocably to the breakdown of trust between Hutus and Tutsis.

While this book is well illustrated with anecdotal evidence, its main thrust, in the words of Lord Carey's Foreword, is to discuss 'the underlying issue of how one deals with the human desire for revenge and the understandable feeling that there should be an "eye for an eye and tooth for tooth"'. Lord Carey goes on to suggest that this story might be instrumental in creating a culture of

understanding and hope in other countries such as Palestine and Israel, Kashmir and Iraq, as well as relationships between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Chapter Four is of particular relevance for all involved in pastoral ministry as the author explores the meaning of true forgiveness with headlines such as 'Forgiveness means refusing to take revenge', 'Forgiveness involves an act of the will; it is not merely a feeling', 'Forgiveness means facing reality', 'Forgiveness involves accepting and even forgiving ourselves' and 'Forgiveness means recognising God's love and justice'. It is heartening to read of the part played in the process of reconciliation by various Christian organisations and in Appendix 2 readers are given case histories demonstrating the effectiveness of the work of these ministries. An earlier Appendix relates the work of African Evangelistic Enterprise, while there is an extensive bibliography listing both books on the history of Rwanda and the genocide as well as others on forgiveness and reconciliation.

The book contains photographs of some of the personalities involved in the reconciliation process, together with moving pictures of the workshop where participants are encouraged to write down their worst memories on a piece of paper which they then nail to a cross, handing their pain over to Jesus. The papers are subsequently burned outside.

There is much in this book which will be of benefit to those who in pastoral ministry are called on to effect reconciliation at a much less sensational level.

DAVID WHEATON
Chesham

REVELATION (IVP New Testament Commentary)

J. Ramsey Michaels

Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1997 265pp £9.99hb ISBN 0851116833

J. Ramsey Michaels is already the author of a useful book exploring the interpretative issues surrounding Revelation, so the reader can be sure that this commentary has been well thought through in its approach. I am happy to say that it has also been well thought through in the details, as the numerous footnotes in this volume will testify. Although the commentary is based on the

NIV, Michaels has clearly studied the Greek text carefully, as well as the numerous text-critical problems in the book of Revelation. He rejects several of the standard approaches to the book (dispensational, preterist, church-historical) and proposes instead a fairly sane ‘qualified literalism’ approach to what he sees as a ‘prophetic’ book (rather than futurist, or apocalyptic). The introduction also contains stimulating sections on ‘The Theology and The Ethics of Revelation’ and ‘Preaching the Gospel from the Book of Revelation’ – crucial issues which must be addressed and which make the commentary itself more useful to the pastor-teacher.

This series of commentaries is aimed somewhere between the Tyndale Commentaries and the Bible Speaks Today series. This is apparent in the mixture of scholarly discussion in the footnotes, and anecdotes and stories in the main body of the text. Sometimes the latter can be quite suggestive for teachers of the book, while at other times they can be fairly obscure (such as the very odd quotation from the apparently ‘well-known story’ by Flannery O’Connor used on p. 48, which baffled this reader at least). I was not always convinced by the theological comments made throughout the book, but it was refreshing to read a commentary which did not stop at exegesis alone and which at least began to answer some of the questions that a theologically-minded reader of Revelation might have. Michaels is excellent at pointing out what is not in the text, as well as commenting on what is.

Greek transliteration is untidy (especially with the letter eta), and the continuous text of the commentary (the only major divisions are between the Introduction, the Outline, and the Commentary) is slightly unusual. The most annoying feature is the footnotes; they are not keyed into the main body text in any way (by numbers, letters, or symbols for example) and so it is difficult to know when to refer to them while reading or studying the commentary.

These are weaknesses of the series as a whole rather than of this volume, which would, despite these, be an excellent resource for preachers alongside a more in-depth commentary like that of Beale or Aune. With Michaels’ help it may be possible to preach a series on the book of Revelation which does not finish at chapter three!

LEE GATISS
London

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE: A Report of the Church of Ireland Bishops' Advisory Commission on Doctrine

Dr. Andrew Pierce, Very Revd. Dr. Stephen White, Revd. Dr. Maurice Elliott, Very Revd. Dr. Sue Patterson, Revd. Canon Dr. Nigel Bigger

Dublin: Church of Ireland Publishing, 2006 167pp £5.00pb

It is refreshing to be offered by the Church of Ireland a collection of essays from differing viewpoints – rather than bland committee edited anonymous documents; sadly so often the fare from Anglicanism! This selection of essays on the Authority of Scripture is intended to be a basis for discussion. After covering the areas of history, experience, revelation, community and ethics there are ‘six theses on Scriptural authority’ which were agreed by all the authors.

The under girding assumption of the project is stated in the Introduction – ‘The authority of the Holy Scriptures has never been a matter for complete unanimity’ (p. 3). The aim which flows from this assumption is ‘not so much to find a simple answer to the question but to recover a wholesome space for a mutual respect and courteous rapprochement between those differing approaches to Biblical authority which are an inevitable element of our nature as Irish Anglican’ (p. 3).

The above quotations are a measure of much Anglican theology today. The goal is to hold opposing viewpoints together; this is assumed to be the main thing God wants his people to do. In some parts of life this may well be a good aspiration – but ought it to be one’s starting point for theologising about the Authority of Scripture? Is this how one arrives at a view Jesus or Paul would commend? We may read the essays on their own terms and ask how successful are they in achieving their stated goal. Do they indeed ‘recover a wholesome space for a mutual respect and courteous rapprochement between those differing approaches to Biblical authority?’

Regrettably they may not for two reasons. Firstly, opposing views are not engaged with. This is in the nature of the project, but is a fatal flaw. If one wishes to work together with people in order to come to mutual respect and possibly agreement (the presence of the six theses suggests this is indeed a goal)

then it is surely necessary to challenge statements that appear to you to be unfair or false. For example, one may want to take issue with statements such as – ‘Some of the more commonsensical statements in Proverbs are utterly banal...God’s speeches of self-praise in Job 38–41, though magnificent, are largely beside the point’ (p. 23). One may want to question if it is really fair to say that, ‘Luther and Calvin operated with considerable critical freedom in their Biblical interpretation, based on the interpretative key of the doctrine of justification’ (p. 29). One wonders if it is fair to describe as merely ‘apparently negative’ the claim that the Parable of the Good Samaritan may be only ‘a Lukan composition, and not a story told by the historical Jesus, though obviously inspired by the Christ event’ (p. 36). Is it an adequate starting assumption for an essay to begin by stating that ‘Scripture is said to have authority or to be authoritative then, in the sense that it is something which can *generally* be relied upon and which is accurate and faithful in *certain foundational* ways?’ (p. 53 – reviewer’s italics).

These and other points could, and should be pressed for their accuracy, fidelity to history and basis of reasoning. Of course it is commendable to be accepting of other peoples’ views – but to accept them before they have been examined is not a wise or kind course of action.

The second reason this project may fail in its goal of ‘courteous rapprochement’ is that too often the traditional evangelical view is misrepresented. For example, the closest the historical survey comes to dealing with the evangelical position is in the section on Fundamentalism. This is in itself unfair, as there is a spectrum of views within Evangelicalism, and one may wish to trace one’s views back to Jesus rather than the American essays cited. The author of this essay makes the following comment, ‘By affirming plenary verbal inspiration, and by equating this with inerrancy, Christian fundamentalism attributes a revelatory significance to the biblical text that is similar to the Islamic understanding of the Qu’ran’ (p. 38). This statement goes beyond criticising ‘Fundamentalists’ and begins to lump people of rather more subtle views in with more dubious ones. Along a similar line, one of the other authors states that ‘The holding of a doctrine of verbal inerrancy, for example, requires the belief that God ‘dictated’ the Bible to human scribes.’ (p. 57 – emphasis by original author.) To link the word ‘dictate’ in with the evangelical view of inerrancy, simply misrepresents those who believe in inerrancy. Much of the evangelical writing that has been

done on this doctrine has been designed to dispel this very myth, and regardless of one's theological views, surely the first step towards courteous rapprochement should be to engage with such literature.

In the light of all this, one is left with an interesting – and vital question over the concluding 'Six Theses on Scriptural Authority'. (p. 165) There is actually little for an Evangelical to object to in them! The Theses affirm that the Scriptures are inherently authoritative, affirm that we ought not to control Scripture, affirm that Christ is the interpretative key, affirm the unity of Scripture, affirm the sixth Article of Religion and affirm that critical scholarship does not undermine Authority. Only two points stand out as possible concerns to evangelicals in the Theses. Firstly the concern to affirm the validity of critical scholarship sounds a bit dated to those currently involved in academia. Secondly to say that Scripture is the 'definitive witness to the Revelation of God in Christ' while neglecting to add that 'Scripture is definitive Revelation' feels more Barthian than scriptural. However, leaving aside those two points, the Theses are basically quite acceptable to the average Evangelical. Having read the preceding essays an important question arises. In Anglican circles, should one assent to agreed statements that deep down, one knows to be a fudge? The essays make clear that there is unexamined disagreement and unfair misrepresentation in the air, so should this be set aside for the greater good and a public display of solidarity? Those of us from Ireland, of all places, have seen how reality floods over political statements that are fudges – and do not current events in the Anglican Communion suggest that this is also the case in theological matters?

PETER SANLON
Cambridge

THE LETTERS OF PETER DAMIAN 121-150

Translated by O. J. Blum and I. M. Rosnick

CUA Press: Washington, DC, 2004

195pp

\$39.95hb

ISBN: 081321372X

This is the fifth in a projected six-volume translation of the letters of Peter Damian, an eleventh-century Italian monk whose correspondence is an exceptionally important source of information about church life at that time. Damian lived in an era when enough people had grown tired of the indiscipline

of the Roman church and were determined to do something about it. The so-called Cluniac reforms, which created a strong, centralized papal monarchy and led eventually to the establishment of an ecclesiastical legal system across Western Europe, were just beginning to bite when Damian wrote, and from his letters we get a good picture of how the reforms were actually implemented. Peter Damian had to deal with a wide range of issues, including Muslim penetration of Sicily, corrupt episcopal elections in northern Italy and the future career prospects of the younger generation. In these letters we can see how he tackled each of these problems and many more, including apparent discrepancies in the text of Scripture (Letter 126). What is particularly interesting for us is that Damian was a strong advocate of the priesthood of all believers, and thought that lay preaching-rare in his day, and virtually banned in subsequent centuries-was to be encouraged. He respected the hierarchy of his time but was not overawed by it, and his church was not one in which the papacy dominated everything that went on. On the contrary. Men like him were able, perhaps even expected, to exercise a spiritual and pastoral ministry which extended far beyond the limits of their own parishes or jurisdictions, and their counsels acquired a semi-official status which led to their preservation and dissemination in later centuries. The period 1062-6, which is covered by these thirty letters, was one of great hope and expectation in Western Europe, which was to be eclipsed in popular memory by the crusades and so largely forgotten. Peter Damian's correspondence opens a window into that vanished world and enables us to grasp, with particular freshness, principles and practices of church government and life which to a surprising extent, still find their echo in our common life today.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

EXPLORING CHRISTIAN ETHICS: Biblical Foundations for Morality

Kyle D. Fedler

Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2006 233pp
\$29.95pb ISBN 0-664-22898-4

This book is an introduction to theoretical Christian ethics, not a scholarly treatise. It has many, interrelated purposes: 'to provide a basic overview of ethical

theory and biblical ethics', and to help readers reflect on their own methods of thinking on ethics and become more aware of how they make moral decisions. The author states that the intended audience is 'those Christians who want the foundations necessary to begin formulating a biblical worldview...people with little or no background in theology or ethics.' Professor Fedler assumes that, like himself, readers have already made a Christian commitment and regard the sixty-six-book Bible as the cornerstone of Christian ethics.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 sets forth basic ethical theory. Part 2 focuses on the Bible because Fedler believes that Christians 'cannot understand Christian morality or learn the language of Christian ethics without immersing ourselves in Scripture'. Part 2 begins 'with a discussion of various ways that Scripture might be used in Christian ethics'. He touches on extra-biblical sources of our ethics and then engages in an extensive examination of the Old and New Testaments, an examination that occupies two thirds of the text.

Professor Fedler gives informative descriptions and explanations of terms that are frequently encountered in the literature on the subject but which other authors assume, often incorrectly, the reader understands precisely what they mean, e.g. the indicative-imperative relationship. He points out weaknesses and variations in the many approaches to ethics, including Christian ethics, and frankly confesses that 'Since the very beginning of Christianity, ethicists have argued over the way in which Scripture should be used in ethics'. Fedler expresses many stimulating new (or at least unattributed) ideas and insights, e.g. abuse of one's body is a form of idolatry, the Bible nowhere explains the reason(s) for temptation, and there are no parables in the Gospel of John.

Unlike a thorough exposition of the subject, shortcomings are probably to be expected in an introductory work. Fedler posits rules and principles of ethics out of thin air or at least without footnotes or other indication of their source or authority. In many of his sample problems and illustrative stories, he drastically limits foreseeable consequences, alternatives and choices, and the number and categories of persons who would be affected by a moral decision. He also makes important but undocumented assumptions about the Christian faith, the historical background to Bible incidents, and the particulars of the Mosaic covenant or ethos.

I like to think that these flaws are a necessary consequence of the book being directed at beginners (especially freshmen), as a means of getting their minds to work, to initiate a discussion, rather than intended to explore all aspects of a topic. It would be suitable for classroom use providing the instructor supplements it and treats it as a starting point for novices and not as an authority in itself.

DAVID W. T. BRATTSTON
Nova Scotia

2 KINGS: The Power and the Fury

Dale Ralph Davis

Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2005 344pp £9.99pb
ISBN: 1845500962

Readers of *Churchman* are probably familiar with Dale Ralph Davis's earlier commentaries on Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and 1 Kings. This volume concludes his tour of Israel's history, and fans of the earlier books will not be disappointed.

All of the hallmark Davis traits are in evidence: concern for biblical fidelity and theological truth; insightful comments on the text of Scripture; homely illustrations; heart warming practical applications; and a Christ-centred vision that aims to see the Saviour in all of Scripture. In addition, as before, footnotes deal with historical and critical issues, demonstrating that a conservative view of the text need not be obscurantist, and indeed makes better sense of the evidence than the alternatives.

2 Kings is, in many ways, a demanding book. What do we make of the killer she-bears, deadly stew, and floating axe-heads in the Elisha narrative? Can we stomach God's horrific judgement on the Northern, and later the Southern kingdoms? How do we harmonise the negative portrait of Mannaseh in Kings with his repentance recorded in Chronicles? More generally, how do we read the concrete historical particulars of God's dealings with Israel through Christian eyes? On all these issues, Davis is a helpful guide, not least because he explains the issues with the needs of contemporary Christians in mind.

Indeed, one of the great strengths of Davis's approach is his ability to draw out practical applications for Christians throughout the book of 2 Kings. These are not 'bolted on' to the exposition, but flow from the details of the text itself. Sometimes one would have wished for a greater christological focus, but even this is perhaps a helpful counterbalance to our tendency sometimes only to preach repentance and faith in Christ from the Old Testament, ignoring the riches of the ethical and devotional lessons available to us.

It is astonishing how much Davis packs into a relatively brief compass. Nevertheless, given the practical, applicatory nature of the exposition, the exegetical comments are too brief for this to be a preacher's first port of call in expounding 2 Kings; it is not intended for that purpose. However, it will provide much help in turning exegesis of the text into a message for God's people today. It would also be excellent as a devotional commentary for the serious Bible student to use in quiet times or as part of their more general reading.

MATTHEW MASON
Tunbridge Wells

ANSWERING GOD: Towards a Theology of Intercession

Robert Ellis

Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005 220pp £14.99pb
ISBN 184227340X

How does an Open Theist pray? This little book promises to tackle a theology of intercession, and holds out the additional prospect of explaining how Open Theism views the issues involved.

The heart of Open Theism is the view that in order for God's relationship with his people to be truly personal and dynamic he must be open to change. He can therefore neither know nor fully determine the future for that would cast the relationship as coercive rather than being responsive. This view begs to be developed into the interface between God's purpose and our petitions as we pray. First Ellis surveys Scripture as a record of the church's struggle to come to terms with the issues of prayer, God's sovereignty and unanswered prayer. The history of intercession follows and takes in the 'usual suspects' i.e. Augustine, Kant, Schleiermacher, Aquinas, Calvin, Barth and Origen as they

wrestle with the tension between divine immutability and human petition. Ellis' Open credentials emerge as he finds their fidelity to both truths to be 'shot through with ambiguity' (on Augustine), 'taken to almost unbearable lengths' (Aquinas), a 'paradox' (Calvin) and 'in acute tension' (Barth). No account is given of modern compatibilism. Rather the two-dimensional account of God's sovereignty is intended to drive the reader into the welcoming arms of Open Theism.

Chapter three examines 'who is God' and circles around the expected issues of immutability, omniscience, omnipotence, and time. Open Theism really breaks cover here as God is required in his relationship to creation to experience mutuality, reciprocity, time, limited knowledge of our decisions, and responsiveness. In addition to the more usual negative arguments in reaction to 'dictatorial' and 'coercive' models of God (i.e. immutable, sovereign and omnipotent), Ellis argues a positive case from a Trinitarian model. Because God the Trinity is relational and so 'needs' to be in relationship, it is implied that God will seek relationship in mutuality. This doctrine guides the final chapter as it finds a theology of intercession in participation in the open Trinity: 'it is in the very nature of God the Trinity not to require us always to conform to God's will but to allow space for our own wills to become part of God's life and purpose'(p. 181). God is open to persuasion and by our prayers we may seek to change his mind – and win. The Open god cannot be coercive and yet there are times when his will prevails and he is found to be 'compellingly persuasive'. That this sounds (to this reviewer at least) much the same as 'manipulative' may explain why the suspicion remains that one is safer in the hands of a Sovereign Lord than in the hands of the Open god.

ED MOLL
Basingstoke

THE CASE FOR COVENANT COMMUNION

Gregg Strawbridge (ed.)

Monroe, Los Angeles: Athanasius Press, 2006 205pp \$14.95pb
ISBN: 0975391437

Gregg Strawbridge has gathered an impressive team of contributors to justify the practice of paedocommunion. All of the writers are conservative

Presbyterian or Reformed ministers. All have a high regard for the inspiration, authority, sufficiency, and inerrancy of Scripture. A number have published on the subject before. In nine essays, they examine the exegetical, theological, hermeneutical, and historical issues surrounding paedocommunion, and combine to make a persuasive case for the practice.

The volume begins with an overview of the paedocommunion case by Robert Rayburn, who succinctly presents the main lines of evidence for it. Following this, the exegetical chapters are, without exception, stimulating. Jeff Meyers offers an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:28ff, the key verse in anti-paedocommunion literature. He argues that the Corinthian failure to discern the body has nothing to do with the sacramental elements, and everything to do with introducing divisions into the church. In so doing, he demonstrates that these verses in no way prohibit paedocommunion. Jim Jordan offers a wide-ranging, although sometimes sketchy, overview of the place of children in Old Covenant religious meals such as the Passover and Peace Offering, whilst Tim Gallant investigates Jesus' teaching on the place of children in the kingdom of God, and its implications for paedocommunion.

One of the highlights is Rich Lusk's contribution. Lusk builds on his book, *Paedofaith*, to argue that the Psalter teaches that infant faith is the norm in covenant infants. This chapter is superb, and should be required reading for all parents and pastors; the implications for the nurture and training of Christian children are profound.

Moving from exegesis to hermeneutics, Peter Leithart examines some of the issues surrounding the relationship between Israel's ceremonies and the Lord's Supper. Leithart probably makes the issue more complex than it need be, and I did not find his conclusions regarding 1 Corinthians 10, for example, convincing. The move from the consumption of the manna by the children of Israel to Christian infants' participation in the Lord's Supper is, in my view, more straightforward than Leithart allows. Nevertheless, this is the most scholarly and rigorous of the essays, and provides food for thought for anyone interested in biblical theology.

Blake Purcell examines the history of paedocommunion, particularly concentrating on patristic and Reformation sources. Much of the essay is

compelling, demonstrating that paedocommunion was practiced very early. Purcell tends to over-read some of the patristic evidence, drawing pro-paedocommunion conclusions when the material is silent on the issue. But this need not detract from the overall evidence that paedocommunion was practised early and consistently until, in the West, children were suspended from the sacrament in the twelfth or thirteenth century. (In contrast, paedocommunion has been the consistent practice of the Eastern churches to the present day.)

In the final chapter, “The Polemics of Infant Communion”, Strawbridge graciously but firmly goes on the offensive, arguing that for paedobaptists and those committed to historic covenant theology, paedocommunion is the only consistent practice. The book concludes with an invaluable appendix: Rayburn’s historical and pastoral examination of ‘The Presbyterian Doctrines of Covenant Children, Covenant Nurture, and Covenant Succession’.

With the Church of England’s new legislation on communion before confirmation (Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006), the issue of child communion is a pressing one for Anglican evangelicals. Apparent ignorance of the debate pursued amongst conservative Reformed theologians in the U.S.A. for the past thirty years has impoverished our consideration of the issues. This volume would provide a very good introduction to some of the major contributors and the major arguments in favour of the practice.

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THE THEOLOGY OF WILLIAM TYNDALE

Ralph S. Werrell

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In a curious way, William Tyndale is the forgotten man of the English reformation. He is famous for his translation of the New Testament, but although this has recently been reprinted, it is not generally known and hardly anyone is aware that he wrote anything else. One of the more interesting results of recent scholarship is that Tyndale has emerged from the shadows and

is being increasingly recognized as a significant theologian in his own right. Most of his writings date from the decade 1525-35, a time when Protestantism was still emerging on the Continent and was virtually unknown in England. Tyndale himself was an exile during this time and played no part in the separation of England from Rome, so it is difficult to classify him as an English reformer in the narrow sense, but the fact that Sir Thomas More bothered to write an extensive refutation of his views shows that his influence on the Church of England was much greater than appears on the surface. From the conservative point of view, Tyndale was a threat even more dangerous than Luther himself, and it is the great merit of this book to explain clearly why this was so.

As Dr. Werrell tells the tale, William Tyndale emerges as an original theologian whose chief intellectual debt was to Lollardy, in particular as this was conveyed in the works of John Trevisa. He was sympathetic to Martin Luther and felt free to make use of his writings, but he did not follow Luther's theological method. Where the great German reformer liked to create oppositions, most notoriously between the law and the gospel, Tyndale preferred the subtler art of synthesis. Unlike Luther, he did not set one part of the Scriptures against another, he never rejected the epistle of James as inadequate and he had a rather different understanding of what 'justification by faith' ought to mean.

The key to understanding Tyndale is the biblical concept of 'covenant', which he believed began its life as an internal decision of God the Holy Trinity. From the beginning, the entire work of creation was one of covenant fulfilment, and Tyndale was particularly keen to emphasize the inherent unity of the human race as fellow creatures of the one God. Some of what he says in this regard might be interpreted as universalist if taken out of context, but Dr. Werrell is careful to guard against this. Tyndale believed that as Christians, we have a responsibility towards the entire human race to whom we are intimately related, but he also believed that only a minority, the 'little flock' as he called it (following the words of Jesus in Luke 12), would be saved in the end. Only they understood the implications of the gospel and turned the profession of their baptism into a spiritual reality which transformed their lives. In his doctrine of the sacraments, Tyndale was closest to what we would now regard as 'Reformed' teaching, though the word is somewhat anachronistic in his

case. What seems clear is that he rejected Luther's understanding of consubstantiation as much as the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation, but without falling into the symbolism of Zwingli. Dr. Werrell suggests that Tyndale may have got some of his inspiration from Lollard writings, but his main concern is to stress his originality as a thinker. Sometimes this goes a little too far, as when he contrasts Luther's 'theology of the cross' with Tyndale's concentration on 'the blood of Christ'. This may indeed be a sign that Tyndale was less indebted to Luther than has often been thought, but it is hard to conclude from this that his theology was substantially different, since the cross and the blood of Christ amount to much the same thing in theological terms. We need to remember that the era of Protestant confessionalism still lay in the future, and so nice distinctions like this one were less significant than they might have been later on. Dr. Werrell insists that Tyndale's covenant theology was internally consistent, even though he used the term in different ways, and that it can be understood if we accept that the key concept is that God is a Father who loves his children, rather than a judge who threatens to punish them. A child of God is meant to grow in grace, whereas the pardoned sinner can count himself lucky to have been forgiven without having to do anything to deserve this. The two pictures are different, though whether they are as opposed to one another as Dr. Werrell suggests is debatable.

What this book has done is put Tyndale back on the map as an important theologian whose views have to be considered in their own right. The general assumption, found even in recent writing about the Reformation, that he did little more than translate Luther, cannot be sustained. The nature of his links with Lollardy remain underexplored, but if Dr. Werrell has not solved this question, he has at least opened it up in a fruitful way which provides others with an open invitation to conduct further research. By its nature, this is a pioneer work which raises a number of significant issues and provides us with a framework for studying them more deeply. For this reason alone it deserves to have a wide circulation and we must hope that it will prove to be the stimulus for more detailed work which will fill in the gaps pointed out by Dr. Werrell and put William Tyndale and his legacy on a more prominent foundation than has been the case hitherto.

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