

Secondly, I find her account of Matthew's Christology too reductionist. This is not to attribute a negative theological bias to her; that a first century evangelist had not arrived at the settled Christology of Chalcedon (which she explicitly cites) is not in dispute. Nor should we fail to find in Matthew the thought that the Son of God was to be, as Paul called him, the 'firstborn among many brethren'. But to maintain, as she does, that for Matthew Jesus was only one among many such sons, and that his relation to them was only exemplary, does less than justice to the ways in which, for this gospel, Jesus is 'special': his conception 'from Holy Spirit', the promise that he will 'save his people from their sins', his acknowledgement by the divine voice at his baptism, the statement that he alone knows and can reveal what the Father is, his sonship as the content of Peter's confession, his investment with 'all authority in heaven and earth', and his post-resurrection presence with his disciples as 'God with us' — the OT background of this expression conveys much more than 'not against us', which is all she finds in it — all point to him as the means and the source of their sonship. I therefore regret that she has revived the rendering 'this was a son of God' at 27.54 (cf. 39). The Greek is most faithfully rendered here without either definite or indefinite article, and if Matthew had meant no more than 'one among many' he would expressed himself differently at 16.16 and 26.63.

There are other places where I am less than happy about her rendering of the Greek, but for a non-technical review this must suffice. Dr Davies' essential scholarship is not in doubt, and I look forward with interest to the wider reception of her book.

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A HISTORY OF THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE VOLUME II: FROM 1700 TO THE PRESENT DAY by David Norton. *Cambridge University Press*, 1991. Pp.xii + 493. £50.

Like the first volume, this one deals chiefly with the history of the Bible as literature in England. There is substantial discussion of the work of Herder, Schweitzer, Strauss and Auerbach, but on the whole a steady focus on the English-speaking world, its wider reaches mainly represented by the American scene. But that leaves plenty of matter and the book traces with notable success the fortunes of the King James Version of the Bible and the translations which have succeeded it since the eighteenth century; and the literary consciousness which both informed the criticism and was itself shaped by the English-language texts of Scripture. To the reader familiar with the patterns of preoccupation of fashionable philosophical and theological thought during this period this treatment presents a salutary corrective. We do

not hear about reason and revelation or prophecy and miracles, but about a revival of the kind of worries which preoccupied Augustine when he, as a man of literary sensibility, had to make the Bible's text respectable for others of like mind. The approach is also refreshing in another respect. Perhaps no translation of the Bible except the Vulgate has so entered into the literary and intellectual furniture of educated minds as the Authorised Version. To read Bernard of Clairvaux is to read a closely-textured fabric of Vulgate quotations and citations. It is not quite like that with English use of the Authorised version, but its phrases and imagery are still pervasive in the culture of these centuries. Here their impact is felt.

The author begins with the period when the Authorised Version had fallen out of favour and there were calls for revision of this 'old prose translation'. He traces the discussion of the criteria on which such a revision should be made, the contemporary consciousness of 'advancement in knowledge of antiquities and critical learning achieved in the study of classics' since the AV was published, and a desire not only for accuracy but also for faithfulness to the literary qualities of the original.

It became possible for critics to treat the Bible strictly as literature and, reading it with a certain freshness in that light, sometimes to be led on to religious understanding and acceptance of the Christian faith. Robert Lowth (1710-87), was for a decade Professor of Poetry at Oxford, where he gave a series of lectures on the sacred poetry of the Hebrews. He did much (again the comparison with Augustine's perception of his task is irresistible) to give a status to the Bible as literature which could make it possible to prefer it from a strictly literary point of view to the classics. He sought to establish 'rules of taste' on the principle that poetry was first religious and can only 'shine forth with all its natural splendour' when it expresses religious truth. But there were other streams in the eighteenth century. Anthony Purver objected in detail to the archaism and obsolescence of a number of expressions in the AV, and made his own translation. At another level the King James Bible was holding its ground. It had the appeal of familiarity to ordinary people and the educated alike. It became possible to love for stylistic reasons the very properties which under other pens had been grounds for calling it uncouth (for example the sometimes felicitous effects of keeping to the word-order of the original even where that was not quite natural in English). So in a fourth chapter we move to the Romantics. For Wordsworth, and Coleridge the attempt to wed literature and natural simplicity was central. Coleridge had a sense of being 'found' by the Bible, of meeting in it again and again expressions of his own thoughts and experiences. But it is, as Dr. Norton points out, also the case that the Romantics did not write in an imitation of 'Biblical' style, or make much

use of Biblical subject-matter, so there is a disjunction here. We go on through the literary discussions of the mid-Victorian period to the work which led to the publication of the Revised Version. The Revised Version (published 1881–95) left a sense of dissatisfaction at a literary as well as a critical level which, the author suggests, did good deal to generate the multitude of twentieth-century versions. The Revisers were told to alter the AV as little as possible, and to try to keep to the language of its time; they were to work by majority committee vote in their final polishing; they were to note it in the margin if they based their version at any point on a different text from that used by those who produced the King James Version. The result was not a literary success. There is a valuable 'aside' at this point on the nineteenth century work on dialect versions, some of which were intended as much to preserve the dialect or to provide a study-text for those learning it, as to bring the Bible to its native speakers. The following chapter looks at the thrust of the attempt to treat the Bible as a literary 'classic', especially in America. Le Roy J. Halsey published an influential work on this theme in 1858, in a context perhaps peculiarly American. The American protestant heritage with its solid emphasis on school Bible-reading was now being challenged by the influx of new waves of immigrants with different assumptions, and there were constitutional difficulties because the the First Amendment of 1791 placed religious teaching in state schools in a dubious position.

The final chapters seek to draw together the mass and variety of more modern thinking on the Bible as literature. There is a chapter on the later reputation of the King James Bible, where a kind of fundamentalism or 'AVolatry' developed; another on the processes by which critics came to defend the freedom to treat the Bible like any other literary text; another—on 'This (spiritual) treasure in earthen/earthenware/clay vessels/pots/jars'—makes the point that the question whether a translation should seek first to be literal or literary remains unresolved; no one translation has yet quite replaced the AV as striking a generally acceptable balance on the tightrope between the two. This is a very good book. It is rich and subtle and makes accessible a vast body of discussion which is not well-known grounded in either Biblical studies or literary criticism. One could point to gaps: in the treatment of the Bible as literature in sermons, for example: in the work of the Wesleys. But the great debate about form and content which is signalled at the beginning is traced with elegance and wit, and shown to remain as entangled as it was at the outset because the two are, perhaps, ultimately inseparable.

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