

Jonathan A. Draper (ed.): *The Eye of the Storm. Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Interpretation*. xii + 415 sid. T&T Clark International 2003.

This book of essays, published on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of Bishop Colenso (C) and the creation of the Diocese of Natal, might also have been written in honour of the recent lifting of his excommunication, which removed a mighty wrong. After a Foreword and Introduction the essays are distributed into five groups — Bible, Theology, Ekukhanyeni (the place of C's educational initiatives), Family and Society, and Bibliography. Most aspects of C's career are thus examined, although his Erastianism, except as it emerges in Jonathan Draper's essay on the Trial, forms a gap which perhaps print space made inevitable. Your reviewer would also have welcomed an essay on the relations between C and William Macrorie, the superimposed Bishop of Maritzburg, but that topic is admittedly at some distance from «the Crisis of Biblical Interpretation».

The editor and contributors to this collection are to be congratulated on together producing such a comprehensive and scholarly account of the multi-faceted activities of C. It is hardly practical for a reviewer to survey each of the 21 essays in this book so your reviewer has inevitably been eclectic. Your reviewer would like to have read a concluding essay in which an attempt was made to identify a blue thread of principle which bound together his Biblical interpretation, mission, educational drive, fight for Zulu justice and more. Might the thread lie in his universalism — a conviction that all are the objects of God's love? In a paper delivered to the Depwade Clerical Society in 1846 C stated, «This love of God towards His entire Intelligent Creation is confirmed by Analogy of Nature: the rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons give, not in mockery to doomed sinners, but in mercy to a ransomed race ...» This inclusivity certainly influenced his Commentary on Romans and his zeal for native education. It also led him to acknowledge that God speaks not only through the Bible, but through other holy books and teachers.

Thus, in the «Concluding Remarks» in Part I of «The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua critically examined» (Pentateuch) C writes, «... not in the Bible only, but also out of the Bible, — but to our fellow-men of all climes and countries, ages and religions, — the same Gracious Teacher is revealing ... the hidden things of God.» In support of this he quotes Cicero, Sikh Gurus and Hindu writing. In the same frame of

mind he fought the injustice of colonial oppression and of dogma in Biblical interpretation.

Since the sub-title of the book highlights C and «the Crisis of Biblical Interpretation», the first two parts are appropriately Bible and Theology. In the first essay of Part I Eric A. Hermanson assesses C's first attempt at Bible translation in Zulu and focusses on the difficulty of finding the most appropriate word in Zulu for the Christian God. In the second, Maarman Sam Tshehla discusses C's rendition of John's Prologue, and whether it makes any difference that the translator is an insider or outsider to the target language.

Timothy Larsen in the third essay provides an interesting account of the reactions to the publication of Part I of Pentateuch in 1862. He describes how the mathematical Bishop having found numerical inconsistencies in the Pentateuch was led by that discovery to the breathtaking conclusion that large parts of the Mosaic narrative including the Exodus were not historically true. It must be added that matters of greater substance also influenced him — his Zulu translator's doubts about the Deluge, and a God whose laws in Exodus 21,20–21 treated a slave as money, compounded C's scepticism.

In the fourth essay David Jobling's «Response to Timothy Larsen» concerns *inter alia* whether C's biblical views were formed before he went to Africa or were the result of his colonial experience. Jobling (p. 67) challenges Larsen's claim (p. 44) that C's Pentateuch was «the first thoroughly indigenous (meaning British-RPB) attempt at modern biblical criticism.» Jobling thinks that although C was British, he was more importantly African. Nobody could doubt the strong influence on his thinking effected by conversation with Zulus, but it was surely his said universalism, reached at or before his incumbency at Forncett, and fostered by friendship with F.D. Maurice, which was the mainspring of his thinking; it was the *application* of that principle to social and political matters which took place in Africa. It is a pity that Jobling is so combative towards Larsen — why should Larsen have disclosed his location or point of view or reason for writing? (p.69) He was surely writing as an historian of Colenso's controversy and rightly sublimates his personal circumstances.

In Part II Gwilym Colenso, an independent researcher and a relative of C, contributes a most perceptive and analytical essay which places C's Pentateuch in the context of the orthodox and liberal thought, both biblical and scientific, of its time. Gwilym links C's Pentateuchal criticism with his work in defence of the Hlubi and Zulu people — «They

were connected by the fact that in both these undertakings he represented a voice of an alternative and largely unheard point of view, a voice questioning the legitimacy of an absolute authority that recognised no other viewpoint than its own.» (p. 167)

C's mentioned universalism also manifests itself in his respect for the beliefs and customs of others. This is illustrated in Part IV by excellent essays of Iain S. Maclean and Livingstone Ngewu which survey missionary attitudes to, in particular, Zulu polygamy and *lobola*. The predominant American and British view was that polygamy conflicted with Jesus' teaching on marriage. They consequently did not allow male Zulu converts to be baptized until they had separated from all their wives except the first.

C, in contrast, was alarmed by the consequent dissolution of families and the suffering of deprived wives and children. He argued that Christianity should take into account the tribal beliefs and customs of the Zulus, and that a Zulu convert should be admitted to baptism if he undertook to take no more wives. After study of the New Testament texts C concluded that the Church's dislike of polygamy was not justified by Jesus' teaching but resulted from an attachment to «Roman laws, customs and opinions» (p. 300). At Luke 16,18 and elsewhere Jesus is reported to have said that a man who puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery, but C declared that Jesus did not speak of a husband who kept his first wife but also married another. C concluded that «Jesus did not find polygamy an anomalous practice worth suppressing.» (p. 299).

Part IV also includes deserving, yet objective, tributes to C's wife, Frances Colenso, by Mandy Goedhals, and to the Colenso daughters, by Jeff Guy. As Goedhals shows, C was, indeed, fortunate in having a wife who not only complemented his own theological interests (she introduced him to F.D. Maurice), but gave him stalwart support in his battles and continued to fight for him and the Zulu after his death. Guy understandably gives prominence to Harriette among the three daughters who inherited their father's passion for justice for the Zulu. Harriette advised the Zulu leaders as her father had. More than that, when Dinuzulu and his uncles were charged with murder and treason, she organised and paid for their defence and with her mother and sister, all elderly, travelled to England to press their suit. Despite Harriette's lobbying and public speaking, the British public and parliament failed to respond, and her belief in the essential justice of the British legal system was shattered. Guy closes with the statement that Harriette's life was a tragic one: in the eyes of the world, perhaps, but such sacrificial lives as her's must have inspired others to devote their lives to seeking justice for the oppressed.

In Part V the book concludes with an exhaustive bibliography of books written by, or jointly with, C, and a select bibliography of books about C, compiled by Fiona Bell and assistants. The production of the book is impressive, although we noticed typographical errors on pp. 298, 321, 322, 323 and 324, and the omission of the main verb on p. 299, line 25.

We applaud the editor's inclusion in the sub-title of «the Crisis of Biblical Interpretation» as, despite C's missionary activities in Natal, it is as a fearless pioneer of critical Biblical interpretation that his memory will remain green beyond South African shores. So it appeared to his fellow townsmen and friends who dedicated a stained glass window in his memory at St. Austell Parish Church, Cornwall, England, in 1887; presumably in sad irony the window depicts the High Priest rending his clothes; the subscribed text is Matthew 26,64!

Roger P. Booth

James J. O'Donnell: *Augustine: A New Biography*. 416 sid. New York: HarperCollins 2005.

It is hard to love Augustine. He stands as the source of some of the most baleful traditions of thought in Western culture. All humans, he held, are born indelibly marked, indelibly marred, by original sin. Human desire, especially sexual desire, is a premier sign and effect of Adam's fall. Unbaptized babies go to hell. Salvation is a question not of human effort, but of divine predestination. The church, to propound spiritual truth and to protect it, should avail itself of the coercive power of the state. These are all Augustinian teachings.

And yet it is hard not to love Augustine. He states his questions and his convictions about the human condition with such ardor that the flames of his ideas leap across the chasm of sixteen centuries from his lifetime into our own. Against the best philosophy of his day, he insisted that the human being was more than a mind sojourning in an inconvenient body. Flesh, he urged, truly is the native home of spirit: body and soul belong together, and together make up the whole person. Memory, he asserted, defines and constitutes self. And love, as he passionately and relentlessly wrote, is the hinge of the soul, the motor of the will. What moves us is not what we know, but what we want. We are what we love.

No living scholar knows the thirteen books of Augustine's *Confessions* better than does O'Donnell. In 1992, he published a definitive three-volume study of the work, an edition of the Latin text together with a wide-flung commentary. Now he has set his hand to