

Universities and Colleges

David Spriggs

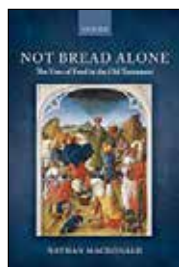
Dean of Studies



We are seeking to enhance the value of *The Bible in Transmission* for our readers by opening up various avenues for further research and reading. We are doing this with the cooperation of the universities and colleges with whom we are developing relationships and partnerships in order to advocate for the Bible in Higher Education.

We start with a contribution from **Newman University College** in Birmingham who have provided brief reviews of some pertinent books.

Nathan MacDonald (Cambridge University) is the UK-based biblical scholar who has devoted most attention recently to the question of the Bible and Food, publishing two books:



Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); ISBN 978-0199546527

This book provides a wide-ranging examination of the way food is used symbolically in many

biblical texts, from the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden to Deuteronomy's promise of a land flowing with milk and honey. It also considers the growing connection between food and Jewish cultural and religious identity in the post-exilic period. New readings of the Book of Judges in particular are opened up, as MacDonald sees connections between that text's use of the imagery of food, sex and warfare.



What did the Ancient Israelites Eat?: Diet in Biblical Times (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2008); ISBN 978-0802662983

MacDonald asks what the literary and archaeological evidence can tell us about

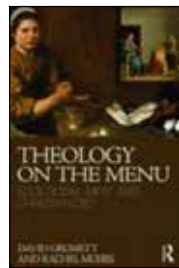
what the Israelites ate in biblical times. Too little information is available to draw many definite conclusions, but it seems that they may have consumed more meat and fish than previous studies reckoned with, and fewer vegetables and minerals than would be considered healthy today. In a final chapter, the author therefore warns against some of the American books advocating a 'biblical diet' which have become popular in the last decade.

In the field of ethics, the subject of food has been explored most recently and consistently

by David Grumett (University of Exeter) and Rachel Muers (University of Leeds), who led a research project sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council on 'Vegetarianism as a spiritual choice in historical and contemporary theology' from 2006 to 2009, from which two significant books were published:



Grumett, David and Muers, Rachel (eds), *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011); ISBN 978-0567267955

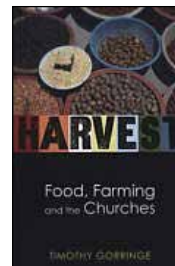


Grumett, David and Muers, Rachel, *Theology on the Menu: Asceticism, Meat and Christian Diet* (London: Routledge, 2010); ISBN 978-0415496834

These books have arisen partly from the authors' thought-provoking

conviction that Christian ethics should be concerned at least as much with matters of everyday life such as eating as with big moral dilemmas like war or xeno-transplantation with which individuals may have to wrestle only occasionally. In different ways, both volumes survey the long Christian tradition of asceticism, including monasticism and seasonal fasts such as Lent, considering both practice on the ground and its biblical and theological justification. They then ask what this tradition might have to say to believers today, faced with the intimate connection between food and social, political and economic issues, such as food inequalities, trade injustice and global warming. There is a particular focus in the first volume on the ethical arguments in favour of vegetarianism.

The research project also generated some lively exchanges in *The Expository Times* in 2011 to 2012 with biblical scholars (e.g. John Barclay, University of Durham) and theologians (e.g. Tim Gorrige, University of Exeter) arguing in



a series of short articles both for and against the idea that Christians should drastically reduce their meat consumption as an ethical imperative.

In addition to the books by Muers and Grumett (see above) **Exeter University**

also mentioned the work of Tim Gorrige, who has a long-standing interests in the topic. See, for example, his *Harvest: Food, Farming and the Churches* (London: SPCK, 2006); ISBN 978-0281058174. Tim has spoken frequently on food and farming, for example, http://www.london.anglican.org/EventShow_11517. This talk was on food security as an issue of justice. Also <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=16477>

Chester University's link takes us to Prof Clough's page and provides information and access to much more of his work.

<http://chesterrep.openrepository.com/cdr/researcher?action=viewResearcherPage&researcherId=5281>

Finally, in March **Redcliffe College, Gloucester** organised, jointly with the John Ray Initiative, an environment day, exploring the controversy surrounding GM crops entitled, 'Progress or Problem? Responding to Genetically Modified Food and Crops'. Including contributions from Joe N Perry (European Food Safety Authority), Christopher Jones MBE, and John Weaver and Martin Hodson of the JRI, the conference considered topics such as (1) the ethical, theological, economic and political implications of genetically modified crops; and (2) the risks to food safety and security: What are the environmental dangers? What impact are multinational companies having on the food chain?

It is hoped that the papers will shortly be available at www.redcliffe.org/environment-conference-2013.