

competition with one of the greatest composers' masterpieces, but there are other reasons for serious doubt. It wisely avoids closer comparison by being set for the most part for piano alone, whether helpful or not for 'meditation' – or I would prefer to say 'commitment' and/or 'engagement' – I would hesitate to judge. The use of occasional cello and recorder lightens the texture, and perhaps 'points' the message.

The trite and over-earnest unctuousness, however, with which the 'Credo' is performed, might be suitable to the style of The Vineyard, certainly not to anything that I have successfully experienced – the *Reproaches* for example. It goes to the words (the fifth cluster) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The constant repetition of the fact that we believe in the sun's existence even when it is not shining on us would seem to me theologically suspect in the extreme when applied to our belief and anxieties with regard to God. The music at best, I suggest, does not match up to the overall concept nor to the individual 'sermons'.

What is really good about this book and its accompanying CD is, I feel, that it makes a bold attempt to break away from the pietistic approach to the Passion of Christ which has been throughout the ages essentially 'private' and has done a lot to block the Gospel message. The uneasy attempt to wed words to music, however, and perhaps an uncertainty about audience (indicated possibly by the fancy lettering which, thank God, ends by and large with page vi) somewhat limit its effectiveness.

GILES HIBBERT OP

THE BIBLE IN THE RENAISSANCE. ESSAYS ON BIBLICAL COMMENTARY AND TRANSLATION IN THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES edited by Richard Griffiths [*St Andrews Studies in Reformation History*] Ashgate, Aldershot, 2002, Pp.204, £47.50 hbk.

The story of the bible during the Renaissance and the Reformation is one of ambivalences and tensions that were largely common to both Catholics and Protestants alike, and defy any simplistic categorization according to confessional lines. Neither side had at first any kind of clear-cut stand on issues of exegetical methods and the ultimate purpose of biblical studies and translations.

Was the principal preoccupation to be with the scriptures as preached or the scriptures as read? Were the hallowed, allegorical techniques of patristic and medieval exegesis (the very stuff of popular preaching hitherto) simply to be discarded and replaced by the new humanist, philological and exegetical skills first applied to the sacred text by Lorenzo Valla and popularised at the beginning of the 16th century by Erasmus and his emulators? Indeed, was it even appropriate to deal with the biblical text as if it were just another classical source, thereby running the danger of forgetting its status as the inspired Word of God, the measure of all piety and aspirations to reform? Finally, was it at all

prudent to make the scriptures, the one indispensable source of Christian renewal, as accessible as possible to all and sundry by the multiplication of vernacular translations, given the likely deleterious consequences of this for issues of ecclesiastical and social order?

This fine collection of nine essays, preceded by an introduction by Richard Griffiths, taken as a whole represents an attempt to explore these fundamental issues. The individual contributions, mostly first delivered at a conference held in London under the aegis of the Institute of Romance Studies on 7 May 1998, are, however, wide-ranging in their chosen topics. Some consider the historical context, the exegetical character and the lasting influence of some famous biblical translations: Henry Wansbrough deals with William Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament, first published in 1525; Ceri Davies with the 1588 Welsh translation of the entire bible ('Bishop Morgan's Bible'); and John L. Flood with Luther's German translation of the New Testament of 1522 and of the Old Testament completed in 1534. The essays by Vincent Strudwick and Luc Borot evaluate the impact of the renewal of biblical studies on English religious and social life, especially during the second half of the 16th century. Michael J. Fox examines Erasmus's so far largely neglected psalm commentaries, and Paulo Cardoso Pereira stresses the important role played by scriptural hermeneutics in the works of Gil Vicente.

The two contributions by Michael O'Connor are particularly interesting. The first deals with the exegetical underpinning of Girolamo Savonarola's 'prophetic' preaching during the winter of 1494. It shows Savonarola, whose allegorical exegesis remained thoroughly medieval, rummaging through the scriptures to find material that could be adapted to bolster his own shifting religious and social message in the face of the changing political circumstances that preceded and followed the descent of Charles VIII in Italy in mid 1494, and especially his entry into Florence itself on 17 November. The second proposes a new interpretation of Cardinal Cajetan's exegetical works. O'Connor argues convincingly against the conventional view, that can be traced back at least to Richard Simon, that Cajetan's biblical commentaries composed during the decade preceding his death in 1534, were essentially polemical, anti-Lutheran exercises. Rather, they are to be seen as the expression of a deeply felt and technically highly refined biblical humanism, and as an attempt to restore the bible to a central place in a renewed, pastorally concerned Christian theology.

This book is a work of solid scholarship, and it will be of value to all interested in the history of exegesis and theology during the Renaissance and the Reformation.

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