

An observant Catholic all his life, one of his brothers was a Dominican. This chapter concludes by citing an appreciative assessment of Michelangelo's Christ-centred piety in an essay by Kenelm Foster OP in this journal (September 1963).

Chapter 5 tracks how the impact of the Passion on the natural order has been registered in literature since the earthquake noted in the Gospel of *Matthew* (27: 51–52). Without being exhaustive the catalogue runs from Ephrem the Syrian, Melito of Sardis, Blathmac mac Con Brettan, Romanos the Melodist, to *'The Dream of the Rood'*, by way of Joseph Mary Plunkett and Simone Weil.

Chapter 6 returns to Shakespeare. While acknowledging the lively debate since Ted Hughes identified him as 'shaman of old Catholicism', Murray highlights the Christian themes in the greatest plays, but holds back from regarding him as a religious dramatist or a secret papist. The chapter concludes with G.K. Chesterton 'in rare form', finding in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a 'mysticism of happiness', with Bottom the Weaver 'greater and more mysterious than Hamlet' (p. 145).

In the concluding chapter poetry and Christian faith unite completely in Canto XXXIII of the *Paradiso* ('I fixed my eyes/on that alone in rapturous contemplation'). But we are not done. Others besides Dante have given us works of art inspired by Christianity. Helped by the translation by the late Seamus Heaney (1983) Fr Murray summons a work 'which happens to be one of the finest literary achievements of medieval Ireland' (p. 163) — namely, *Buile Shuibhne* (The Frenzy of Sweeney). Anonymous, dated to the twelfth century at the earliest, agreed to be composed in beautifully rich Irish, it is the story of a king who insults a bishop who curses him with the result that for the rest of his life he is always in flight, eventually becoming a Bird Man. Mad and restlessly on the move Sweeney is given 'lyrics of manifest delight', 'a manifest joy in the natural world' (p. 166), as Heaney's translation persuasively conveys.

In the closing postscript Fr Murray lists several more poets whom he might have included but those presented in this beautifully written, compelling and original book shows that 'poets of vision' continue to reveal to us 'the mystery of things'. (The publisher has announced a paperback edition.)

FERGUS KERR OP

GALATIANS [Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture] by Cardinal Albert Vanhoye and Peter S. Williamson, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2019, pp. 224, \$21,99, pbk

The 'Catholic Commentary' series seeks to combine, according to its publisher's website, 'the best of contemporary biblical scholarship' with 'the rich treasury of the Church's tradition'. This is obviously a laudable

aim, but almost as obviously a difficult one to achieve, inasmuch as large amounts of contemporary scripture study, the great majority in fact, even in this supposedly post-modern era, is straightforwardly historical-critical, and such scholarship particularly tends to predominate in the content of commentaries on the books of the New Testament. The problem of how to relate the conclusions of such research to the Church's tradition, and to her needs in regard to theology and preaching, is one that is too complex to cover in a review such as this, though I seem to remember touching on it in other recent reviews in this journal; but it is at least clear that it is a problem: the suspicion of so-called 'scientific' historical study as intrinsically anti-theological meets an equal suspicion among the historical critics that theological readings of scripture, while they may have their place in theology, are too eisegetical and fideistic to be described as biblical scholarship.

If any scholar is able to bridge this chasm, at least to the satisfaction of Catholic readers, it will be Albert Vanhoye, Jesuit, Cardinal (actually, the oldest living member of the college at 96) and one-time rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Vanhoye's works on the *Letter to the Hebrews* include a magisterial commentary (finally published in English four years ago), numerous other books and an extraordinary wealth of articles. These writings show a fine historical sensitivity allied to an unparalleled theological sensitivity: I have never read an exegete more convincingly able to expound the thought, one might almost say 'read the mind', of a biblical writer. In 2000 Vanhoye also published, in Italian, a commentary on *Galatians*, and the 2011 revised version of that has been edited and revised by Peter Williamson for this edition. Williamson has, by his own account, not only updated footnotes and bibliography and added 'sidebars' and other bits and pieces, but also suppressed such detailed exegesis as 'would be of interest to graduate students and scholars but [is] less pertinent to a pastoral commentary'.

I venture to suggest that the flaws in this volume – one that is nevertheless worth reading – have two sources. The first is that process of revision that Williamson has undertaken. It is not that he ought not to have done so: having read much of Vanhoye's work, though alas not having access to his '*Lettera ai Galati*', I would be willing to bet that he has modestly underplayed the amount of work necessary to make a Vanhoye commentary fit for this series. But Vanhoye's strength lies to a great extent in his mastery of exegetical nuance, especially in his superb grasp of the subtleties of the original Greek text, to which this present volume scarcely refers. Inevitably, but also tragically, we find ourselves hearing the great Cardinal's voice with our ears deliberately plugged.

The second reason why this book is flawed relates more, I suggest to the nature of the material – the difference between *Hebrews* and *Galatians*. In the case of the former, the identity of the author, and the time and place of writing are unknown. More importantly, the wiser exegete reckons that we do not need to know them. The message of *Hebrews* is not dependent

upon a particular situation, except that it follows the crucifixion; certainly some historical critical scholars have (mistakenly, I propose) sought to discover a particular ‘issue’ in a particular ‘community’ against which alone the Epistle can meaningfully be read, but part of Vanhoye’s greatness lies in showing that *Hebrews* can and should be read theologically, that its message is not determined by historical hypotheses. Such is not the case with *Galatians*. This letter has, since long before the rise of the historical critical method, been interpreted against a more or less explicit reconstruction of the situation in Galatia, a situation in which a group of ‘Judaising Christians’ is seeking, whether out of malice or out of theological folly, to impose Torah observance upon converts to Christianity from paganism.

Having such ancient roots, this historical reconstruction is not one of those ‘assured results of biblical criticism’ that are the product of post-enlightenment scholarly confidence, held by everyone in one decade, widely derided in the next. These a Catholic commentary can and should ignore, or at least not depend upon. But the story of the Judaising Christians in Galatia is as much a part of Catholic tradition (albeit with a very small ‘t’) as it is a central part of the Tübingen Hypothesis with its explicitly anti-Catholic reading of the early history of the Church. We should therefore not be surprised that Vanhoye and Williamson also take it as read. This is unfortunate, because I believe it to be a mistake, springing from a fundamental failure to interpret correctly – nay, really even to take seriously in its plain meaning – *Galatians* 6.12f, and from a failure to observe the vital distinction between those in Galatia who are acting hypocritically out of fear of persecution and those potential persecutors of whom they are afraid.

This dependence upon an insufficiently careful and nuanced reading of the historical situation behind *Galatians* is by no means fatal. The message of the Epistle is still the same, that the Cross of Christ is the source of all salvation and the fulfilment of God’s promises to Israel, the manifestation of his faithfulness; and that to preach anything other than Christ Crucified is a betrayal of the Gospel. Vanhoye expounds this axiom of Pauline theology with his customary brilliance and shows the consonance with it of the Catholic Faith in all its richness. If you want a commentary on *Galatians*, you could do a lot worse; but if you want to discover Vanhoye, you could do a lot better.

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THE THREE DYNAMISMS OF FAITH: SEARCHING FOR MEANING, FULFILLMENT AND TRUTH by Louis Roy, *OP Catholic University of America Press*, Washington DC, 2017, pp. xii + 236, £36.50, pbk

Louis Roy begins by speaking of ‘the faith experience’ rather than simply ‘faith’. In spite of current scepticism, and widespread rejection of religion,