

progresses from corruption to reform, from enmity to alliance, from ignorance to knowledge. It looks curiously old-fashioned. But in other ways, it is very post-modern: from a disarmingly personal perspective, he gives us stories about celebrities, events that have random twists and turns to them, and no final and definitive conclusion about the meaning of the Reformation. While surveying a distant religious and political culture, he has been subtly conditioned by his own.

Reid has crafted a sparkling account of human drama and historical change. He has read and travelled widely and shared the fruits of his experience and insights in a fluent and readable way. His enthusiasm is infectious, and his controversial statements and judgements will stimulate debate. He is proud of what Scotland has become, and traces much of it to the momentous events of the sixteenth century.

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***Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, Crawford Gribben and David George Mullan (eds), Farnham: Ashgate, 2009, pp. 260, ISBN 9780754667155. £55**

For a long time, the Reformation has been regarded as having had a deeply negative effect on literary endeavour in Scotland. The verdict of writers such as Edwin Muir on the Reformation's attempt to 'crush the poet with an iron text' ("Scotland 1941") has been accepted almost without question by later commentators, and exists still. Typically, in his book to accompany the 2004 TV series *Writing Scotland: How Scotland's Writers Shaped the Nation*, Carl Macdougall writes, '[i]n early times our writers' imaginations soared with divine inspiration. But since the Reformation, literary flights of fancy have been darkened by Calvinism' (p. 130).

However, there is a new consensus emerging in historical and literary studies which questions such certainties, and regards the Reformation rather more positively than before. Rather than having a purely destructive and crushing effect on Scottish literature, it is

suggested instead that the Reformation was a permissive and exciting development in Scottish culture which led to new literary movements of worth. Crawford Gribben and David George Mullan's edited volume, *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, is at the heart of this rehabilitation and reassessment of the evidence.

Not surprisingly, the introductory chapter, by Crawford Gribben, will be of most use and interest to general readers. Here the development of the traditional view is traced and assessed, and the alternative view is offered, from Robert Crawford's assertion of the 'literary and theoretical potential of the iconoclastic temper at the heart of Scottish Reformation thought', to Patrick Collinson's argument that 'the Reformation was awash with words', which in Scotland was an 'immense[ly] creative as well as disruptive influence' (p. 6). A key point made in the Introduction is that 'it now seems clear that Muir and MacDiarmid overstated the social hegemony of the Reformed church' (p. 9), and several of the contributions in this book substantiate this claim.

As the argument runs, there is no doubt that as a religion of the Book, the Reformers in Scotland sought to overlay and interpret, define and control to some extent, the Scottish nation. But they did it through writing – by allowing and encouraging writers to develop a wide variety of forms of literature to realise their goal. Writing the nation, in political, economic, literary and social, as well as in religious terms, was encouraged through reference to theological and biblical ideas. However, competing systems of belief continued. The continuation of Roman Catholicism, the varieties of Reformed theologies, and the competing political theories that existed in the centuries thereafter, all suggest that the Reformation's control as a unitary force was far from complete. And, as this volume demonstrates, it encouraged literary production of all sorts as the forum for debate. Writing and Reformed religion were closely intertwined.

Those who are not part of the purely literary or historical field of study will perhaps note with a wry smile the mention of the work of theological interpreters such as T. F. Torrance, who have quarried literature to 'vindicate their authors' often competing theological presuppositions', each having identified their subject as

a ‘battleground of competing ideologies’ (p. 8). Such interpretations, suggests Gribben, are not to be used uncritically: rival concerns of historical theologians, he argues, must not be allowed to limit the possibilities of literary research – as if literary critics are completely free from such rival concerns and presuppositions and their work may be used completely uncritically! That quibble aside, the Introduction to this book is a model of clarity, and of the effective marshalling of a vast quantity of literary evidence to make its point.

The subsequent chapters are more specialised in their scope, although David George Mullan’s article on “Writing the Scottish Reformation” and Marina Dossena’s contribution on “Language Attitudes and Choice in the Scottish Reformation”, both setting the context in which specific writers will be placed, are wide-ranging and revealing. In the second part of the book, covering “Texts”, the work of various writers is considered. Amanda J. Piesse discusses “Allegory and Reformation Poetics in *Ane Satire of the Thrie Estaitis*”; this is followed by a reassessment of John Knox’s prose by Rudolph P. Almsy, and then “King James VI and I as a Religious Writer” by Astrid Stilma. The religious poetry of Alexander Montgomerie is considered by Mark S. Sweetman, and an exploration of the influence of Scottish writing on sixteenth-century English religious verse is offered by Deirdre Serjeantson. While written with the literary scholar in view, each of these contributions will be of interest to anyone familiar with the texts under discussion – or wishing to become familiar.

In the third and final part, the reception of writing from around the time of the Reformation is discussed. Adrienne Scullions asks if *Ane Satyre* (sic) in production should be considered “Political Theatre or Heritage Culture”. Martin Holt Dotterweich explores the influence of Murdoch Nisbet’s New Testament on Lollards and Protestants. Both articles shed new light on the long-term influence of these specific texts.

In his concluding remarks, David George Mullan argues that ‘[r]eligion in the sixteenth century did not stifle and constrict human imagination, but rather enabled it, though not always without some dire results, for this literature is the product of conflict and the quest to achieve something better, if not an ideal form’ (p. 249). Such an

assessment sums up the argument of this book, which stands as a fitting tribute to the pioneering work of Professor David F. Wright, to whose memory it is dedicated.

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Sin and Politics: Issues in Reformed Theology, Jeong Kii Min, New York: Peter Lang, 2009, pp. 266, ISBN 9781433103728. £49.60

The making of this book illustrates well the spread of Reformed theology. The Korean author wrote this as a doctoral dissertation at Fuller Seminary in California, using primarily Dutch theological sources. Seeing political theology as the church's response to the increased politicization of society, Jeong Kii Min places the need for this book in the context of the twentieth century, which saw 'political theology' originate primarily in European Catholic and Lutheran sources, and become further developed through American Evangelical political action. Into this theological discipline Jeong Kii Min offers this work as a Reformed 'systematic political theology' (p. 7): one based in a methodical exploration of doctrinal themes of creation, *imago Dei*, sin, evil, angelology, ecclesiology, eschatology, Christology, and the Trinity.

The main intellectual debts of this work are to Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and Herman Dooyeweerd, and the heirs to this Dutch Reformed tradition in Europe and America. Scottish theologians are not considered. The book is broken into three sections, reflecting the Reformed narrative structure of history: "Politics Without Sin", "Politics Within Sin", and "Politics Beyond Sin". This displays the creational nature of politics, the distortion of politics by sin, and its final redemption in Christ.

Part One examines the Reformed teaching on the origins of politics. Here Jeong Kii Min shows that Reformed theology views