Literature and the Scottish Reformation


Digital Object Identifier (DOI): 10.1017/S0022046910002654

Link: Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer

Document Version: Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In: The Journal of Ecclesiastical History


General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Jane Dawson

The Journal of Ecclesiastical History / Volume 62 / Issue 01 / January 2011, pp 165 - 166
DOI: 10.1017/S0022046910002654, Published online: 14 December 2010

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0022046910002654

How to cite this article:
doi:10.1017/S0022046910002654

Request Permissions : Click here
and Jesus ‘the just but merciful Friend’ (p. 94) with whom Scots empathised on a humane level, Mary had a far wider range of roles – as divine mother, as God’s chosen vessel, as a divine entity not quite linked but yet not quite separate from the Holy Trinity and, most strikingly, as ‘virtual co-redeemer’ (p. 186) with Jesus in interceding with God on behalf of humanity. Interdisciplinarity is a central approach in the text, and the visual element of this is supported by a collection of high quality plates, which is well meshed with accompanying discussion throughout. One of the major successes of the book is the way in which it demonstrates the ordinariness of late medieval piety in Scotland, in both the day-to-day sense of ritual, liturgy and worship, and in terms of Scotland’s location squarely within the realm of late medieval European Catholicism, right up to the seismic juncture of 1560.

STEVEN JOHN REID

University of Glasgow


JEH (62) 2011; doi:10.1017/S0022046910002654

The volume’s title quietly flags up an important distinction. The contributors are concerned with literature and the Scottish Reformation rather than literature in the Scottish Reformation. For much of the volume the reader is assumed to possess considerable familiarity with the main events and characters inhabiting the literary and religious worlds of early modern Scotland. The self-consciously non-denominational approach and the examination of different aspects of the interaction of literary and religious ideas and practice during the early modern period does offer a welcome variety. However, the effect is more like a rainbow coalition than a predominant colour. The collection is divided into three main sections – ‘Contexts’, ‘Texts’ and ‘Reception’ – and while such categories offer a clear strategy, they only provide the loosest of threads to bind the chapters together. There are a range of detailed and specialist studies of specific authors with Sir David Lindsay and John Knox each being discussed in two separate essays. A direct explanation of the premises underlying the book is provided in the introduction. Gribben challenges the view commonly held within literary circles that the Scottish literature produced during this period was of little importance and places his defence of Reformation writings within the wider debate concerning the canon of Scottish literature. A different type of overview is provided by the other editor, with Mullan’s survey of writing during the Reformation laying the foundation for subsequent essays. Mullan’s concluding thoughts, helpfully showing how the Bible remained as a key constant, does give extra glue to hold the volume together. Within the ‘Context’ section, Allen makes a strong and convincing plea for the importance of neo-Latin literature. He underscores the valuable point that, with the exception of liturgy and biblical translation, the choice between Latin and the vernacular was not made upon confessional grounds. Being seen to be within the mainstream of European intellectual life by publishing in Latin was as important to Protestants as to Catholics. More generally, Scotland was an active exporter as well as an importer of culture during this period. Having rehabilitated neo-Latin writings, it was a pity that the
volume contained no essay upon Scottish Gaelic literature. More narrowly focused studies were placed within the ‘Texts’ section. In addition to two interesting pieces on Knox, one on Lindsay Montgomerie and Hume of Godscroft, James vi is examined as a religious writer. The late 1580s saw this royal author cement his Protestant reputation and align himself with European Protestantism. Also linked to James’s role and cleverly using Henry Lok’s work as a case study, Serjeantson redresses the ‘normal’ assumption that literary influences between England and Scotland only flowed from south to north. The section on ‘Reception’ brings together very different approaches and subjects. Scullion discusses the production of Lindsay’s Satyre during the twentieth century and why it has been performed in Scotland at particular junctures. By contrast Dotterweich’s essay on Murdoch Nisbet’s Scots translation of the New Testament fixes upon sixteenth-century reception and traces how that particular text brings to light new detail about the early Protestant underground movement. In a pleasing and varied manner this volume substantiates Gribben’s claim that this period’s literature has been unfairly downgraded and the essays provide a fine start to its rehabilitation.

JANE DAWSON

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH