## **Book Reviews**

Douglas H. Parker, ed. William Roye's *An exhortation to the diligent studye of scripture and An exposition in to the seventh chaptre of the pistle to the Corinthians*. U of Toronto P, 2000. Pp. 244. \$65.00.

An exhortation to the diligent studye of scripture and An exposition in to the seventh chaptre of the pistle to the Corinthians consists of two texts translated into English and published together in a single volume in Antwerp on 2 June 1529. The Exhortation is a translation of Erasmus' Paraclesis; the Exposition is Luther's commentary on 1 Corinthians 7. The translator was William Roye, who assisted William Tyndale in the translation of the New Testament beginning in 1525. Roye emerges in this publication as a capable and politically engaged translator whose work supported the goals of the Reformation in England during its formative stages. Douglas H. Parker presents a superb critical edition of this significant publication. The scholarly components Parker assembles around the text, particularly his own critical introduction and commentary, show the rich associations between the religious and political context and the stylistic and bibliographic elements that comprise the material production of this text in its historical moment. As such, Parker's text is a significant contribution to Reformation history, and should be welcomed by scholars and teachers of English, History, Religion, and Theology.

Roye's goal, however, was to encourage and support the English "reformist agenda" by issuing Erasmus' appeal for accessible, vernacular translations of scripture, and by supporting Luther against the intense opposition he encountered in England.

As Parker observes in his introduction, Roye's rendering of Erasmus' Paraclesis was only the third of Erasmus' works to be translated into English at that time. Moreover, the translation of Luther's commentary was the first major translation of Luther in English. The politics of Roye's work as a translator is most evident in the joint publication of these two major but disparate figures. In Parker's own words, "the present work is crucial to the history of Reformation literature, history, and theology because for the first and last time it yokes together, between the covers of the same book, Erasmus and Luther, thereby suggesting to the unsuspecting reader a compatibility and harmony of thought and ideology that neither figure would have been prepared to credit" (4). Roye's goal, however, was to encourage and support the English "reformist agenda" by issuing Erasmus' appeal for accessible, vernacular translations of scripture, and by supporting Luther against the intense opposition he encountered in England, where orthodox church leaders, including Cuthbert Tunstall, who burned copies of Tyndale's New Testament, viewed him as an "arch-heretic." Luther is absent from subsequent editions of Roye's text for this reason.

The *Exhortation* begins by considering the power of language, as Erasmus sets the classical resources of eloquence and philosophy against the plain but profitable language of scripture and the *philosphia Christi*, or the "immortall fontayne of Christes pure philosophye" (74). Parker offers a striking comparison between Erasmus and Milton in terms of this contrast. Aware of his enrichment by the classical tradition, Milton nevertheless intended to soar "Above the Aonian mount," or to place the Bible above the classics in his epic subject (6). Extending Parker's fine insight, we might compare Erasmus' description of scripture as a "songe" that can "entyse and move the mindes of all men" (74) to Milton's sense of being "Smit with the love of sacred song" in *Paradise Lost* (3: 29), and to his praise of "Sion's songs" in *Paradise Regained* (4: 347).

While both Milton and Erasmus affirm the literary supremacy of the Bible at the expense of classical models, the political thrust of Erasmus' argument is towards an egalitarian commonwealth of biblical literacy: "I do greatly dissent from those men which wold not that the scripture of Christ shuld be translated in to all tonges that it might be read diligently of the private and seculare men and women" (77). The text contains Erasmus' perhaps most famous declaration of support for the vernacular scripture: "I wold to god the plowman wold singe a texte of the scripture at his plowbeme" (77). This statement became central to Tyndale's purpose, and Roye must also have recognized its political charge.

1 Corinthians 7, the text of Luther's commentary, concerns the state and vocation of marriage. As such, it provides both Luther and Roye with a means of attacking the compulsory clerical celibacy enforced by the Catholic Church. As Parker observes, "Papal dicta requiring a celibate clergy are shown to be unscriptural, and, specifically, anti-Pauline" (25). Luther demonstrates that "no choice of life or occupation is inherently superior to any other" whether single or married (25). Parker places the attack on celibacy in relation to Luther's core value of justification by faith, which places the inward disposition above any imposed regulation. As Luther puts it, "yt were profytable and nedefull that nothynge were called after the name of the sprete excepte only the inner lyfe of fayth whiche ys in the harte" (102). Placing the text in its broadest perspective, Parker also observes that Reformation polemics are by nature polarized and divided, characterized by "wildly different versions of interpretation or hermeneutics held by forces on each side of the ideological divide" (26). It is precisely this polarity of interpretations generated from specifics texts that makes Parker's subject matter so vital for students of literature, history, and religion.

Parker offers an account of Roye's style as a translator that is as rich as his survey of the political context. Parker's excellent analysis of Roye's choice of words, use of doublings and synonyms, and selection of familiar proverbial phrases, offers great insight into the craft as well as the politics of translation, and gauges their possible effects upon readers of the time. The text also offers a complete descriptive bibliography of editions from the 1529 text Parker uses through to a final edition, without Luther's commentary, published in 1548. A generous and erudite scholarly commentary is followed by a list of emendations and variants, and a full glossary of archaic words that will support readers of this old-spelling edition. With this solid array of components surrounding and supporting the central texts, Parker's commendable edition has much to offer students of bibliography and textual editing as well as scholars of the Reformation and its English contexts.

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## **Works Cited**

Milton, John. *The Complete Poems and Major Prose.* Ed. Merritt Y. Hughes. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1984.