

respectively are notable for their avoidance of the old arguments and for the new ground they strike. However, other parts are less impressive. The last section on “Situating Christian Apologetics” is rather impenetrable, and ends with the aforementioned reiteration of apologetics as engaging with science – although admittedly, it would be odd to have a book on apologetics that does not touch on the familiar ground of faith, reason and science. This is perhaps a strength of the book: that it acknowledges the limitations of the apologetic genre, whilst working within it to draw out new and interesting variations on the themes.

Nevertheless, there is a clear thread throughout *Imaginative Apologetics*, which means that all the various themes are linked up and presented as a coherent whole. Furthermore, this is a more accessible book than its academic credentials might suggest, and a more ecumenical one than the subtitle seems to indicate. The emphasis on the Catholic tradition is largely due to the links that that tradition has with philosophical and theological thought, which in many cases is being ignored or misappropriated within the sphere of the recent debates. All in all, this is an interesting and constructive book, in which in some of the contributions will prove more useful to the debate than others.

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***Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425–1650: From Late Medieval Classic to Early Modern Bestseller*** (St Andrews Studies in Reformation History), Maximilian von Habsburg, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 364, ISBN 978-0754667650. £70

This scholarly work hales from the ‘other side’ of South Street to St Mary’s College in St Andrews, coming from Andrew Pettegree’s Reformation Studies Institute. It is a rewarding tribute to the growing belief that spirituality is not peripheral to the study of religion, but is

at its heart. Today, scholars seek out the connections between belief and society, and between belief and the individual person. With works such as Max von Habsburg's here, the possibility for dialogue and the mutual enrichment of theology, spirituality, and history is secured.

After the Reformation, one might assume that the devotional medieval bestseller Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi* would be forced to go underground in Protestant countries. After all, Calvin had called Philip Jacob Spener's spiritual writings 'poison from the devil'. Kempis's work might have been similarly classified, and for good reason, for it is a carefully articulated ladder of merit, directing one to climb to heaven through humility, penitence, and regular partaking of the Eucharist.

However, careful research by von Habsburg has revealed that the *Imitatio Christi* not only increased in status and reputation after the Reformation, but it did so among *both* Catholics and Protestants. Having played a role in the conversion of Ignatius of Loyola, it became the main arsenal in the Jesuit apostolate, equipping missionaries to persevere by its very attentiveness to the interior life. For Protestants, it too played a key role, particularly in countries where doctrine and controversy had taken centre stage, and the nurturing of the soul had been left behind in the fray. With the exception of the Bible, the *Imitatio Christi* was the most frequently printed book of the sixteenth century.

Is it simply the 'universal appeal' that some have claimed for it, that can explain the boundary-crossing phenomenon of the *Imitatio Christi*? Or is it that Protestants were not as 'converted' as they thought themselves to be? Von Habsburg does not romanticize Kempis (and nor does he enter the distracting authorship debate) but instead proposes to study the entwined religious and secular context for clues as to how Protestant values were conditioned to embrace the *Imitatio*.

Chapters Two and Three pay close attention to the Devotio Moderna movement and its transitional spirituality, which provided a bridge of sorts between late medieval devotion and the Reformation. Certainly, its christocentric accent, interiority, Biblicism, and privileging of the vernacular fertilized the ground for the Reformation. It embraced the medieval religious culture and reshaped it according to an interior framework, by downplaying external forms of piety (the saints, the

host) and channeling them toward an interior embracing of Christ (through silent prayer, constant contrition, and an acceptance of suffering). It was in this context that the *Imitatio Christi* was written, copied, and distributed for the devotional life of those – both inside and outside the cloister – who were associated with the *Devotio Moderna*.

The printing press brought the *Imitatio Christi* from the status of “Manuscript Classic to Early Printed Bestseller” (as Chapter Four is titled). Given that manuscript copying and *rapiaria* (spiritual notetaking) had a devotional dimension for those in the *Devotio Moderna*, it is not unsurprising that over 800 manuscripts alone still exist from within the first century of its composition. The Latin text made its way to England by means of the Carthusians in the 1430s, but it was not until the early 1500s that the first text in English was printed, commissioned by Henry VII’s mother, who undertook the translation of Book IV herself.

However it was the ‘protestantizing’ of the *Imitatio Christi* in the early sixteenth century that is the unique historical and theological interest of von Habsburg’s book. Why would Protestants undertake such a translation – particularly when all the Magisterial Reformers had purposefully steered clear of such works? And how would they appropriate it for their own purposes? The Protestant Reformation was anything but monolithic, as Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight explore. In some cases, it made the need for a devotional book such as the *Imitatio* all the more pressing. For example, the Radical Reformer Caspar Schwenckfeld, unhappy that the Lutheran Reformation was not leading people to live holier lives, defected to a more ‘spiritualist’ position, and found in the *Imitatio* a spirituality perfectly suited to his stress on perfection, holiness, and freewill. Schwenckfeld’s translation in 1531 was the first Protestant translation, which was then used by others (such as Castellio) for reference in their own translations. In England, however, it was not the radicals who promoted it, but those in the highest political and ecclesiastical circles: it was seen to be in the national best interest to encourage purity of living, as this would hopefully suppress heretical and violent religious counter-movements. The most popular works of the Elizabethan era were of Catholic origin – as long as they had been happily exorcised of references to the Mass, monastic life, the saints, purgatory and merit.

For Protestant translators, there was one higher call than a humanist fidelity to the original author – and that was fidelity to the supreme Author. The translators spoke of ‘leaving out the corruption’ and ‘taking onely that which was sounde.’ For Thomas Rodgers of England, Kempis ‘was not fully enlightened’ and thus had to be censored by Scripture – making the work of translation not only interpretive but also exegetical. In all cases, Book IV (on the Eucharist) was removed and instead the devotional language was purified to suit Protestant ears. For example, feast days were omitted and instead the ‘Sabbath’ was recommended; the renewal of strength was not acquired through the saints but through ‘helping the poor’; the intrinsic reward in right-doing was not counted as meritorious but instead as ‘highlie pleasing to God’. Even humility is given a Protestant gloss, as that ‘dejection’ that comes from being laid low by God, rather than some virtuous attitude that one is able to attain by oneself. Yet despite these subtle changes, the *Imitatio* – with its stress on interiority and obedience to the divine will – was still relevant to both a sacramental and non-sacramental church, a flexibility that made it suitable alike to Catholics, continental Protestant radicals, and moderate Elizabethan England.

Chapters Nine, Ten, and Eleven of von Habsburg’s book turn to consider Jesuit appropriation of the *Imitatio*, esteemed by Ignatius of Loyola as the ‘partridge of spiritual books’. For the Jesuit missionary, the inward spiritual progression was vital to an exterior mission in the world, which could only be sustained by interior strength. Again the flexibility of the *Imitatio* was paramount, suited equally to those called to contemplation, action, or both.

The final appendix in the book is devoted to a comprehensive bibliography of the *Imitatio*, itself worth its weight in gold. Although hindered by the diminutive nature of devotional books and the fact that they were often not catalogued, von Habsburg presents a lengthy survey of all known copies and editions from the period under investigation.

It is one of those tantalizing facts of history that both Ignatius of Loyola and Jean Calvin studied at the Collège de Montaigu in the same decade, perhaps even crossing paths. One could say that the *Imitatio Christi* bears this out, as both Protestant and Catholic reform

movements benefited to a greater or lesser degree from this work, reflecting important continuities in piety across early modern Europe. It is not so much that the *Imitatio Christi* is ‘timeless’, but that it was an ideal document precisely for its time, reflective of the ethics, interiority, and possibility for renewal in a certain time and culture ‘deeply attached to the humanity and suffering of Christ’ (247). Von Habsburg’s rewarding book illustrates this admirably.

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*The Kirk and the Kingdom: A Century of Tension in Scottish Social Theology, 1830–1929*, Johnston McKay, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012, pp. 128, ISBN 978-0748644735. £45.00

I read this book, Johnston McKay’s Chalmers Lectures for 2011, the same week as was published the report to the General Assembly of 2012 of the Special Commission on the Purposes of Economic Activity (the ‘Munn Report’). The report addresses the inequalities in contemporary Scottish society which perpetuate poverty, and invites the church to become engaged in the ‘transformation of economics’. In the course of its analysis, the report records that the UK has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the industrialised world and notes that the income of the top 10% of earners is approaching levels last seen at the end of the Victorian era.

This last reference is not the only thing that situates the report in direct line with McKay’s study of the development of social theology which begins in Victorian Scotland. That the commission should contain in its membership not only ministers and elders but also representatives from varied sectors of secular society, and that it should engage with political issues without apology or explanation, both acknowledge the innovative theological work of nineteenth-century churchman Robert Flint, who proposed that Kingdom and Church were not identical.