

## Reviews

**CAJETAN'S BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES: MOTIVE AND METHOD** by Michael O'Connor, *Brill*, Leiden, 2017, pp. xvi + 302, £145.00, hbk

In 1524 the famous Dominican Tommaso de Vio Gaetani (Cajetan) began a massive study of sacred scripture. He decided to revise the text of the Vulgate, book by book, in the light of Hebrew and Greek sources and to comment on the sense of the revised text. Such massive undertakings were by no means unfamiliar to Cajetan; he had already written a multivolume commentary on Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* (1507-1522) and he had also enjoyed a brilliant and successful career: Master of Theology and Professor of Metaphysics at the University of Padua (1494), Master of the Order of Preachers (1508-1518), Cardinal (1517), Bishop of Gaeta and Papal Legate tasked with investigating Luther (1518). Yet this scriptural project, begun at the age of 55 only a few years after investigating Luther, would occupy Cajetan until his death in 1534 and provoke controversy in subsequent years.

Much of the controversy stemmed from the character of the commentaries and their connection to the events of the Reformation. Cajetan was content to revise the text of the Vulgate according to the best scholarship available to him and to expound that text with less reliance on patristic sources than was usual at the time. He rarely referred to the Reformers directly and for the most part seems to have regarded them as merely in error rather than formally heretical. Indeed it was not until 1533 near the end of his life that he recognised their schismatic tendencies and criticised them more forcefully. Such an irenic approach did not prove congenial to the Dominicans Ambrosius Catharinus and Melchior Cano or the theologians of the University of Paris. The Reformers remained largely unmoved by Cajetan's work but were happy to attack his Parisian critics. The Council of Trent placed greater weight on patristic consensus than the singular prestige of St. Jerome and thus took a different view of the Canon to Cajetan. More than a century later the French Oratorian Richard Simon would praise elements of Cajetan's approach and later still a popular view would emerge that these commentaries were written just to attack the biblical exegesis and theology of the Protestant Reformers. It is into these deep waters that Michael O'Connor leaps with his fascinating book. He argues that Cajetan's Commentaries were written for 'the reform of the Church' (p. 1) and that therefore they were 'more a work of 'Catholic Reform' than 'Counter-Reformation'' (*ibid.*), that Cajetan's method was 'heavily inflected by Renaissance humanism' (*ibid.*), and

that Cajetan's approach fell 'somewhere between' (p. 196) St John Fisher's traditionally Catholic exegesis and Luther's Protestant approach.

O'Connor divides the structure of the book into three sections. The first contains two chapters that examine Cajetan's life and career. It aims to show that Cajetan was generally committed to reform, both in the Dominican order and in the Church, and that the bible was the tool Cajetan would use to achieve that end (chapters 1–2). The second section also consists of two chapters. It shifts the focus to the commentaries themselves and highlights the need for reform among priests, bishops, the papacy, the faithful (chapter 3), and the Reformers (chapter 4). The third section is the longest. In four chapters it examines Cajetan's method of scriptural study by focusing successively on Cajetan's revision (correction as O'Connor prefers) of the Vulgate's text (chapter 5), Cajetan's commentary on the literal sense of the text (chapter 6), Cajetan's use of scripture to interpret scripture (chapter 7), and it finishes with a discussion of the major reactions to the commentaries (chapter 8). The conclusion locates Cajetan's work both in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and in the history of biblical exegesis.

So what should we make of O'Connor's book? Well generally it is very good and very interesting and it is certainly well worth reading. There are a few caveats, however. First, O'Connor's view of 'reform' is problematic. The evidence offered as indicative of Cajetan's desire for reform is subject to alternative explanation. Thus one can readily agree that Dominicans should attend to common life and study (p. 33), that moral corruption and spiritual ignorance in the Church (p. 51) are matters of concern, that a lack of peace among Christian princes (*ibid.*) is troublesome, and that priests should not love and abuse money (p. 81) without also regarding oneself as a reformer in any significant sense of the term. The concept of 'reform' used is too broad: at p. 211 we learn the bishops at Vatican II were 'reformers', so O'Connor is committed to a view of 'reform' that applies to Cajetan, Luther, and the bishops at Vatican II equally. How can such a concept be analytically useful in the scholarly assessment of a thinker whose work will need to be distinguished in some way from that of Protestant Reformers?

Secondly, whilst O'Connor recognises irenic quality of Cajetan's approach he fails to appreciate the full implications of this. It is reasonable to think prior to 1533 Cajetan had viewed Luther and his followers as erring Catholics who could yet return to a correct understanding of the faith. As such in Cajetan's view they were still part of the Church in some sense and therefore given O'Connor's contention these commentaries were written for Catholic Reform, then Lutherans turn out to be very much a part of Cajetan's intended audience.

Thirdly, once we recognise this Cajetan's emphasis on the literal sense of scripture makes sense; it was the only way to communicate with some of his hoped for readers because it was the only way Lutherans read scripture. An analogous point could be made for the other part of

Cajetan's intended audience, Catholics without Lutheran tendencies. After all, it would be a brave Dominican who expected his audience to have mastered both the *Summa Theologiae* and his even longer Commentary on the *Summa* in order to understand his points. Doubtless much more could be said. Still it is a measure of the richness of O'Connor's book that we can now better appreciate the nuances of Cajetan's position.

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**ALL GREAT ART IS PRAISE: ART AND RELIGION IN JOHN RUSKIN** by Aidan Nichols OP, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2016, pp. xiii + 613, £80.95, hbk*

Since the 1980s there has been a remarkable resurgence of interest in the work of John Ruskin (1819-1900), owing to the recognition that Ruskin in the 19th century raised questions which seem to be important today; it is also due to the wider academic revival of interest in Romanticism. Fr Aidan Nichols's work is an excellent contribution to this ongoing reappraisal. As this book shows, Ruskin was an astonishing figure by any standards: his interests ranged widely, but as an artist in his own right, he was most passionately concerned with the theoretical problems posed by his own empirical observations of nature and art. It was love of nature which preceded and dominated his love of art, and for most of his life Ruskin believed that nature was a revelation of God's glory designed for the moral improvement of humanity. He began to write on art because he thought he had found in Turner an artist who shared this view of nature, and because he believed in the power of art to transform the lives of people he considered oppressed by visual illiteracy rather than material needs. His motto was 'there is no wealth but life'. The title of this book, *All Great Art is Praise*, is another of his slogans. With the revolutionary approach to criticism displayed in his *Modern Painters* (1843 - on) he became the leading art critic of the Victorian era. His best-selling *Stones of Venice*, (1853), which argued that a nation's buildings and its morality are inseparable, became the highly influential bible of the Gothic style for the period. His other well-known study, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), sought to catalogue the experience of the built environment on the basis of the morality. He despised capitalism and believed in education, giving his name to an Oxford college devoted to the education of the working class, as well as to the Ruskin School of Art. And his social teaching inspired the Labour Party, Gandhi, and Tolstoy, who said Ruskin thought with his heart, as shown in the famous treatment of social justice in *Unto this Last* (1860). These pieces are representative of a very complicated and paradoxical