

*Sébastien Castellion: Des Écritures à l'écriture.* Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud, ed. Bibliothèque de la Renaissance 9. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013. 562 pp. €49.

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In the English-speaking world, the sixteenth-century Savoyard Sebastian Castellio has been made familiar to readers through the work of Roland Bainton and Hans Guggisberg; the latter's biography remains the most accessible treatment of the

humanist's life and thought. Yet, we have only part of the story. The Castellio we know is closely associated with the debate over toleration in the Reformation following the execution of Michael Servetus, as the Basel professor participated in a fierce exchange with John Calvin and Theodore Beza.

Castellio the translator and interpreter of the Bible, the subject of this large collection of essays, is less well known. The volume brims with new information and fresh insights on the work of one of the most talented humanists of his age, a man Calvin had every reason to fear. The contributions are not limited to the sixteenth century, for a central theme of the book is the reception of Castellio's thought in the early modern and modern periods. Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud is to be congratulated on assembling such a range of prominent scholars prepared to explore in depth the multiple ways in which Castellio acted as teacher and translator of the Bible. The contributions introduce us to how he dealt with sources, his methods of translation, and his hermeneutic thought. These aspects of his life and work, as well as his posthumous reputation, were profoundly shaped by his engagement with the subject of toleration.

It is impossible in a short review to do justice to the richness of the essays, but mention of a selection of themes can provide a good sense of the range and depth of the scholarship. Opening contributions deal with the reception of Castellio by Stefan Zweig (Olivier Millet) and with the Savoyard as a fashioned hero of French liberal Protestantism (Valentine Zuber). This appropriation of the Savoyard as a harbinger of freedom of conscience built on eighteenth-century scholarship, when Enlightenment thinkers remembered Castellio for his biblical work and involvement in the Servetus case, which only confirmed the monstrous behavior of John Calvin. Crucial to the emergence of the twentieth-century view of Castellio was Ferdinand Buisson, whose extraordinary work on the sources is a monument to the spirit of French Protestantism in the early part of the twentieth century.

Many of the essays raise questions about Castellio's self-perception. What was his status as a layman translating the Bible, who thereby moved into the territory of the theologians? Castellio defended the idea of translator as theologian against the attacks of the Genevans, who charged that he was not qualified to deal with theological ideas (see the contribution by Nicole Guenier). The portraits provided by the authors in this collection reveal Castellio perched on the edge of the Swiss Reformed churches, working alone and closely connected to radical thinkers.

For Castellio, his devotion to the classics and ancient literature was at one with his commitment to the Bible. One of the most fascinating essays is by Irena Backus, who examines Castellio's use of Josephus in the Latin Bible of 1554 to fill in the historical gap in the story of the Maccabees. Castellio's passion for editing classical texts is noted by several scholars, but is incisively treated by Jean-Michel Roesseli's account of the Latin translation of the *Oracula Sibyllina*. Also worthy of special mention is the work of Carine Skupien-Dekens, whose treatment of the French translation of the Bible is grounded in detailed textual analysis of syntax to reveal how Castellio's distinction between passages of scripture he deemed "divins" and those he regarded as "humains" shaped his approach

to the text. In the “humains,” Castellio sought to bring the best possible literary approach to translation.

The subject of tolerance is given full treatment by Maria d’Arienzo and Stefania Salvadori. D’Arienzo concentrates on the influence of legal thought on Castellio’s conception of tolerance, while Salvadori clearly outlines the boundaries, or limitations, of that conception. Their work is handsomely complemented by Daniel Ménager’s interpretation of Castellio’s *Conseil à la France désolée*, written at the height of the French Wars of Religion and a text that demonstrated Castellio’s doubts and pessimism about the character of humanity. The collection ends with a series of translations of texts that will be gratefully received by readers unfamiliar with Castellio’s Latin writings.

Castellio was a truly distinguished figure of the sixteenth century and one of the most learned men of his age. His command of Hebrew and Greek (he was professor of Greek in Basel) was matched by few others. Most remarkably, as these essays admirably demonstrate, he worked largely alone. Somewhat isolated and always living on the cusp of penury, Castellio labored on scripture in a distinctive manner in which he brought to bear on the text not only his command of classical literary styles, but also his own profound piety. He sought to translate and interpret the text according to the principles by which Christ taught men and women to live. One of the most striking aspects of the collection is the way it highlights the differences between, on one hand, how Castellio understood himself and his work and, on the other hand, the causes for which he was enlisted by posterity.

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