

the Greek text, they provided another avenue through which his approach to, and understanding of, the Scriptures could be expounded. Even more than in the previous section, this material is organised thematically, collating some of his principal insights on the Scriptures (covering themes such as the nature of the biblical canon, the authority of Scripture, and its text and language), the use of the Bible in theological debates, ‘Church and society’ and ‘people and places’ (the last of which captures some of his thoughts on individuals including the humanists Guillaume Budé and William Warham, and the family of the Holy Roman emperor, Charles v). In the final section (again a single chapter), the volume draws together a number of letters in which Erasmus reflected on his biblical projects at greater length, as well as a couple of dedicatory letters. This is the only chapter where material is drawn from earlier volumes in the *CWE*.

The volume as a whole begins with an introductory essay which provides a brief overview of Erasmus’ work on the New Testament, as well as some context to each of the main components of his *oeuvre* reflected in this volume. Each chapter, and each main subsection, opens with an introductory section in which Sider provides the context and provides a gloss or rationale for the selection of material which follows. There is sparing use of annotations on the texts themselves: typically, there are two or three footnotes to each page. But the texts are clearly cross-referenced to the *CWE* so the reader who wishes for more by way of explanatory material can turn to that much fuller resource should they wish. The twenty volumes of Erasmus’ New Testament writings in the *CWE* would – for most readers – be overwhelming. This volume gathers together, in little more than 300 pages, extracts which highlight the diversity of that work, and provide an insight into that huge *corpus*. Of course, any other editor might have made a different choice, but Robert Sider has here made a compelling selection which showcases the work of the Dutch scholar with sufficient – but not too much – supporting apparatus. It works very well as a volume in its own right, but if it encourages readers (and one imagines these may be especially university students and a more general audience) to refer directly to volumes within the *Complete Works* as well, it has more than served its purpose.

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

KENNETH AUSTIN

*Season of conspiracy. Calvin, the French Reformed Churches, and Protestant plotting in the reign of Francis II (1559–60)*. By Philip Benedict. Pp. xii + 224 incl. 2 ills. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society Press, 2020. \$37 (paper). 978 1 60618 0853

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Philip Benedict’s *Season of conspiracy* opens like a detective novel. A police detail interrogates Pierre Menard, a Lyonnais cabinetmaker, about his role in the abortive conspiracy to seize control of Lyon during the tumultuous events of 4–5 September 1560. Faced with torture, ‘Menard’ admits his involvement in smuggling weapons and soldiers into the city and hiding them. He confesses that his real name is Gilles Triou, and that he entered Lyon from Geneva. Thus begins Benedict’s painstakingly detailed research connecting the Conspiracy of

Amboise (9 March 1560), the Lyon ‘Maligny affair’ of 4–5 September and members of the nobility and French Reformed Church in further conspiring that continued well into October. Their intent was to compel Antoine of Navarre to accept Huguenot military assistance for a rising to force the calling of the estates-general which, it was hoped, would eliminate the Guise regency and endorse Antoine’s influence over the young Francis II. As an important by-product, the estates would call for a reformation of religion in France and the elimination of the Guise family from power. Catherine of Guise, Duke Francis, the Cardinal of Lorraine and other members of the family were instrumental in persecuting the fast-growing French Protestant movement. But on 30 October, to the consternation of the plotters, indecisive Antoine and his Protestant brother Louis de Condé meekly entered Orleans and submitted to the crown. Benedict concludes that the magnitude of the conspiracy startled the royals and brought even greater repression onto the Protestant movement.

Benedict first reviews the historiography of the three events, creating yet a second detective chronicle every bit as fascinating as the first. ‘Historians’, he notes, ‘repeat one another’. Protestant apologists, writing just after Amboise, blamed adventurers in the nobility for the conspiracy and downplayed the role of the Reformed Church and especially of John Calvin. This narrative was repeated intact by most French historians over the succeeding centuries. But was that accurate? Like all investigators, Benedict asks, ‘Who knew what, and when did they know it?’ Many French records were purposely destroyed after the death of Francis II. In late 1800s the Genevan council registers, city legal proceedings, consistorial records and registers of the Company of Pastors all began to be transcribed, catalogued and printed. Calvin’s and Beza’s correspondence also became available, allowing their letters to be linked with people and events. Incriminating links between many of the City’s French pastors and *habitants* in the Amboise conspiracy and the Maligny affair quickly emerged. In fact, two Genevan historians, Henry Naef (1922) and Alain Dufour (1963), and Robert Kingdon (1956) all noted Calvin’s likely involvement in the plotting by cross-referencing these sources.

But Benedict advances this linkage many steps further, benefitting from access to additional source material from France, England and Switzerland. He tracks some of the major conspirators back to Geneva; in fact, two even lived on the same street as Calvin. Others were French *émigré* friends. The Reformer is discovered to have contributed his entire savings to the venture. As much as the Genevan Church and councils sought to retain ‘plausible deniability’ of involvement in the plot for fear of angering the French crown, it is improbable they were innocent. Fifteen participants at Amboise appear in the Genevan *Livre des habitants* and resided in the city, and between seventy and 400 Genevans participated in the event.

The plot was destined to fail. It was so widely discussed, both in correspondence and face-to-face meetings across Europe, that it was uncovered by those loyal to the monarchy a full three weeks before it would have been executed. Benedict also uncovered a fascinating link between Amboise and Queen Elizabeth. Correspondence implicated her government and Scotland’s ‘Lords of the Congregation’ with the plotters. They had a common enemy: the Guise family.

Mary Queen of Scots (the young wife of Francis II) and her mother Mary of Guise sought to control political and religious events in Scotland as a stepping-stone toward dethroning Elizabeth and allowing Mary to reign in both countries.

This book is a masterful example of original source historical research. Benedict connects people and events in a web of conspiracy that propelled them all into the French Wars of Religion. It is well-written, and the conclusion cogently argued. It does require a solid knowledge of the era, for Benedict devotes little space to introducing the reader to the broader picture. It does, however, fill in over the course of the book, and a second reading is much more illuminating. For any student of this era, Philip Benedict has performed an invaluable service and advanced his reputation as one of the great scholars of this period.

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

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*Libri e biblioteche. Le letture dei frati mendicanti tra rinascimento ed età moderna. Atti del XLVI Convegno internazionale. Assisi, 18–20 ottobre 2018.* (Società Internazionale di Studi Francescanti.) Pp. x+444 incl. 11 figs. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 2019. €50 (paper). 978 88 6809 266

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The role of the friars' libraries in the Middle Ages has generated a large literature, especially lists of books or the inventories of the vast libraries of the Sacro Convento in Assisi, the Basilica del Santo in Padua, Santa Croce in Florence and San Fortunato at Todi. Such libraries sustained and informed the friars' studies and teaching, playing a central role in the scholastic life of the order. A team of scholars has now carried forward this examination of the friars' books and conventual libraries from the Renaissance to the modern age and has opened up research on the later period of Franciscan history with realignment of theological studies in the aftermath of the Council of Trent. Papers by Edoardo Barbieri, Ugo Rozzo, Francesca Nepori, Domenico Ciccarello, Giovanna Granata, Giovanni Grosso, Antonella Mazzon, Flavia Bruni, Massimo Carlo Giannini, Gabriella Zari and Fabienne Henryot were delivered at Assisi between 18 and 20 October 2018.

Domenico Ciccarello's 'Tra grandi biblioteche e grandi lettori: i Conventuali' traces the question of learning and books from the *Regula bullata* and the general constitutions of the order. More than once the author points to the recent research by Pietro Maranesi. Theological study presupposes books, as Bonaventure pointed out in his *Epistola de tribus quaestionibus ad magistrum innominatum*, a treatise which is cited from the Seraphic Doctor's *Opera omnia* of 1898 rather than from the more recent edition of Fr François M. Delorme of 1951. Books were the key to the friars' studies and their successful programme of expounding the Gospel to contemporaries. The general constitutions of Narbonne in 1260 continue the theme raised by Bonaventure in his afore-mentioned treatise. Attention was given to the provision of books and the need to take care of them, especially for students at the *studia generalia*. Once again the author prefers to cite Fr Michael Bihl's edition of the general constitutions in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* of 1941 rather than the new edition published by Frs Cesare Cenci and George Mailleux in 2007. The