HOLINESS
THE JOURNAL OF WESLEY HOUSE CAMBRIDGE

Reviews

***Martin Luther**: Renegade and Prophet*, Lyndal Roper (London: Vintage, 2017), 592 pp, £14.99 pbk

This is the kind of book that probably only about a few dozen people in the world can properly assess. With its 110 pages of tightly printed footnotes, meticulously substantiating the version of Luther's life presented here, there will not be many who have the knowledge and authority to offer a counter-claim such as 'no, you're wrong there: Luther didn't do that'. And I am certainly not one of those few dozen! I have, though, wrestled with Luther's thought and its impact in different ways for nearly four decades and so felt it was high time, in this 500th anniversary year of the 'Wittenberg Door' event, that I engaged seriously with his life in its entirety. In this way, perhaps, I would make better sense of what I did know about Luther's thought and belief, and how they emerged from, were shaped by and in turn shaped his own experiences and actions, and the lives of many others both contemporary to him and in the centuries to follow.

Reading this magnificent book was an ideal way to do that. Appearing as it does at a time when, predictably, a flurry of biographies have appeared – including Scott H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* (Yale University Press, 2016), Heinz Schilling, *Martin Luther: Rebel in an Age of Upheaval* (Oxford University Press, 2017; a translation of the 2012 German original) and Peter Stanford, *Martin Luther: Catholic Dissident* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2017) – it is inevitably not going to be possible to adjudge definitively that this or any other text 'really has' captured the essence of Luther. And this is no comparative review anyway. What critical engagement with this text does provide, though, is an opportunity to take note of what its author, Lyndal Roper, Regius Professor of History at the University of Oxford, suggests were key emphases in Luther's

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Volume 3 (2017) Issue 2 (Holiness & Reformation): pp. 317–321
ISSN 2058-5969

life and thought and, for the purposes of this journal, to reflect on how those emphases have or have not been helpful for or influential upon Methodist and Wesleyan recipients of and respondents to Luther and the Lutheran tradition.

What, though, to begin with, of the book itself? It has 19 main chapters, filling, after a 16-page introduction, a little over 400 densely packed pages. There are also 75 black and white illustrations and a dozen colour plates which are not simply there for light relief or window-dressing. Discussion of these is interwoven with the text in an informative way. Together, words and images bring Luther and the German Reformation to life within the context of the multiple Reformation movements which blossomed in the first half of the sixteenth century.

The Luther that emerges is indeed a radical, though with plenty of inconsistencies in thought and practice thrown in. He was not straightforwardly from peasant or working-class stock, despite his claims (pp. 17–19), though his father's employment in the mining industry connected Luther from his early life with the challenges and fluctuations of commercial life. It, and his later monastic experience, also made him aware of the importance of good management (p. 62). The educational influence of his mother's family was important and perhaps opened Luther up to think more widely about possible avenues to follow than the legal career which his father hoped for him (pp. 38–41). Becoming a monk was an obvious act of rebellion against his father, though was not a life that he particularly enjoyed. It did, however, enable him to construct the platform, through study and spiritual discipline, upon which he was later able to build, and through which he was able to process the many, rapid-moving developments which the Reformation movements would press upon him.

The passage of time from Luther's arrival to be a resident (as opposed to a student) in Wittenberg, in 1511 (when 'the town was a building site', p. 77), through to when he began his travels to defend himself in public across the German-speaking world is handled in Chapter 4. Luther's sheer industry, intellectual creativity and existential courage is reflected here, and includes the famous 95 theses. Roper highlights just why the theses were so shocking (p. 99).

The intense years (1519–30) from the Leipzig debate, through the three crucial 1520 texts and the Diet of Worms to the Diet of Augsburg, at which Luther could not even appear, occupy 11 chapters and inevitably form the heart of the book. It is in many ways invidious, and somewhat arbitrary, for a reviewer

to attempt to distil particularly striking insights, but there are conclusions and observations made by the author which do stand out. The driving force of Luther's anger, as a creative impetus to the development of his thought, is noted at many points. If it turned into irascibility and sheer venomous cantankerousness, especially in his later life, it also fired him up and led him to new discoveries at key points. Luther's physicality – his earthiness, his robust, positive approach to sexuality, his love of food and drink, his attentiveness to bodily functions – features throughout. Its theological importance not only in informing his embodied theology, but also as it related, perhaps surprisingly, to his high view of Communion, is accentuated. For all their significance, the philosophical debates about the elements at the Mass were not all that were influencing the decisive and sometimes violent disagreements about 'Communion in both kinds'. The physical energy and stamina needed for lengthy journeys should also not go unnoticed. In days of air and rail travel to 48-hour conferences it is sobering to be reminded of the many risky journeys of many hundreds of miles – on foot, or by cart – to protracted disputations and debates that Luther had to make, necessitated to save his own skin, as well as to plead the cause and defend what he deemed to be a divinely inspired position. With hindsight it is easy to see that these disputations *were* the party political conferences and the international summits of their day, and what is telling now is the relative absence (and at what cost) of theological and philosophical elements in current similar events.

In the midst of the author's enquiry into all of this there are sharp observations made about the emerging emphases of Luther's theology: a 'bleak' concept of salvation (p. 118), which would eventually mingle both gloominess and liberation (pp. 167–168); the crucial importance of fatherhood as a theological category, though of God's distance rather than closeness (p. 206); the acute psychological insight brought by his opposition to free will, despite its unmodern origin and nature (pp. 288–289). Such wrestling occurred as he worked with friends and allies to further the cause of the Reformation, yet as he also fell out (an understatement!) with many who had been allies. In many ways this theme becomes a central thread of the final four chapters of the book, one of the chapters (17) being entitled 'Friends and Enemies'. At many points Roper observes that Luther, in becoming more parochial and entrenched as time went on, did not enable the more conciliatory approach which may have led to greater evangelical/Protestant unity to hold sway. Despite his fluctuations through time, there were certain key convictions on which he would not shift, and he needed, to the end, to be 'right' on so many counts.

There was not much 'give' in his approach. Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of the author's interpretation of Luther is her reminder that his 'relationship with God was not that of a believer cheerfully confident of having been "saved"' (p. 421).

Roper's book is, then, an appreciative, appropriately contextualised account of Luther's life, which does justice to his drive, energy and lasting impact on European thought and political life without glossing over not just the personality flaws but also the deeply damaging aspects of his views (his anti-Semitism, for example). The account also displays an informed interest in Luther's psychology without being reductionistic.

What, though, is to be made of such a reading of Luther among Methodists? At a recent church meeting in the UK at which a talk had been given on the (largely positive) significance of Luther for Christianity in the West a helpfully dissenting voice raised a query as to whether we should, as Methodists, be straightforwardly affirming of Luther's influence. Luther had after all, said the respondent, sided with the princes over the peasants. His decision and his political commitments had cost many lives. It was a helpful corrective. While similar criticisms of John Wesley's political conservatism can also be made, there is no direct equivalent to Luther's role in the peasant wars. It has to be accepted that others among Luther's contemporaries (Andreas Karlstadt in particular) were more sympathetic to the peasants' cause than Luther, an insight which highlights the lingering ambiguity about whether 'the Reformation' can unequivocally be regarded as a people's movement.

The question as to the way in which Methodism can be deemed a Reformation movement remains live. As a branch of Protestantism emerging from the Church of England, sparked off, in part, by Wesley's heart-warming reading, in 1738, of Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans the answer may seem self-evident. But emerging from a Church which claims both Catholic and Reformed roots and, as Methodist–Roman Catholic conversations have long shown, given that there are creative points of contact between Methodism and Roman Catholicism which belie easy assumptions about the route from the Reformers to Methodism, there is much more to be said.

There are, though, also tough things which Luther and Lutherans need to say to Methodists. In the same way that Luther's 'earthiness' challenged those in his own day who, in his view, overemphasised the spiritual at cost to the material, the challenge is sometimes still needed now. It is always easier for the materially comfortable to emphasise the spiritual, after all. The sheer

radicalness of Luther's insistence on the futility and unworthiness of human activity (as having anything at all to do with the receipt of God's grace) may have been apparent to, and understood by, the Wesleys. And it did not, of course, mean that 'good works' had no value; you simply had to be aware of the basis on which they were being done. But not all who have inherited and made use of Luther's emphasis here – Methodists included – have been able to distinguish human worth (utterly dependent on God, but still real) from seeking, and trying to earn, that worth. Low self-regard and manic activity can be easy partners, whatever is being said on Sundays, or whatever it is thought is being believed. Roper's book offers a timely reminder that Luther was thinking, believing and writing prior to the emergence of modern understandings of 'the self' and conscience.

Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet is, then, a hugely stimulating read. Whether or not it proves provocative among Luther specialists (I cannot judge where its particular 'take' on Luther may be controversial), as an account of his life and thought it sounds totally plausible. It is extremely well written. Without signalling to the reader elements which resonate with today – which would have compromised the style and approach of its scholarship – it presents plenty of material which invites contemporary reflection. Theologians may wish for more digressions, and nuanced engagement, about Luther's writings. But in a book of this kind, Roper has got it about right: enough discussion to make clear what was at stake, and clear location of a text's importance in Luther's life, and the context of his times. It is to be hoped that Methodists, and many others, will read the work. Luther was not a comfortable figure, but he was profoundly influential, and justifiably so. Reading this book explains why and would give all readers influenced by Western European culture insight into what we should be inspired by, and wary of, as we continue to be influenced by Luther.

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***Reformation Divided:** Catholics, Protestants and the Conversion of England*, Eamon Duffy (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 441 pp, £30.00 hbk

Towards the conclusion of his biography of Sir Thomas More in 1557 – one of the first biographies ever written in the English language – Archdeacon Nicholas Harpsfield made a remarkable, even for some a faintly ludicrous, claim about his subject: 'he was the first of any whatsoever layman in England that died a martyr for the defence and preservation of the unity of the Catholic Church. And that is his special peerless prerogative.[1]

Writing as part of the official campaign under Queen Mary Tudor to reintroduce and re-instil Catholicism into the public worship and private devotion of the English people, Harpsfield placed More at the very heart of his appeal, and in that reflected one of the key strategies of the regime. For Harpsfield, as for his boss, Cardinal Reginald Pole, it was critical that the nation was asked to reconsider its recent past, and thus to understand afresh, both the reasons for the upheaval and turbulence of the preceding few years and that the solution to the country's woes was the very policy of reconciliation with Rome which the Queen had pursued. Absolutely central and critical to this right reading of recent history in their minds was the right reading of Sir Thomas More and his stand against King Henry's 'Great Matter': his divorce from Queen Katherine of Aragon.

It's perhaps time again for our reading of Sir Thomas More to be re-examined and recalibrated. Hilary Mantel's very particular interpretation, in *Wolf Hall*, is still fresh in our minds, and has more recently been brought vividly to life by Anton Lesser on our television screens. Her More is the fanatical heresy-hunter, dour, zealously intent, ferociously purposeful in his unbending quest to stamp out error. The contrast with Robert Bolt's *Man for All Seasons*, the phlegmatic champion of individual liberty of conscience, equally memorably played by Paul Scofield, could not be more pronounced. But both evocations are woefully inadequate and profoundly misinformed. The Thomas More who became idolised, by Nicholas Harpsfield and by the generations of English Catholics who read his works and claimed his theological and ecclesiological inheritance, was neither of these things. Nor did his singular importance rest, for them, on his piety, or his pursuit of heresy, or his bravery, important (if often

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Volume 3 (2017) Issue 2 (Holiness & Reformation): pp. 322–325
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misunderstood) though those things were. Rather, the qualities that made him a statesman also made him a saint: wisdom and foresight. More, unique among his contemporaries (apart from Bishop Fisher), and although not a renowned supporter of papal supremacy, foresaw what others could not: that Henry VIII's royal supremacy in church matters, whatever promises or assurances were given, could have no other outcome than a descent into division, disavowal of the common Christianity of the known world, and a constant process of rebellion and revolt among the English people. By 1557, no one could claim that he had been wrong, whatever their religious convictions.

This absorbing, entertaining, constantly enlightening and thoroughly readable collection of articles by Professor Eamon Duffy reflects his main scholarly concerns across several decades. If his seminal work in *The Stripping of the Altars* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), which offered a compelling and challenging evocation of the real power of medieval Catholic piety and devotion over English hearts and minds on the eve of Reformation, is the work by which he is best known, this collection reminds its readers of other areas in which he has offered a careful and convincing corrective to prevailing historical opinion. Chief among them is the Marian reintroduction of Catholicism in England from 1553 until the Queen's death in 1558, an effort until recent years usually felt to have been moribund and ineffective, and thus to have failed, partly through its reliance on a discredited figure such as Thomas More. Duffy has no truck with either proposition.

In Part One, Duffy draws together and revises three earlier pieces on More: a more general reappraisal of the man and his contribution, together with considerations of two of his most important, and commonly criticised, works: the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* and the *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*. Seeking to extricate More from the anachronism of many recent attempts to understand him, Duffy carefully sets the man and even his most polemical writing against the backdrop of his age and the common outlook of his times. Far from the rabid fundamentalist of Mantel's novels, still less the ranting hysteric others have claimed to see here, More emerges rather as the kind of rigorous humanist whose approach to the great causes of his life in fact feels rather reminiscent of that of Luther or Tyndale himself, and all of a piece with the Catholic world he inhabited and defended and whose collapse he feared would bring anarchy in its wake.

Thus, Part Two of the collection follows on from this rehabilitation of More to focus on the English Counter-Reformation. It begins with the generation of

Nicholas Harpsfield, seeking to present More to the English as the icon and emblem of what had befallen them, and of the unity with all humanity now being restored under the influence and guidance of Queen Mary, the child of King Henry's one healthy, happy marriage. There are helpful reminders here of the ways in which Duffy has sought to reappraise the efficacy of Marian religious policy, most fully in his book *Fires of Faith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009). Beginning with his study of the place of preaching under Reginald Pole's policy and in the Archbishop's own practice, the collection charts the contours of Duffy's impressive contribution to scholarship on English Catholic identity.

In this regard, pen portraits of two of the English Counter-Reformation's most influential and controversial leaders, William, Cardinal Allen and Gregory Martin, are included, and both articles seek, like earlier pieces, to set these men more carefully against the canvass of their own time in order the better to appreciate their unique approach and creative contribution. Following on from this, Duffy explores the difficulties and divisions within the English Catholic community, especially after the papal excommunication of Queen Elizabeth in 1570 invited her Catholic subjects to overthrow her. Duffy's meticulous historical research, combined with his engaging prose, make a winning combination here, revealing the true nature of these intra-religious disputes, and offering a striking description of the impossibly difficult position in which the Pope left his English followers and of the conundrums to which it led.

Much of this section of the book, it should be noted, is very directly aimed at the collection's dedicatee, the late Professor John Bossy, whose propositions about the shifting character of English Catholicism during and after the Reformation Duffy acknowledges as having been highly influential, even as his own research seemed to undermine their credibility. It is nevertheless a very touching tribute, from one enormously generous scholar to another, and Duffy frequently cites his indebtedness to Bossy, even when disputing his theses and ideas. This section of the book in particular, although constructed out of several discrete articles, holds together remarkably coherently as a whole, and constitutes a helpful gathering together of some of Duffy's most pertinent writing in an area still demanding further investigation and assessment.

The book ends with some mostly older pieces, culled from a variety of sources, including the *Epworth Review* (Vol. 12, 1985), and refreshed for republication. Here, Duffy returns to scholarly concerns from earlier in his career, including the character of the Puritan movement and its influence on the English Church,

and the divergence of theological approaches taken by Puritan ministers in the care and formation of their flock. Pleasingly prominent here is the figure of Richard Baxter, a West Midlands Presbyterian for whom Duffy, an Irish Catholic who spent some formative years in Birmingham, obviously holds a great regard and depth of appreciation. Baxter's moderation, pastoral wisdom and thoughtful preaching were for a time the cause of considerable renewal among the Christian people of Kidderminster. A pair of articles in this collection commemorate his career, but more particularly locate him carefully against the varied contentions and often heated division of his contemporaries.

This well-crafted and thoughtfully constructed cornucopia of scholarly insight ends on a rather touching ecumenical note, with Duffy's short account of the life and influence of George Fox, the founder of the Quakers. Here again, he does much both to dispel common misapprehensions and to offer a portrait at once more honest and yet for all that more compelling. Supervised as a doctoral student by Professor Gordon Rupp, the Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge, Eamon Duffy's influences and interests have always been broad and generous. To end on a personal note: when he began supervising my own doctoral work, on Nicholas Harpsfield, there were those who asked me why I would, as a Methodist myself, research Catholicism. The question for me was always answered by the kind of ecumenical richness and benefit which a collection like this brings and makes plain. In this 500th anniversary year of the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation, this wide-ranging and always fascinating collection by one of the Reformation's finest historians demonstrates how pivotal, critical and formative this crisis in European Christianity was and still is. More than that, it reminds us also of how grateful Protestants and Catholics ought to be that, in our time, we are now able to be enriched in our appreciation of our own tradition by the observations and insights of those we once considered the religious 'other'.

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Note

1. E. E. Reynolds (ed.), *Lives of Saint Thomas More* (London: J. M. Dent, 1963), p. 170.

***Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God**: The Wittenberg School and its Scripture-Centered Proclamation*, Robert Kolb (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 517 pp, £29.99 hbk

It's hard to know which book on Luther to trust these days – particularly this year, of all years! Luther's celebrity, eccentricity and exceptional influence (both religiously and culturally) make him ripe for skewed interpretations of his priorities. Kolb's study may appear to offer yet another voice in the crowd; yet it stands apart for its rigour and its faithfulness to Luther's overall tenor, showing – in immense detail – the richness of Luther's fundamental priority and commitment to the Word of God.

This book offers an expertly detailed grasp of Luther in his Wittenberg context, showing the background and key tenets behind the exegetical revolution which catalysed the Reformation. Although the political and sociological factors surrounding 1517 and beyond must never be dismissed, Kolb reminds us that this Scripture-centredness was paramount to the Wittenberg project, which was so influential on subsequent reform movements. We see particular insight into Luther's theology of the Word, which is quite possibly the highest imaginable. For Luther, the Word (in Scripture, preaching and sacrament) is the creative and reparative source of all life, and the prism throughout which all else is interpreted.

Luther, of course, did not develop his understanding of the Word in a vacuum, nor via a revelatory bolt of lightning! We see a healthily nuanced awareness of Luther's relationship to medieval theology – by which he was neither unaffected nor determinatively influenced. This blend of historical and theological analysis is incisive, and situates the book amid the likes of Ocker's *Biblical Poetics before Humanism and Reformation* (2008) and Oberman's *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (1963), with which Kolb regularly interacts. Indeed, Kolb shows critical awareness of those who would misunderstand Luther's relationship to his context, resisting the temptation to fall into anachronistic readings.

As expected, Kolb gives a thorough account of Luther's exegetical world, including his use of (and departure from) medieval allegorical exegesis, his Christocentric reading of the Old Testament, his law–gospel hermeneutic, his

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awareness of canonical and historical-critical issues, and his approach to biblical diversity. Here we are able to observe Luther's exegesis *in action* in various ways throughout his enormous output as a preacher, a pastor, a commentator, a translator and a professor. We see his narratival and imaginative lecturing style, bringing the Word to life for both hearer and reader, and providing a tangible sense of what it meant for Luther to recover the 'privilege' of the accessibility of God's Word in his context.

Kolb also goes in-depth with Luther's theology, addressing many of the relevant and controversial theological themes, such as justification, nominalism, divine hiddenness, and the enigmatic relationship between Scripture and tradition. We see how, for Luther, all tradition (including Lutheran tradition!) remains subject to the judgement of Scripture in every age and context. Kolb's account delves deep into close readings of the primary sources (often including his own translations) of a whole variety of sixteenth-century texts, ranging through sermons, treatises, pamphlets, lectures, commentaries, letters and edited student notes. This includes not only Luther's own material (of which there is a great deal) but also others around the Wittenberg context and beyond who were influenced by the movement as a whole, as Luther's students and colleagues continued 'the Wittenberg message' in inventive ways in the next generation.

Indeed, one of the strengths of the book is in drawing attention to the 'teamwork' ethos at Wittenberg. On the contentious issue of the various 'edited' versions of Luther's writings, Kolb notes insightfully: 'The Wittenberg project was not about Luther; it was intended to convey God's Word to a larger readership' (p. 170), also adding that in virtually all cases what was published in Luther's name – however tweaked – accurately reflected what he wanted to convey publically (p. 171). We also see the different sermonic forms and preaching styles in the Wittenberg circle, the distinction of the sermon as a unique genre, and the different ways preaching was received and understood as a media event, including its uniquely political dimensions.

Although this book is exceptionally detailed in its analysis of key texts, it does risk becoming a little bogged down in such details at the expense of a coherent overall narrative. Indeed, at times the chapters could almost be read as separate essays, and it is no coincidence that a good deal of these chapters were previously published as articles. The Wittenberg connection and the overall theme of 'the enduring Word of God' (connoting the famous maxim which appeared on the title page of Luther's 1534 translation of the Bible) helps hold

the individual studies together in a general sense, though certainly more could have been done to show their connection. Overall, however, the book succeeds marvellously in its close attention to Luther's exegetical and homiletical context and the cross-fertilisation of the Wittenberg circle. It will itself undoubtedly endure as a landmark study for many years to come.

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***The Whole Church Sings**: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg*, Robin A. Leaver (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 206 pp, £17.99, pbk

Robin Leaver draws on a range of perspectives in this insightful examination of congregational hymnody in Luther's Wittenberg. Drawing on the breadth of his scholarly expertise in church history, Lutheran theology and musicology, and combining attention to fine details with lucid and economical prose, he argues for a re-evaluation of the generally accepted view that congregational singing was slower to take hold in Wittenberg than elsewhere. The historical significance attached to Luther's contribution to the repertoire and practice of congregational hymnody makes this an important book for anyone interested in the history of liturgical music, most obviously, though not exclusively, in relation to any of the church traditions that trace their heritage back to Luther. A general level of familiarity with the historical context of the Reformation is necessary, and a basic level of musical literacy would be useful, although not essential. The book is accessibly written, but also demonstrates considerable academic rigour; readers with a deeper scholarly interest in the topic will find much important information in the extensive footnotes and appendices, particularly concerning aspects of publication history.

The book is an argument-driven examination of the evidence of liturgical publications mostly from the 1520s, and Leaver is forthright in his intention, 'It challenges some of the conclusions that have been drawn from the available evidence and attempts to provide new perspectives on the old treasure of the earliest Wittenberg hymnals' (p. vii). He begins by setting out the various ways in which vernacular song would have permeated everyday life in Wittenberg, as elsewhere, in the early sixteenth century, paying particular attention to the influence of *Leisen*, religious folk songs often sung at major festivals. Permeating the many references to musical practice that Leaver describes is a clear understanding that words and music, separately and in combination, were important influences in shaping religious beliefs and attitudes. Furthermore, the use of congregational music in religious practice drew on existing materials and customs, but reshaped them for a new context: 'not the wholesale replacement of the old by the new but rather the re-formation of what was old and good' (p. 80).

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The central focus of the book is a small hymnal rediscovered in 1894, the *Enchyridion*, published in Wittenberg in 1526. Leaver argues that this volume has not received the attention it deserves, as it has not been considered as a primary source. By examining its contents in fine detail and comparing it with other known sources, he posits that it is in fact a third edition, following on from two earlier versions, now lost, printed in Wittenberg in 1524–25. Though conjectural, the argument is persuasive thanks to Leaver's careful attention to detail, and it presents a fundamental challenge to the received view that congregational singing did not flourish in Wittenberg until at least 1529. In turn, this calls for a new understanding of the emphasis Luther and his colleagues placed on congregational participation, from the very beginning of their work.

This is an important book for anyone with an interest in the history of congregational song and the role of music in the Reformation. It is also a significant affirmation and example of the benefits of considering congregational song in a holistic way: as words and music, written, compiled and practised in specific contexts.

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All Things Made New: Writings on the Reformation, Diarmaid MacCulloch (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 464 pp, £25.00 hbk

Diarmaid MacCulloch's latest book is a highly enjoyable, eclectic series of essays, the nature of which is best summed up by it's subtitle, 'Writings on the Reformation'. The range of the essays presented is vast, from attitudes to angels and the Virgin Mary in the Reformation to the story of the seventeenth-century forger Robert Ware, and the fact that they represent MacCulloch's reflections on the last 25 years of Reformation scholarship. Every essay included has appeared in print before and several were originally book reviews.

If the range of the subjects covered is great, then equally the joy of reading many of the essays lies in the vast range of knowledge which the author demonstrates. The article on Robert Ware, for example, carefully places him in his own historic context, as well as exploring how the forgeries continued to shape Reformation scholarship until relatively recently. The essays on the early English Reformation brought to life just how complicated and broad the Reformation would have seemed at the time.

Readers may find that this vast range is both the strength and the weakness of the book. It is beautifully written and often witty and there is a great deal here to interest someone who has some background in Reformation history but who is not necessarily a specialist. At the same time, terms are not always explained and at times lesser-known individuals are referenced in a way which assumes a fair amount of knowledge from the reader. It is also worth noting that in places the focus of attention is on how the Reformation is and has been studied, rather than the events themselves; I suspect that the eclectic nature of the essays may prove less than attractive for some.

MacCulloch writes as an Anglican, but most definitely not only for Anglicans. Those who have read some of his other work will not be surprised at the strong emphasis, underlined again in the final essay, that Anglicanism is a product of the Reformation, albeit a unique one; an argument I can only support. Methodists and others may well appreciate his acknowledgement on the final page that Anglicanism, which he describes engagingly as a 'trial and error' form of Christianity, has made mistakes and that losing the Dissenters and the Methodists, and of course killing Roman Catholics, are some of the worst.

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The book came out in 2016; writing this review less than a week after the horrific events in Charlottesville gave particular resonance to the argument made in the Foreword that history has a moral purpose in preventing societies and institutions telling themselves badly skewed stories about the past and thereby 'collectively going insane' (p. xiv). If, as he acknowledges, Professor MacCulloch has concentrated his efforts on Anglicanism, he has nevertheless served a much broader audience.

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Brand Luther, Andrew Pettegree (New York: Penguin, 2016), 383 pp, US$18.00 pbk

On 31 October this year the world will celebrate the moment 500 years ago when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, a small town in Saxony, south of Berlin, thus signalling the beginning of the Reformation. This new book by the historian Professor Andrew Pettegree is an entirely fresh look at the origins and growth of the movement until into the early seventeenth century.

Pettegree, an expert in the history of printing, presents Luther as the one who more than anyone else exploits the enormous advantages of the printing press 70 years after its invention by Gutenberg in Mainz. He presents Luther as the world's first master of mass communication as well as a revolutionary theologian and biblical teacher. He demonstrates very skilfully the many advantages that Luther exploited – the devotion and loyalty of the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, who, though himself a Catholic, resisted all attempts to unseat Luther, the presence in Wittenberg of the artist and entrepreneur Lucas Cranach, whose friendship, help and illustrative work in the form of woodcuts proved invaluable, the dislike of the local populace for the constant demands for money made on them by the Roman Catholic Church in their sale of indulgences, even before Tetzel's notorious activities, and the natural advantage of Germany's possessing the most advanced metalwork industries in Europe favouring the production of printing type. This latter point is one of many most interesting, possibly lesser-known snippets of information in this most informative book.

In addition to exploiting these advantages, Luther wrote so powerfully, succinctly and directly, producing an infinite number of pamphlets, thus making things easier for the printing process, whereas many longer, detailed works would have been too costly and slow in production. He also wrote in German from the start, quickly producing the first German Bible, reaching the immediate public, while ensuring that enough works were published in Latin to reach the wider scholarly public.

Pettegree's book is extremely well illustrated, with over 50, largely half-page, black and white illustrations, maps and photographs, detailed notes, clear

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HOLINESS The Journal of Wesley House Cambridge
Volume 3 (2017) Issue 2 (Holiness & Reformation): pp. 333–334
ISSN 2058-5969

indexing, as well as chapters divided into manageable sections for the busy reader to encompass efficiently. While Luther's theology and doctrinal differences with Rome are only covered generally, the author describes the political disputes and confrontations very thoroughly, revealing the combative, uncompromising and very practical Luther who had to confront troubles such as the Peasants' War, persecution and excommunication. He also covers Luther's married life and his unsavoury views of Jews, giving a very full picture of the man and the 'brand', his exploitation of the printing technology and the resources in manpower to hand.

The book, though general in its coverage of Luther's theology, presents an original and fascinating picture of an entrepreneurial Luther, without our requiring detailed technical knowledge. The historical detail of Luther's times is sufficient to ensure our interest and understanding. Highly recommended.

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***Protestants:** The Radicals who Made the Modern World*, Alec Ryrie (London: William Collins, 2017), 495 pp, £25.00 hbk

Perhaps the warmest compliment I can offer Alec Ryrie on his truly outstanding tome is that it gave me a nightmare. This is without question a brilliant work – so forcibly impressive, indeed, that I found myself regularly haunted by nuggets of information laced with rare detail bringing to life the story of Protestants and their torturous expedition of faith; an astonishing statement from North Korea, for example (the cause of my nightmare):

> They [believers working for North Korea's internal security services] said that it was a heartbreaking job to catch Christians while they, too, were Christians, but that they had to stay in their positions because the situation could turn even worse if an evil-minded person was in that position to ferret out believers.

With an eye for forensic analysis that wouldn't look out of place in any Colin Dexter novel, and could easily hold its own in a court of law, Ryrie succeeds in turning what could, disastrously, have become an historical document as dry as Luther's bones into an immensely readable, compelling masterpiece.

Allied to what is, patently, a spectacular ability to excavate remarkably deeply in his painstaking research, repeatedly and generously laying out gems of stunning evidence in substantiation of his proposal that Protestantism is a 'cult' that 'became one of the most creative and disruptive movements in human history' ('Still the German Christians tried, vainly, to demonstrate the compatibility of their beliefs with Nazism … One German Christian publication even looked forward to a postwar world "completely purged of Judaism"'), Alec Ryrie demonstrates, with chronological clarity and consistent fairness, his skills as an historian and storyteller par excellance.

So detailed are Ryrie's tales, and sometimes so eye-popping in their substance, that one is forced to remind oneself over and again that *Protestants* really is a record of actual, factual events that shaped individual and national destinies and enormous swathes of Christendom. Likewise, so widespread and comprehensive is the content, moving with an ease that is only really appreciated in

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hindsight from Luther to Bunyan to Billy Graham to modern-day jihad, that one is sometimes left reeling by the sheer magnitude of the Protestant impact; 'reformation' becomes far too diluted and inadequate a word to ever again satisfactorily employ.

Arguably, the beauty of *Protestants* is that it would rest well on the loaded bookshelves of a professor, yet also on the less-cluttered bedside table of someone not particularly interest in reading towards a formal qualification. That is to say, this towering study would enhance academic circles while also serving as enjoyable and enriching bedtime reading for the Protestant keen to analyse and better understand the roots of their persuasion.

If it is the job of the comedian to 'leave 'em laughing', then it is the responsibility of the historian to join the dots between history that is documented and history that is still to happen. Ryrie succeeds in this too, leaving the now well-informed reader wondering just exactly where Protestantism might go next.

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