

the early seventeenth century. The impact of the Reformation is inevitably reflected in many of the articles. Kathleen Crowther surveys interpretations of the story of Adam and Eve from across sixteenth-century Germany, highlighting both the continuities and discontinuities with previous traditions, and also their variety in the Lutheran context. In similar fashion, Jussi Koivisto provides a detailed examination of Luther's reading of the serpent possessed by the Devil in Genesis iii, an idea which enjoyed considerable currency in early and medieval Christianity.

Many of the articles are at least as concerned with the Bible's readers as with those who produced, translated or interpreted it. Van Duijn, in the chapter already cited, surveys twenty extant copies of the Delft Bible in an effort to understand the intentions of the publishers. In a particularly impressive study, Sabrina Corbellini examines about 200 manuscripts of vernacular biblical material from late medieval Italy, especially Tuscany, to consider how the Bible was approached, used and understood by its lay readers. Els Agten, by contrast, uses a book entitled *Bononia*, published in 1556, as a means of appraising humanist attitudes towards vernacular Bible-reading in the Low Countries. Readers would also approach the Bible through its visual elements, and this is also reflected in this collection (not least in the almost sixty illustrations which it contains). Maria Dieters's article looks at the copy of a Luther Bible owned by an embroiderer of silk and pearl, Hans Plock, who added a series of glosses and pictures, thereby furnishing a very striking example of the way in which a reader might engage with, and personalise the text. Liesbet Kusters traces the transformation of iconography associated with the Haemorrhissa (Woman with an Issue of Blood), discussed in Mark v.21–34, across the medieval and early modern periods, reflecting the changing attitudes to the woman, and particularly her growing individuality. James Clifton looks at Dutch illustrations of the Annunciation to the Shepherds (Luke ii.8–14) produced around 1600: not only was enthusiasm for this scene perhaps related to broader artistic trends, but Clifton argues that its interpretation – and particularly the emphasis on peace – was related to the political context, and above all the Eighty Years War which was then being waged. Taken together, this set of essays sheds further fascinating light on the centrality of the Bible to medieval and early modern European culture, and the many ways in which individuals and groups, educated or not, interacted with the text. Readers will, without doubt, find many issues of interest here.

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

KENNETH AUSTIN

*The prelate in England and Europe, 1300–1560.* Edited by Martin Heale. Pp. xiii + 321 incl. 20 figs and 1 table. Woodbridge: Boydell (for York Medieval Press), 2014. £60. 978 1 903153 58 1

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This interesting and very entertaining volume presents considerable difficulties to the reviewer: it is interdisciplinary and transcends conventional scholarly boundaries of geography and chronology. Listing its twelve papers would consume much of the word-limit for this review. The introduction makes the case for studying bishops and the heads of greater monasteries together, but the contents are divided between six papers on bishops and five on abbots. Only Anne Hudson, ('Lollard views on prelates'), treats the regulars and seculars together, though

Elizabeth New's argument that their seal designs greatly influenced bishops' tombs could perhaps have been applied also to monastic memorials had more abbatial memorials survived. The contents are remarkably diverse, ranging from a miniature (Wendy Scase on John Carpenter's Carnary library in Worcester), through a closely focused examination of Cistercian artistic patrons in York province after 1400, and especially after 1500 (Michael Carter), to a wide-ranging discussion of one aspect of Crown-Church relations over two centuries as Gwilym Dodd considers the clerical – overwhelmingly episcopal – chancellors from Edward III to Henry VI, while Benjamin Thompson romps through the whole history of alien priories. Some titles are somewhat misleading; Emilia Jamrozak has actually little to say about the central European Cistercian abbots' interactions with the world compared with her accounts of their internal activities, while James Clark's 'An abbot and his books' is actually about abbots and their books. He makes a powerful case for the writing culture which surrounded many superiors. The material possessions and legacies of prelates loom large in this volume: books – both manuscript and printed, other writings, precious objects of all kinds, seals, tombs, church furnishings and buildings. Monastic histories are discussed, notably by Martin Heale in 'Monastic attitudes to abbatial magnificence', but entirely absent from this volume are considerations of bishops' registers, the basic sources for most episcopal careers. In asking why English bishops were so slow to embrace the new technology of printing as potentially applicable to diocesan administration, Felicity Heal's answer is that episcopal chancery clerks exerted a powerful conservative force defending their vested interests. Since most bishops' registers of the later fifteenth century are particularly slight and feeble, investigation of episcopal subordinates in the later fifteenth century is perhaps overdue. Very few registers survive from Wales, so it is heartening that both Elizabeth New, and Christopher Woolgar, whose subject is bishops' material possessions, present evidence from Welsh sees.

Two overriding themes emerge from this collection of papers. One is that prelates were very high-maintenance; clothed in luxurious vestments, they were surrounded by high-value furnishings, jewels and plate, and were increasingly well-housed. If they were not all as personally wealthy as some of their testamentary records might suggest, argues Woolgar, they were surrounded by the borrowed magnificence commensurate with their position. One reason why royal experiments with lay chancellors were discontinued was that kings were unwilling to reward laymen to the level of income which bishops enjoyed. Many abbots lived lavishly, surrounded by retinues whose size increased during the fifteenth century. Building was the prelates' passion. Bishops might spread their efforts between their cathedral, episcopal manor-houses and, though they are not mentioned here, their educational and ecclesiastical projects. Monastic prelates built almost entirely at their abbeys, promoting construction works with a zeal later shown by headmasters of public schools. Generations of monks at larger houses must have passed their entire life in religion on a building site. Funding for monastic projects might come not only from abbatial resources but, as Carter shows, by raiding conventual incomes, but abbots were keen to take sole credit by leaving their personal marks upon buildings. Extravagance might lead a house into debt but it was not necessarily of itself unpopular. Martin

Heale shows that expenditure on monks' living quarters and on abbey churches – to solicit lay support – won monks' approval, if not made to the detriment of a house's economy, and when abbots lived lavishly their brethren might bask in reflected glory. Moderation was everything, and this Aristotelian concept had overtaken earlier ideals of austerity and otherworldliness. Similarly bishops' wills, however businesslike, are conspicuous for their lack of legacies to the poor.

Yet a second theme is that prelates were not as powerful as they appeared. Those of the highest rank, cardinals, were very few in late medieval England, but at the court of Francis I there were twenty-five, whose promotion was a matter of importance, to their families especially. Yet once advanced they were key figures neither in royal government nor at the Curia, but were valued by the French king as members of diplomatic delegations and to add pomp and dignity to solemn occasions. Cédric Michon's contribution suggests that cardinals were essentially more decorative than useful. In England bishops' helplessness was vividly demonstrated by the crown's treatment of alien priories; it seized their property during times of Anglo-French warfare from 1295, and commandeered their patronage rights. Parliament joined in the harassment of these houses, though neither the dates 1378 or 1414 were as pivotal as Thompson supposes. Bishops, led by Wykeham of Winchester, circled these beleaguered houses, snapping them up to endow new foundations, and thus taking advantage of a situation brought about by their own helplessness. The archives of New College, Oxford, are very illuminating on this process. Meanwhile, Lollard writers, whose starting point was that prelates are not mentioned in the Vulgate, were assembling criticisms of the church leaders of their day, contrasting them with the ideals of the Early Church, and preparing the mental ground for revolutionary change.

There is much food for thought in this handsome volume, and the learned footnotes constitute a valuable resource in themselves.

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

ALISON K. MCHARDY

*Meilensteine der Reformation. Schlüsseldokumente der frühen Wirksamkeit Martin Luthers.*

Edited by Irene Dingel and Henning P. Jürgens. Pp. 296 + 34 colour plates.

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With the five-hundredth anniversary of the posting (however one wishes to conceive of that) of the *Ninety-Five Theses* fast approaching in 2017, there are a vast number of works sliding off printing presses on the dawn of the Reformation and Martin Luther. Many good, some certainly not so good. This is one of the good ones. Dingel and Jürgens (director and her associate, respectively, of the religious history section of the Leibniz Institute at Mainz) have brought us a number of excellent volumes recently and this is no exception. This is a thoughtful collection of essays by serious scholars helping to contextualise and explain some of the most important early works of Martin Luther. Most of these 'milestone' or 'key' documents get two essays. They examine, in chronological order: Luther's lectures on the Psalms, the emergence of the Reformation's essential kernel or core message in the lectures on Romans, the copy of the Old Testament that he used in his study, the *Ninety-Five Theses*, his sermon on Indulgences and Grace written