

ence in the Supper, which in turn had results in Luther's conception of the church in relation to the world. Regrettably, the troubled relationship also showcased Luther's often-vile temper, and his all-too-often intense anger toward those he deemed his enemies. Karlstadt was far from alone in finding himself the object of Luther's wrath, which could take on a coarseness that still gives pause to some even in our own day. In this, Roper presents the reader with a Luther earthier, if that is possible, than even the one found in Heiko Oberman's 1982 biography of the Reformer. Yet it is a feature of Luther with which we must become familiar (and away from which, admittedly, many a church historian in the past has directed our gaze), and he was hardly alone among his contemporaries in using such language (or imagery, as a number of the sixteenth-century illustrations in this volume graphically demonstrate)—and once again, we encounter a Luther who was very much aware of physicality, and shaped by that awareness.

Roper's biography of Luther is an important contribution to the already vast body of work on him. Some will have reservations regarding her treatment of aspects of Luther's theology (and that of his opponents, on whichever side of the growing theological divide), including what she has identified as a defining locus for Luther, the real presence. Nevertheless, this is a far richer work than a short review can describe, and will serve as one of the standard resources for understanding Luther and the Reformation for some time to come.

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A Companion to the Reformation in Central Europe. Howard Louthan and Graeme Murdock, eds.

Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 61. Leiden: Brill, 2015. xx + 484 pp. \$199.

"Man is the measure of all things," a philosopher once opined, which is a concept very much at the heart of this offering in the continuing Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition series, especially when it comes to defining such murky geopolitical notions as Central Europe at the time of the Reformation(s). Knowing full well that conceptual borders have shifted considerably since 1989, and continue to shift still, the editors chose to become the measures of things themselves and posit their voluminous research in an amorphous geographical locale better called perhaps Greater Central Europe, or, to be even more precise, every place east of Western Europe and west of Muscovy. Bringing this up is not a critique, however, but rather an appreciative nod to a book bringing together such disparate medieval and early modern lands as the Bohemian Crownlands, the heterogeneous vastness of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Habsburg domains, and Hungarian and Transylvanian regions both

free and under Ottoman suzerainty: namely, lands that have so far been less than blessed with detailed anglophone analysis, especially pertaining to the time of the Reformation(s).

The historic specificity of the narratives presented within gives one hope that the age of treating Central Europe (or Eastern Europe, or South-Eastern, or . . . however you want to call it) with broad and heavy brush strokes of (mostly) negative pre-1989 comparisons to Western European standards of historic development has been happily jettisoned, and that the liminal space in which Central European scholarship in general and Central European Reformation scholarship in particular has been brewing for the last twenty-five years or so has finally produced an outline that stands opposed to outdated pre-1989 models and the equally shaky indigenous-nationalistic vantage points that replaced them. The present volume is a magisterial, insightful, and replete collection that approaches the tangled web of Central European Reformation(s) from a variety of contextual focal points. Of course, just like the history of the region it tries to cover, this is a necessarily conflicted work: conflicted about its geographic definitions as well as the nature and composition, and even the plurality, of the movements it presents. The story covers the fifteenth to the eighteenth century and nearly as many types of Reformations as geography; here there are nods to the Hussite, urban, noble, orthodox, late, humanist, radical, and Catholic Reformations in wide panoply of analysis that tries to define common elements as well as preserve disparate meanings and national varieties.

Equally conflicted is the volume's engagement with existing historiography. A particularly favorite preoccupation of one of its editors, Howard Louthan, is the substitution of nationalistic accounts—often ingrained in the historic spirit or soul of the country discussed—with more modern and objective analysis. An example of the former would be the opinion of some critics that Poland's Reformation was nothing more than a "grand intellectual adventure" (202) of the nobility that played itself out when the nobles discovered something else to tinker with. This (almost) dismissal of the Reformation in Poland is corrected here, but no final word on the nature of the movement in the commonwealth is offered. This might frustrate the reader from time to time, as one can find the experience similar to digesting an early Socratic dialogue—the work is best at telling the reader what the point in contention is not, without ever saying what it actually is.

This is one drawback to an otherwise outstanding volume that finds itself out of necessity in confrontation with past scholarship. Nearly every chapter presents reappraisals necessitating engagements, but due to length and focal constraints deals with it in a somewhat perfunctory way; a case in point is an early chapter on the Hussite movement and its eventual appropriation back into the Hapsburg Catholic fold following the 1436–37 Basel Compactata. It's a good chapter, well researched and presented, and one that offers a reappraisal of traditional approaches, but its engagement with preceding Marxist historiography and the Czech nationalistic narrative is mini-

mal at best. A section of primary and secondary literature that follows each chapter is a good addition, but is not enough. The work almost seems to naturally beg, welcome, and require additional historiographic discourse.

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John Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion": A Biography. Bruce Gordon. Lives of the Great Religious Books. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. xxii + 278 pp. \$27.95.

It is strange to think that a book could have a biography, or that one could write the life of something that has been written. The oddity rests in the assumption that a work of literature can, perhaps in some literal sense, be born, nurtured by a community, reach maturity, and then die. As unusual as this may seem, writing the biography of a book is precisely what Bruce Gordon has undertaken in his compact treatment of the life of one of the great theological texts, John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Gordon's small work helps unravel the historical knot of a subversive document, one that was deployed, for example, to underwrite key elements of the American Social Gospel movement and yet to justify the draconian segregationist policies of South African apartheid. The author also describes how the *Institutes* came under scrutiny as one of the focal points of disagreement at key moments in the development of Christian doctrine in the United States and Europe, such as in the Princeton-Mercersburg controversy over the "static" versus "progressive" nature of divine revelation and the Barth-Brunner contest over "natural" versus "revealed" theology. In many ways, the tale of the *Institutes* is a tale of conflicts born out of sibling rivalries. And in this sense, Gordon's biography is really a story about the uses of a text by a committed readership. It is a book about the way a religious family used one of its primary texts over the course of nearly 500 years of social and political flux. Thus Gordon hasn't so much written a book's biography as a biography of a religious community who used a book to find solace in the midst of upheaval and the rationale for protest in the midst of perceived social immorality.

Over twelve epigrammatic chapters, Gordon carries the reader from the initial production of the 1559 Latin edition of the *Institutes* through 450 years of textual reception. Along the way, one encounters a steady stream of debates over the doctrine and legacy of Calvin's masterwork, ranging from Calvin's immediate ecclesiastical heirs to variegated Enlightenment responses to his eventual American reception. These contests, as Gordon points out, stand as testimonies to the subtlety, intricacy, and ultimate ambiguity of Calvin's thought, as well as the indeterminate nature of the theological tradition he helped institute and nurture. An impressive range of reactions to the *In-*