

transformed into a commercial centre after 1530. Its location, close to the Sicilian straits, a central crossing point for travelling across the Mediterranean, made it a key theatre for international influence. During the Italian Wars, whilst also witnessing constant Ottoman-Habsburg competition, – Malta was forced to shed its medieval skin, as these early modern powers transformed its society. Its location made it an ideal base for the Order of the Knights of St John, where the Hospitallers could both attack the Ottomans and other Muslim powers that threatened the sea, and provide a line of defence. Yet, as Abela makes clear, the very same group that the Knights fought against was also vital to Malta's commercial network. Malta was a key trading post with Muslims, as well as with both Jews and Christians.

This book, therefore, largely avoids the traditional military-dominant focus of Maltese history attributed to the prominence of the Knights of St John, and instead provides an account of socio-economic development, a topic that has not hitherto been addressed in such rich depth. This is made possible due to the recent opening of Malta's Notarial Archives which together with the author's work at the National Library of Malta, facilitated the production of a text based on original research. The book is well presented and structured; many readers will be pleased with its accommodating size, which is not overburdensome. In addition to its introduction and conclusion, *Hospitaller Malta* consists of four chapters and a short foreword by Maria Fusaro. The book provides a fascinating exploration of sixteenth-century Maltese social and economic history. Included are chapters dedicated to the roles and opportunities available to women, while the final chapter highlights that the island, far from being socially and commercially isolated, in fact expanded its trading networks with both North Africa and the Ottoman-dominated Levant after 1530. Overall then, this book reveals that Malta needs to be acknowledged as having greater importance to early modern history than merely as having a strong military role in the Mediterranean. Malta was an open island that profited from its open trading networks. Abela shows that as research into Mediterranean history progresses, Malta's prominence within the field deserves to be featured more prominently.

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Beyond indulgences. Luther's reform of late medieval piety, 1518–1520. By Anna Marie Johnson. (Early Modern Studies Series, 21.) Pp. xii + 227. Kirksville, MI: Truman State University Press, 2017. \$50. 978 1 61248 212 5
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In this revised dissertation, written under the direction of Scott Hendrix at Princeton Theological Seminary, Anna Marie Johnson seeks to address an important problem in the interpretation of the early Luther. Johnson argues that until very recently scholars have largely ignored Luther's pastoral and practical works as they have examined crucial years of his theological development, 1518–20. Luther the academic theologian and controversialist has received a great deal of attention, but not Luther the 'practical theologian', whose primary mission was 'to foster authentic faith' (p. 3). Most treatments of the early Luther focus on his conflicts with the papacy, not on his work as a pastor. Yet we know that he published many more pastoral writings than controversial works and that the public

consumed significantly more of the former than the latter (pp. 2, 3). Johnson wants to correct this significant oversight. She explains her perspective:

Ultimately, the narratives of ecclesial conflict and practical concerns are complementary. One could even conceive of them as a duet of sorts, with the academic-polemical writings and pastoral writings each playing in their own range but never alone. This metaphor also highlights the problem with the traditional narrative, namely, that it has allowed only the academic-polemical part to be heard. When the polemical themes are heard together with the pastoral themes, Luther's theological concerns sounds less like conceptual arguments and more like pastoral principles. Not only do they sound fuller when heard together, but one also notices themes in the academic writings that are complemented and emphasized by the pastoral writings, and vice versa. (pp. 6–7)

Or, as she puts it more succinctly, 'The task of this book is to tell the story of his [Luther's] early development in a way that takes account of the full range of his reforming activities' (p. 9). But Johnson is not simply adding new evidence to this story in order to complement it; she also wants to revise this story in important ways. She concedes that most scholars today acknowledge that Luther was a pastoral theologian, but she rightly notes that no one has sought to reintegrate the pastoral dimension into his overall theological development in the years under consideration (p. 23).

Johnson sets out to examine twenty-five pastoral writings that appeared between Lent 1518 and summer 1520. In these writings, Luther treats themes such as confession, prayer, baptism, the Lord's Supper, death, marriage, Christ's Passion, the saints, the Ten Commandments and good works. She proceeds chronologically, analysing each work in its historical context and in conversation with Luther's controversial works. At times the reader wishes for more interpretation of the overall significance of the texts under consideration, as the book's six chapters are comprised largely of close textual and contextual analysis. On the whole, this analysis is done skilfully and in conversation with the most important recent scholarship. (One exception would be in ch. ii, where Johnson accepts as authentic the 1517 *Treatise on indulgences*. Franz Posset has recently made a plausible case that this work should be attributed to Johann von Staupitz and Wenceslaus Linck, perhaps with Luther acting as an editor (*The front-runner of the Catholic Reformation*, Aldershot 2003, 216–17). Still, the desired interpretation is definitely present and it is important.

Johnson shows that Luther had an early and abiding interest in pastoral matters, which preceded and informed his first critiques of indulgences. Here Johnson might have examined some of Luther's unpublished sermons from the early 1510s to support her argument – the earliest such sermon in her book comes from January 1517. But her case is still convincing: it was Luther's long-standing concern about 'proper repentance' that motivated his concern about indulgences, not some objection to papal authority (p. 57). This concern for sincere contrition, and sincerity in the Christian life in general, was but one of a number of abiding pastoral concerns that informed both Luther's devotional and controversial works. The other concerns include absolute trust in God's grace, love of neighbour and the acceptance of suffering as an essential feature of the Christian life. (Unfortunately, Johnson makes little of how justification by faith influenced Luther's view of suffering.) Johnson also observes that when the friar-professor was not required to defend himself against his various opponents, he consistently

returned to practical works: he chose to write such works, whereas he was compelled to write controversial ones.

Beyond indulgences makes a valuable contribution to the scholarship on Luther's 'Reformation discovery'. Johnson shows that the perspective of Ernst Bizer and Oswald Bayer does not accord with the fuller story of Luther's early theological development that her sources reveal. Bizer and Bayer have argued that Luther underwent a decisive breakthrough experience in the late spring or early summer of 1518, at the centre of which was a new-found certainty of salvation based on faith in the divine promises of the Word. According to Johnson, Luther's pastoral and devotional writings evince 'no such seismic shift' (p. 110); rather, they demonstrate a fairly stable development in which themes that Luther allegedly discovered 'late' (i.e. spring/summer 1518) and suddenly were actually present earlier, being part of a gradual theological evolution. Johnson thus adds important evidence to the arguments of Berndt Hamm and Volker Leppin for a gradual Reformation discovery. Johnson also shows that, *contra* Jared Wicks, certainty did not become the centrepiece of Luther's theology from 1518 on – certainty was only one feature among many others of an authentic Christian life for the friar-professor (p. 19). In addition, *Beyond indulgences* makes clear that Luther had an abiding concern for humility (p. 111) and good works (p. 179) in the entire period under consideration. Justification by faith did not exclude or negate either, although it did provide a new theological underpinning for both.

Johnson goes on to examine how Luther gradually expanded his treatment of practical piety, seeking to reform various traditional practices in keeping with his emerging evangelical theology, especially as papal opposition increased and his hopes for reform were disappointed. It was his conviction that the Church was sadly deficient in the care of souls that lay at the heart of his escalating conflict with the papacy. As Johnson concludes, 'Luther's attempt to reform Christian practice is not an experiential aside to his theological cause, but rather its heart' (p. 192). *Beyond indulgences* reveals this heart rather clearly.

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Debating the sacraments. Print and authority in the early Reformation. By Amy Nelson

Burnett. Pp. xx + 524 incl. 22 figs. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. £64. 978 0 19 092118 7

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No theological topic in Early Reformation Europe was more disputed and divisive among Protestants than the nature of the sacraments. The Lord's Supper, in particular, was an issue that split theologians and emerging ecclesiastical traditions. The eucharistic controversies of the 1520s were complicated, intricate and important. Theological decisions made then still have effects today.

Now Amy Nelson Burnett helps sort out what she acknowledges to be 'a convoluted topic' (p. xiii). She has produced a masterful and comprehensive study of a range of theologians who contributed to this issue while setting the disputes in the context of early print culture, tracing their evolution through publications and the ways in which these writings affected a wide public. Veteran Reformation scholar, Robert Kolb, calls this book an 'instant classic'. Kolb is right. This book does, as he