

filled with heresy and sectarian divisiveness. In France, Arnaud Sorbin flipped the coin, creating an anti-Huguenot counter-interpretation of the monster, published in 1570. He contrasted protestant sectarianism with Catholic unity. The monster image later reemerged, Buck showed, in England as a response to Catholic resurgence, and also in “alarum literature” concerning the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, and the mutiny of the Spanish army in Flanders (208). Contemporary authors sometimes insisted that God allowed Catholic success as punishment for protestant complacency and immorality. Apparently demonic iconography, as well as scripture—like statistics in the modern world—can be used to demonstrate most anything an interpreter likes. Buck then concluded that the original power of the image as a figure of the papal Antichrist had been undermined by the end of the seventh decade of the century.

Some readers and critics may quibble with editorial choices, like the distracting way the monster sometimes disappears amid explanation of basic Reformation texts. In the end, Buck’s insight that Melanchthon’s interpretation of the monster image succeeded because he drew upon late medieval ideas about Antichrist, and put it to polemical use, stands. Buck produced a fine work: a significant contribution to the literature on Reformation polemics.

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***An Introduction to the Medieval Bible.* By Franz van Liere.**

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xv + 320 pp. \$28.99
paper.

In *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible*, Frans van Liere sets out to accomplish two tasks. His primary goal is to provide a concise introduction to a topic of bewildering breadth and staggering complexity. Along the way he hopes to correct prevailing misconceptions regarding “The Medieval Bible.” Read seriatim, the book begins with the Bible as a book and proceeds through textual criticism and commentary to broader cultural adaptations. It argues that “The Medieval Bible” is not a single book or even a single idea, but rather a protean set of material, intellectual, and culture practices always subject to revision. Specialists in the fields of book history and medieval biblical criticism may find van Liere’s arguments pedantic, or even reductive, but they would do well to consider the purpose of the book. The aim of a book like van Liere’s is to provide an entryway to a complex and intimidating discipline. The merit of such a book rests less in its immediate

interventions and more in its capacity to foment and enable further study. In this respect, van Liere succeeds admirably. Each chapter provides a sketch of an aspect of “The Medieval Bible.” Frequently, van Liere supplements his broad narratives with an exemplary case study. His discussion of Haimo of Auxerre’s commentary on Jonah (113-116) in “Medieval Hermeneutics” is especially insightful. Perhaps most useful to the more advanced student are the selected bibliographies, which conclude each chapter. Ultimately, this book is—as introductions ought to be—more useful than revolutionary. Having taught portions of this book to undergraduates, I can happily affirm that several of the dreaded course evaluations singled out van Liere’s book as particularly useful. Final assessments of van Liere’s work, however, will depend on the quality of scholarship it inspires in the next generation.

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***John Calvin as Sixteenth-Century Prophet.* By Jon Balsarak.**

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Jon Balsarak’s *John Calvin as Sixteenth-Century Prophet* is a significant work of historical scholarship. Employing such primary sources as Calvin’s sermons and letters, the author argues that the Reformer harbored and exhibited a prophetic understanding or mentality about himself. Calvin believed he was called by God to act as a prophet in a time of transition—indeed, his was a time of drastic political and religious change and religious violence. The author’s close analysis of Calvin’s writings reveal compellingly that Calvin felt his vocation was to further the Protestant Reformation in Europe, particularly in Geneva and France, if need be by also embracing religious war. (Calvin sent ministers and scholars, trained in Geneva, to France.) Balsarak’s analysis of Calvin’s prophetic awareness in his writings is situated within a broader examination of Old and New Testament prophetic figures as well as other sixteenth-century “prophetic” Reformers like Martin Bucer and Martin Luther. This book is a welcomed addition to Calvin studies, one that will be appreciated and valued by students and professional historians alike, for it illustrates some of the mindsets of some important figures of sixteenth-century Europe. The reader obtains a better understanding of not only Calvin the Reformer, but the place and agency of the leading individuals in Reformation Europe.

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