

expert opinion on the doctrine of the eucharist, which testified to the authentic notions the South Germans had expressed at the Wittenberg Convention and recognised these as the basis for a consistent doctrinal concordance.

With his careful and close-to-the-source study, Reinhardt has succeeded in comprehensively reconstructing the history of the Wittenberg Concord and the events of the Concord Convention of May 1536 and plausibly interpreting their dynamics and results. Last but not least, he can show that Luther had by no means lost his influence on developments in the Reformers' camp in the 1530s, as some recent researchers have assumed. However, the Wittenberg Reformer had not yet spoken his last word in the dispute over the understanding of the eucharist. In his 'Short Confession of the Holy Sacrament' of 1544, he even implicitly distanced himself again from the Concord of 1536. The inclusion of the later years would have gone beyond the scope of the present volume. But it would be worthwhile and exciting now to also examine in detail the post-history of the Wittenberg Concord, its reception and ratification during the years 1536 to 1544 in the light of the insights gained by Reinhardt.

MARBURG,
GERMANY

WOLF-FRIEDRICH SCHÄUFELE

Henry VIII and Martin Luther. The second controversy, 1525–1527. Edited by Richard Rex. Pp. xvi + 306. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2021. £70. 978 1 78327 581 6

JEH (73) 2022; doi:10.1017/S0022046922001385

Henry VIII's 1521 response to Luther's vigorous pruning of the seven sacraments is one of the most well-known publishing events of the sixteenth century. A less famous exchange between the king and the professor took place a few years later when Luther, led by the king of Denmark to believe that Henry was now favourable to the Gospel, wrote an uncharacteristically conciliatory letter in private, only to receive both royal barrels. Henry subsequently published the correspondence, which was reprinted and translated throughout Europe by Catholic controversialists who were delighted to have this evidence, as they portrayed it, of Luther's 'recantation', and to have their ranks swelled once more by royalty. Of course, those same ranks were to be thinned by their new comrade's executions of More and Fisher; but for now they made hay. Rex and his collaborators have put us all in their debt with this careful edition and translation, not only of the original letters but also of the satellite publications, all with lively translations. The centrepiece is undoubtedly the transcription of a manuscript version of the letters from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, which here serves as the base text against which variants in the twenty or so print editions are registered. Rex himself disarmingly concedes that no work of this sort can be without errors. These, however, are not serious: the worst slip I found was the translation of '1500 annis' as '1500 books' (p. 169). The decision to cite Luther's works in the *Weimarer Ausgabe* alone and not, where translations exist, in Fortress Press's *Luther's works* was an odd one, considering that elsewhere no knowledge of Latin or German is assumed on the part of the reader. Even so, this volume will be of

immense interest and use, both to those who are limited to English and to those who are not.

UNIVERSITY OF HULL

DAVID BAGCHI

The dissolution of the monasteries. A new history. By James G. Clark. Pp. x + 689 incl. 33 colour plates. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2021. £25. 978 0 300 11572 7

JEH (73) 2022; doi:10.1017/S0022046922001117

This substantial volume, the result of prolonged research, aims to provide a detailed and definitive account of the final years of monastic life in England. In so doing the author has provided a chronological, step-by-step examination of the successive developments before, during and after the actual closing of all the religious houses. The resulting details are impressive, although the reader may, from time to time, find himself in danger of losing the broader vision in the midst of the profusion of fascinating illustrative details.

The first 140 pages are devoted to a lengthy description of the historical background in which details of the round of daily life within the cloister are examined together with the impact of its physical presence on the surrounding community. Many of the members living locally were dependent, at least in part, on the neighbouring monks and nuns for their livelihood. In addition, the monastic contribution in the fields of hospitality, charity and health care were far from negligible.

The second section, of more than 200 pages, traces in detail the unfolding sequence of events that culminated in the final complete closure of 1540. In so doing Clark suggests that, along with the growing difficulties arising from Henry VIII's divorce from his Spanish wife, Katherine of Aragon, there were increasing signs of the development of a new relationship between the crown and the religious communities. The author sees a growing uncertainty on both sides arising from the succession of changing policies and directives issued by the former and the not surprising hesitation and lack of collective policy or action on the part of the latter. In addition, the English monastic community received little or no support from the papacy, which became concerned with the divisive international ramifications of the royal divorce. As a result, the English monastic community was bereft of support. Clark also draws attention to an earlier Tudor interest in monastic reform on the part of Henry VII and Archbishop Morton, who had become concerned about a renewal of monastic observance. This had the, perhaps, unexpected effect of paving the way for future intervention in monastic affairs, for example in making appointments to ecclesiastical office and in their constant supervision. These activities were probably a significant factor in the otherwise surprising lack of collective resistance on the part of the religious houses.

The first round of suppressions in 1536 led to a few scattered uprisings and also increasing agitation and division of opinion among and within many monastic communities. This was soon augmented when the greater monasteries awakened to the impending threat that their future existence might also be at stake. This became clear when they were also subjected to a detailed visitation ordered by the king and his advisers. All monastic properties and possessions were to be recorded and evaluated by assigned royal commissioners. In the space of four