

Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet. Lyndal Roper.

London: The Bodley Head, 2016. xiv + 578 pp. £30.

It is a testimony to Martin Luther's significance that the study of him has resulted in a huge number of books, each of which contributes to our understanding of him but none of which exhausts the subject. Hence, with the quincentenary of the Ninety-Five Theses upon us, we can expect another burst of studies of the Reformer and his age, of which the substantial contribution of Lyndal Roper is one. While the book, for the most part, covers familiar narrative ground, we are nevertheless presented with a fresh examination of the tumultuous life of the Reformer. Roper sheds valuable light on various aspects of Luther's life from angles different (or, at least, less common) than one finds in many previous studies. One of the principal focuses of this book is Luther's inner development, in which Roper seeks to understand the emotional impact on Luther of the cascade of changes he unleashed on Europe—but doing so in such a way as to avoid the failings of prior attempts at psycho-history. Perhaps a more notable contribution of this book is the effort to rebalance the broader history of Reformation scholarship (and of the study of Luther) away from the emphasis on the cities of southwest Germany found in much existing literature, and to examine both the era and its central figure with more pointed reference to the context of northern Germany and its cities—an imbalance that is attributed in part to the Cold War division of Germany and the relative inaccessibility of archives to many historians. In arguing for the distinctiveness of her book, Roper presents her study as that of a historian of religion rather than a church historian, implying that her volume will provide a perspective lacking in most other examinations. This does not mean that consideration of Luther's theology is pushed to the margins, but it does result in a shift of emphasis. In this connection, Roper argues that the focus will be less on *sola scriptura* (which many previous studies made central) and more on the question of the real presence in the Lord's Supper—admittedly as difficult, controversial, and knotted a theological subject as one could choose to examine. She explains this decision by reference to Luther's emphasis on physicality and the flesh-spirit distinction (both of which had consequences for so many other areas of his thought), and she makes the further point that it was on the subject of the real presence more than anything else that any possibility of unity within Protestantism foundered, in no small part because of Luther's intransigence on this point.

Another aspect of this study that is noteworthy is the attention Roper pays to the relationship between Luther and Andreas Karlstadt, which in this book equals, if not slightly exceeds, attention she gives to that of Luther and Philipp Melancthon. That Luther and Karlstadt shared a troubled history is well known, but Roper makes this a recurring subject of her book in such a way as to show how the fundamental tensions between the two defined both of them and their legacies. Among other things, the conflict between the two pointed up Luther's distinctive understanding of the real pres-

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