David M. Whitford (ed.)


This new addition to the reference section of the Reformation studies library offers a comprehensive approach. *The T&T Clark Companion to Reformation Theology* is divided into two sections. Part One, ‘Theological Topics’, features essays by established scholars in the field on a range of themes hotly contested in the Reformation (and indeed since). Part Two, ‘A Reformation ABC’, presents a more dictionary-style selection of short lemmata enabling quick reference to a wide range of terms. The *Companion* opens with an introduction by David M. Whitford to ‘Studying and Writing about the Reformation’, aimed at the undergraduate student, and including some useful suggestions about how to approach original sources. This essay is presumably also intended to define the audience of the work: the *Companion* is not aimed at the specialist, but at those entering the field for the first time (few of whom, given its price, will have any chance of buying it).

Eighteen essays follow in Part One. Robert Kolb introduces ‘Human Nature, the Fall and the Will’, identifying the influence of Aristotle’s definition of human nature and the importance of Augustine’s anthropology, before considering how Luther, Calvin and their followers understood humanity both in relation to God and to other human beings. Kolb contrasts the Reformers’ positions to that taken at the Council of Trent. He concludes that ‘all sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theologians … struggled with defending human integrity while properly assessing and proclaiming God’s grace’ (p. 30). R. Ward Holder discusses ‘Revelation and Scripture’, including the texts of Bibles, editions in Greek and Hebrew, vernacular translations (here he implicitly perpetuates the myth that Luther’s was the first: in fact at least eighteen editions of the Bible in German were printed between 1466 and 1522), and approaches to biblical interpretation. As he notes, by the end of the sixteenth century, ‘the sense of the “Bible” had splintered in much the same way as the sense of the “Church”’ (p. 54). Bibles and Bible-reading had become confessional.

These confessional readings expressed themselves in fundamental theological differences, not only between Protestants and Roman Catholics but also within Protestantism. These are illustrated in Carl R. Trueman’s excellent consideration of justification, the doctrine which lay at the heart of Reformation disputes; in Lubomir Batka’s and Anne Marie Johnson’s brief but helpful exploration of Law and Gospel, including the antinomian controversy and the third use of the law; and in Chad Van Dixhoorn’s discussion of election, which moves into the seventeenth century with a consideration of the Synod of Dort and the
rise of Arminianism in England. Some indication of Roman Catholic understandings of election would have enriched this last essay, and countered the all-too-common misapprehension that election is an exclusively Protestant doctrine.

Theology had its outworking in practice. In his assessment of ‘Sanctification, Works, and Social Justice’, Carter Lindberg argues that the Reformers ‘opposed the clerical-monastic theology of perfection ... and proposed in its stead a new understanding of holiness and social ethics in the world’ (p. 105). He presents these new readings of vocation and celibacy, poverty, and obedience. Bryan Spinks explores the Reformers’ controversial theologies of the sacraments – differences over eucharistic theology would divide the movement – and shows how they played out in liturgical practice. Paul Avis’s consideration of ‘The Church and Ministry’ points to the way that shifts in ecclesiology – perceptions of the relationship between the church visible and invisible, and definitions of the marks of the church, rooted in the preaching of the word and the celebration of the sacraments (and, for many Reformed theologians after Calvin, church discipline) – led to a new understanding of and structures for ministry. Anne T. Thayer discusses preaching and worship, observing how ‘preaching gained in importance across all traditions in the pedagogical urgency of sixteenth-century reform’ (p. 175).

The preaching of the gospel raised the question of how people should respond. As Karen Spierling observes in her discussion of ‘Women, Marriage, and Family’, the question of women’s participation in the Reformation was one that ‘all reformers, male and female’, had to confront (although the idea that Reformers might be female seems otherwise not to occur in the Companion). Spierling explores views of women’s nature and the Reformers’ assertion of their spiritual equality before God, the silencing of female Reformers such as Argula von Grumbach, and the promotion of the role of women as wives and mothers; she considers also the responses of Roman Catholic women and the restrictions placed on women’s orders at the Council of Trent. Karin Maag presents ‘Catechisms and Confessions of Faith’, highlighting ‘the range of approaches taken by Reformation leaders to inculcate the fundamentals of the faith to the members of their communities’ (p. 211). These texts shaped the community’s religious identity; they were an important element in the process of developing confessional identity. Similarly, through ‘Church Discipline and Order’, as Raymond A. Mentzer shows, Reformers – and particularly those in the Reformed tradition – sought ‘to transform each and every aspect of society in conformity with God’s eternal promise’ (p. 229). The Reformation became increasingly concerned with the practicalities of living out Reformation theology.