

Introduction

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Most histories of Reformation-era theology have been organized either by theologian or by subject. Both approaches follow a straightforward logic, but they also have limitations, and these have become more evident as the field has expanded and become more complex. Works that treat theology as products of individual minds tend to overlook the role of dialogue and collaboration, mutual influences, and academic exchange in the generation of ideas. That is especially problematic for an era that was shaped by the emergence of new religious communities and confessional identities, powerful currents of polemic and controversy, and strategies for conflict resolution – none of which are given adequate account by viewing individual theologians in isolation. Organizing a history of theology by subject, that is, according to a list of prominent theological topics, solves some of the problems of the first approach but introduces a different set of deficits. Apart from imposing an artificial coherence on widely divergent strains of thought, such models tend to view ideas all too ahistorically, reducing theology to a series of timeless apodictic statements decoupled from their place and function in the conversations of their day, and from their social and political environments. Though not of inherent necessity, most such works have also divided their subjects according to confession, separating Lutherans, Reformed, and Catholics into distinct camps and excluding Anabaptists and Spiritualists altogether, thereby ignoring the degree to which all of these groups were in communication with each other and influenced each other's thoughts.

Scholarship of recent decades has moved on from such approaches in part by appreciating more deeply the complexities involved in the formulation, communication, and publication of ideas. It has taken into greater account the social and institutional location of authors and their relationships to each other and to their readers, as well as their religious and political commitments and agendas. It has also brought a massive expansion of subject matter

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that can be associated with the heading “Reformation-era theology.” Far more historical authors have been examined, their works made available in critical editions, and their contributions valued. Writers who worked outside the traditional channels of theological expression, including religious and lay women, as well as laypeople more generally, have had their voices raised to greater prominence. New genres of writing are better appreciated for their theological impact, as are nonverbal media such as the visual arts. As scholars have ventured out of their confessional foxholes, they have begun to recognize the interconnectedness and mutual dependence of theological thinking across the period’s ecclesial lines of loyalty. That, in turn, has encouraged a wider geographic vision, as theology of the Reformation no longer means simply German, Swiss, or English thought, but includes other parts of Europe, and from beyond Europe altogether. It has also forced a broadening of traditional timelines and periodization, not only because of the partial continuities between late medieval and Reformation-era thought, but also because the pluralization of Reformation narratives necessitates different starting points and endpoints. Even scholarship that has remained confessionally oriented has come to recognize a greater diversity of thought within these ecclesial traditions, whether Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, or Anglican, especially as it has trained its vision on the later part of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth.

As a result of all these developments, theology of the Reformation era appears far more complex, varied, dynamic – and arguably more interesting – than ever before. Whether one survey work can do justice to all of that complexity remains to be seen. For the present work, the editors have chosen an approach that seeks to address several of the more significant new developments. For one thing, the timeline has been kept deliberately open, ranging from about 1500 to somewhere in the middle of the seventeenth century, depending on the subject at hand. The resulting questions of periodization are handled by the individual contributors according to their own judgment. In a conscious break with the tradition of confessional histories, most chapters were not separated according to confession, except where doing so was an obvious consequence of the subject – such as in the various chapters on the formation of schools of thought. Instead, individual authors were asked to provide an integrated view of their subject, including material from several major Reformation-era confessions, in their chapters. That required forays into less familiar ground for some, but the results are frequently revelatory.

The overall structure of the volume, described in greater detail below, has focused on a description of theology as discourse, rather than as a set of fixed

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ideas produced by individual authors. Without making explicit commitments to various theories of discourse currently in circulation, the present project builds on the simple observation that theology emerges in conversation. As a result, the conditions under which it emerges, the factors that seek to regulate or confine it, the questions and needs that propel it forward, and even the personal beliefs, mentalities, and commitments of its authors are not only describable, they are materially relevant to theological expression. Taking such factors into account creates a richer, broader, and more multi-dimensional account of theology's history. Such an approach reflects the complexities of contemporary scholarship and seeks to employ them to open new windows onto the thought-worlds of the Reformation era.

Several terms require clarification. After considering a variety of alternatives, the editors have chosen to use "Reformation era" to denote the historical period in question. Taken by itself, the term "Reformation," either singular or plural, retains unavoidable associations with predominantly Protestant narratives; those are in keeping neither with the consciously ecumenical spirit of the work nor with its material content. The term "early modern," apart from problematic references to an ill-defined European "modernity," appeared too vague for use in a work that focuses on Christian theology. Because the Reformation in its various expressions was arguably the most conspicuous and formative event that impacted theological discourse after 1500, it makes sense to keep the word in the title, but broaden its range of reference with the addition of "era." Even though the Reformation continues to influence theological discourse up to the present day, it is also clear that the second half of the seventeenth century saw a number of important shifts in philosophical method, scientific worldview, religious culture, and theological approach which, taken globally, justify the designation of a distinct and new period, and an end to the era under consideration here. Because the Reformation originated within Christianity's Latin West and exercised its most direct influence on the theology of those cultures, the present volume does not provide an extensive treatment of Eastern Christianity apart from its impact on Western thinking in ecumenical dialogue.

"Theology" in this work refers to Christian discourse about God and God's relations to creation and humankind. It is viewed as a specialized discourse typically grounded in practicing faith communities and generally exercising a normative and public teaching function, though sometimes also extending into devotional modes. That specialization most often locates theology in institutionalized academic settings such as universities,

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academies, and seminaries, or in ecclesial teaching offices, and its most conspicuous practitioners tend to be educated and male. Significant exceptions to that model do occur, and this volume treats several, including the theology expressed in visual arts, that produced by untrained laypeople, missionaries in the field, or by literate women working in alternative genres. The dominant currents of Reformation-era theology, however, run through church and academy.

The geographic scope of this volume remains focused heavily on Europe, since that is where most of the era's Christian theology was produced and where the faith communities that occasioned it were anchored. Especially the Catholic world, however, was expanding dramatically during this very period, and that had important impacts on theological discourse. This volume recognizes the significance of that expansion and includes accounts of theology both inspired by and articulated in Latin America and South and East Asia. As those chapters show, studying such developments is immensely rewarding, and the editors hope that the present work will inspire scholarship of Reformation-era theology in Asia, the Americas, and also Africa, whose multi-faceted impact on the period's theological discourse has recently begun to receive more attention.¹

The volume has three parts. The first, *Theology in an Age of Cultural Transformation*, provides an account of factors external to theological discourse that influenced its shape, scope, and direction. This section includes chapters on the printing press (Andrew Pettegree); on the culture of Renaissance humanism (Ana Morisi); the use of the Bible (Robert Kolb); on ways of regulating theological discourse (Nelson H. Minnich); on the influence of political agendas (Kenneth G. Appold); education at universities, in religious orders, and in primary schools and catechesis (Paul F. Grendler); on the para-academic theology of uneducated authors (Geoffrey Dipple); on gender (Kenneth G. Appold); and on the social background of theological writers (Charlotte Methuen).

The second part, *Schools and Emerging Cultures of Theology: Diversity and Conformity within Confessions*, describes formative factors internal to theological discourse, such as the emergence of theological schools and cultures, that concentrated minds on an emerging consensus of questions,

¹ Examples include Alberto Elli, *Storia della Chiesa ortodossa Tawāhedo d'Etiopia: Chiesa ortodossa dell'Unione*, 2 vols. (Milan, 2017); Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, *Envoys of a Human God: The Jesuit Mission to Christian Ethiopia, 1557–1632* [Jesuit Studies: Modernity through the Prism of Jesuit History 2] (Leiden, 2015); and Cécile Fromont, *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of the Kongo* (Chapel Hill, 2014).

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principles, debates, and thematic commitments. It includes chapters on the School of Salamanca (Juan Belda Plans), the Jesuits (Stefania Tutino), the Universities of Paris (Jean-Robert Armogathe) and Louvain (Wim François), and schools in Latin America (Josep-Ignasi Saranyana), as well as chapters on the theological cultures of Lutheranism (Markus Matthias), the Reformed tradition (Carl R. Trueman), the British Isles (David S. Sytsma), and the Radical and Dissenting Protestants (John D. Roth). The final two chapters trace the impact of Christian ecumenical efforts on theology among Western Christians (Irene Dingel) and between Western and Orthodox Christians (Yury P. Avvakumov).

The third and final section, Topics and Disciplines of Theology, treats material topics of theology directly and from an ecumenical perspective. This includes chapters on the method and ethos of theology (Walter Sparn), biblical theology (Euan Cameron), systematic theology (Risto Saarinen), controversialist theology (Jared Wicks), ethics and moral theology (Jennifer Herdt), ascetic-mystical theology (Bernard McGinn), pastoral theology and preaching (Ronald K. Rittgers and Megan Armstrong), missiology and relations to non-Christians in China (Nicolas Standaert), Japan and India (Haruko Nawata Ward), and Latin America (Mariano Delgado), sacramental theology (Theodor Dieter), ecclesiastical ordinances and canon law (Kenneth Pennington), theology and science (Maurice Finocchiaro and Leen Spruit), theology and history (Stefan Bauer), the role of art in theological discourse (Marcia B. Hall), and the theology of politics and warfare (Robert Bireley and Robert Kolb).

The volume not only summarizes the current state of scholarship on Reformation-era theology with chapters by leading researchers in the field, it also hopes to encourage future studies modeled on its innovative contextual, expansive, and ecumenical approaches.

PART ONE
*
THEOLOGY IN AN AGE OF
CULTURAL
TRANSFORMATION

I

The Printing Press and its Impact on the Production, Proliferation, and Readership of Theological Literature

ANDREW PETTEGREE

In 1521 Martin Luther spent a tense and frustrating year in the Wartburg Castle. Five years previously he had been virtually unknown outside the narrow circle of his colleagues in the German Congregation of the Augustinian Hermits order. Now he was one of the most notorious men in Germany, a condemned heretic and a German *cause célèbre*. His incarceration in the Wartburg came immediately after his appearance at the German Imperial Diet, an interview forced on a reluctant emperor by the German princes. Now he was a fugitive, an outlaw, living under the protection of his own ruler, the elector of Saxony, who had his own reasons not to surrender Luther for punishment for his heresies.

This transformation in Luther's reputation, this tumultuous fame, was something he owed very largely to print: his unexpected facility as a writer and the power of print to spread his word. One can easily document this phenomenon in the torrent of printed works that erupted in Germany from the first months of 1518.¹ The Luther controversy transformed the audience for theological questions; how far, and in what way, these writings were understood by their purchasers is a more difficult question. What one can state without equivocation is that the Reformation transformed the German publishing industry, building a new readership and changing the shape of the book, its physical appearance, and the dynamics of the market. This was also a process in which Luther, no detached intellectual, was heavily involved.

¹ Most easily in the Universal Short Title Catalogue (www.ustc.ac.uk/). See also Mark U. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda and Martin Luther* (Berkeley, 1994). For Luther's works, Josef Benzing and Helmut Claus, eds., *Lutherbibliographie: Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften Martin Luthers bis zu dessen Tod*, 2 vols. (Baden-Baden, 1966–1994), now updated by the USTC.

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The Publishing Industry before the Reformation

The birth of print was a more difficult process than is sometimes imagined. Technological fascination could sustain growth for a time: for two decades after Gutenberg's breakthrough every prince, bishop, or university sought the prestige of a local press. But as print became more familiar, and the novelty wore off, the problems of actually making money from the new printed books became ever more pressing. Printers had been remarkably conservative in their choice of projects, so Europe's warehouses were glutted with multiple copies of the same familiar texts. Creating a European distribution network to bring editions of more expensive books to distant markets was complex and difficult: local markets were too small to dispose of hundreds of copies of the same text. Raising the necessary investment capital was beyond the capacities of many of those drawn in to the industry. Bankruptcy was the inevitable result.²

So the print industry contracted. Although at some point before the end of the fifteenth century books were published in over two hundred places, two-thirds of this production was concentrated in only twelve cities.³ These were not necessarily the major intellectual centers that had been the main focus of manuscript book culture: half did not even have a university. Rather, they were without exception Europe's major commercial cities, places used to the rhythms of international trade, the transportation and storage of bulk goods, the raising of investment capital, trading on credit. It was only in such places that large books could be contemplated or accomplished: the lag time between investment and recouping costs was too great for small shops in smaller places. If they survived at all, they did so by printing utilitarian work for the local authorities: the church or the state. This was lucrative work, easily completed, the whole batch often paid for directly by a single client. This concentration on cheap print as the bedrock of the industry, as it turned out, offered a significant pointer to how the industry would be transformed with the Reformation.

Luther

The extent of the transformation wrought by Luther can be summed up by two milestones of his extraordinary life. In 1515 a description of the hundred

² Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven, 2010); Susan Noakes, "The Development of the Book Market in Late Quattrocento Italy: Printers' Failures and the Role of the Middleman," *Journal of Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 11 (1981), 23–55.

³ Venice, Rome, Milan, and Florence; Cologne, Augsburg, Nuremberg, Strasbourg, Basel, and Leipzig; Paris and Lyon.

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leading professors in three not particularly distinguished German universities (Wittenberg, Leipzig, and Frankfurt an der Oder) did not mention Wittenberg's professor of Biblical Theology, Martin Luther, at all.⁴ At this point he had published nothing. His first published work would not appear until 1516. Yet within five years he would be the most published author in the history of print. By 1521 published editions of his works had outstripped those of every living author, and even of the ancients, staples of the school and university curriculum such as Aristotle and Cicero.⁵ In the process he had transformed the German printing industry.

Explaining this extraordinary phenomenon requires attention to several factors both personal and structural. Certainly one must credit Luther's extraordinary facility as a writer. Between 1518 and 1521 he penned 102 separate works: a remarkable productivity given the tensions and preoccupations of those years.⁶ Crucially, in terms of their reception, many were very short. Luther established this pattern early with his first response to public criticism of his teaching on indulgences. *The Sermon on Indulgence and Grace* is a masterpiece of concision: twenty short paragraphs, each addressing a separate aspect of the doctrine of indulgence.⁷ The whole text is a mere 1,500 words. It fits perfectly into an eight-page pamphlet; it can be read aloud in ten minutes. Crucially, Luther also made the decision to publish it in German, and reach beyond the academic audience addressed in the 95 Theses.

The work was an immediate success, published and republished throughout Germany. This set a pattern. Luther's first hundred writings were distributed in over eight hundred editions; some ran to twenty or more. Here the particular structure of the German print industry greatly assisted Luther's cause. Unlike other centers of European print, Germany had no predominant center of publication; no equivalent of Venice in Italy or Paris in France.⁸ The highly decentralized political structure, with multiple states and jurisdictions, made establishing effective control over output extremely difficult. So from Wittenberg Luther's works were relayed through reprints

⁴ Bernd Moeller, "Das Berühmtwerden Luthers," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 15 (1988), 65–92, at 67.

⁵ The figures come from the USTC, searching 1450–1521.

⁶ Benzing and Claus, eds., *Lutherbibliographie*.

⁷ Accessible in a readable translation in Kurt Aland, *Martin Luther's 95 Theses* (St. Louis, 1967).

⁸ Paris was responsible for 65 percent of all books published in France before 1518, and Venice for 37 percent of books published in the Italian states during the same period: USTC.

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in Leipzig, Augsburg, Basel, and Strasbourg, and hence into the bloodstream of German public life.

These initial relay stations for Luther's message were all major centers of publishing before the Reformation: printers in these places did a highly competent job of making Luther's works available to a wider public. But the impact of Reformation print spread far beyond these major centers. In the years after 1518 print would be established, or reestablished, in towns across Germany that had previously scarcely been able to sustain a printing press.⁹ Here the example of Wittenberg itself was far more relevant. Wittenberg had had no press at all before 1502; the city, on Germany's northeastern frontier, was far removed from all the major centers of commerce and intellectual life. That a major public event could be orchestrated from such a place was one of the most extraordinary aspects of the Reformation. Even after a press was established in Wittenberg, the limited needs of the local university community could be met by a single print shop: it survived, barely, by printing small utilitarian works for the local professoriat, and the routine academic works of disputations and dissertation defenses.¹⁰

The types of works promoted by the Reformation were ideal to stimulate the growth of such small, undercapitalized ventures. Because Luther's works were often very short, an edition of 300 or 500 copies could be turned off the press in under a week. Because they proved extremely popular, a printer could rely on an immediate return, creating the investment capital for future growth. This is precisely what happened in Wittenberg. Within a decade Wittenberg had attracted five new printing houses, operating some twenty presses among them, and now capable of taking on far more substantial projects (such as Luther's German Bible).¹¹ This pattern, in a more modest way, was repeated over and over again in other towns around Germany.

This transformation owed a great deal to Martin Luther – his provision of a constant stream of small digestible works, his intuitive understanding of the needs of the new industry. That a friar in his mid-thirties could transform himself into a writer of such power and understanding of the popular voice

⁹ Christoph Reske, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet: Auf der Grundlage des gleichnamigen Werkes von Josef Benzing* (Wiesbaden, 2007).

¹⁰ Maria Grossmann, *Wittenberger Drucke 1502–1517: Ein bibliographischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des Humanismus in Deutschland* (Vienna, 1971); Maria Grossmann, *Humanism in Wittenberg, 1485–1517* (Nieuwkoop, 1975).

¹¹ For these developments see Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing and the Reformation* (New York, 2015); Heimo Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch: Luthers Bibelübersetzung und ihre Tradition* (Hamburg, 1983).