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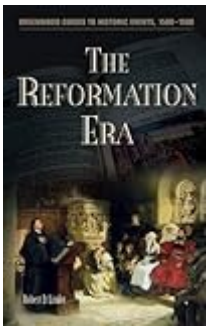

Robert D. Linder. *The Reformation Era.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008. xxi + 225 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-31843-6.

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An Accessible Textbook to Stimulate Young Readers

Both teachers and students will find many reasons to like this new textbook from the Greenwood series. As the series editors note in their foreword, the book is meant to synthesize and contextualize the most recent scholarship and is intended as a teaching and resource aid for secondary schools and lower-level undergraduate curricula. Most importantly, the text is to stimulate young and general readers; with its accessible front and back matter (chronology, biographies, and so on), students are able to look up key figures and events for term papers and further research with ease.

In the preface, Linder introduces the Reformation "as a basically religious movement with important political and social consequences," while noting that there were multiple "Reformations within an era" (pp. xiii-xiv). Even though he follows the new trend in Reformation Studies to acknowledge variation within the era, he still holds onto the older chronology, stressing 1517 as the beginning of the Reformation and 1660 as its end. In six chapters Linder surveys the medieval background, Luther, Calvin, the English, the Radicals, and finally the Catholic Reformation.

In chapter 1, "The Road to Reformation," Linder describes the medieval background to his larger story by addressing early histories of the Reformation by Cochlaeus and Sleidan, the Avignon papacy and western schism, the conciliar movement, and the general worldliness of the Renaissance papacy. This progression leads the student to learn of the reputation of the popes as "secular, flippant, frivolous, sensual, magnificent, and worldly," as opposed to a concurrent surge of popular piety (p. 11). Thus the declining Roman Catholic Church is set up for the triumph of Martin Luther and the beginning of modernity.

Chapter 2 is largely a short biography of Luther, with attention paid to the effects of Lutheran reform. With what Linder sees as legitimate complaints in bold language, Luther was able to appeal to a wide audience and act on that appeal via the printing press. Linder's interpretation here is the conventional one: Luther's heroic challenge to the corruption and authority of Rome changed the world and made it more dangerous.

John Calvin and the second generation of Protestantism are the subjects of the third chapter. Here Linder highlights the developments both in theology and poli-

tics among the reformers. With special reference to Eucharistic debates, Zwingli is described as "a middleman" between Luther and Calvin, and Calvinism as that which "eventually absorbed the Zwinglian Reformation" (p. 36). Of course, Calvin's *Institutes* receives a good deal of attention for its impact during the sixteenth century, but also for its legacy extending well into eighteenth-century America.

The fourth and longest chapter is on the Reformation among English-speaking peoples, Linder's specialty. Here Linder describes the usual story of the English tendency for orderly reforms as illustrated by Henry VIII's "Great Matter," the Marian return of Catholicism, and the broadly Protestant Elizabethan Settlement of the Church of England along with its Reformed theology, Catholic ecclesiology, and episcopal polity. Alongside these official endeavors, though, the Puritan movement is noted as the competing "dream" of so many reformers. Linder thus concludes that in England the 150 years after 1510 were characterized by "disorder, change and turmoil" (p. 75). The same could be said for all of Europe.

The Anabaptists and other radicals are treated in chapter 6. As opposed to the magisterial reformers so far described, the radicals of the Reformation were on the margins of the movement and looked not to reform but rather to the restoration of Christianity to its primitive roots. Linder focuses on the Anabaptists as the largest and most significant group, but he does well to show the vast diversity of radical beliefs and the social history of religion. The section on Anabaptist women, whom he terms "steel magnolias" of the period, is particularly good as it shows the multiple roles filled by women, whether as deacons, writers of hymns, or martyrs.

The final and best chapter is on the Catholic Reformation. Linder summarizes early calls for reform from within the Roman Church (the first or more properly "Catholic Reformation") and the later reactionary measures (hence "Counter Reformation") showing both the conciliatory and suppressive elements within sixteenth-century Catholicism. He lays out the essentials of the Society of Jesus, the Council of Trent, mystics such as St. Theresa of Avila, and the Inquisition. With a judicious and even hand, Linder shows that just as Protestants had several different and evolving views on how to reform (or restore) Christianity, so too did Catholics, and that the goals common to both groups should be seen as common bonds.

The book concludes with a tone of finality that tends to conflict with the flexibility of the Reformation(s) as hitherto described. After assessing its impact on politics, language, economics, and so on, Linder leaves the reader with the idea that the Reformation is in fact over with his references to the "last polemic written and the last musket cooled," and that all the tension of the past three centuries "is at last beginning to subside" (pp. 124, 135). This sense of finality, though, seems to work against the competing notions of dynamism and continual legacy that are key strengths of this textbook. While it is of course important to recognize the irenic impulses of the era, teachers using this book would no doubt wish to instruct students that the Reformation is still very much alive to those who debate its principles and history.[1]

This book is to be recommended for many reasons apart from the 135 densely packed pages of regular text. The biographies, primary documents, glossary, and annotated bibliography of printed and electronic resources will doubtless prove useful to students looking to write term papers, and the lively writing style will engage even the most uninterested student. The format of the book, including the additional resources, is simple to follow and welcomes the readers new to the Reformation and, as an introduction to the era, shows that textbooks need not be just all text. Particularly attractive to younger generations in this electronic age is the list of suggested websites for further research, and the fresh authorial style will help to keep students reading. As with all textbooks, however, Linder's effort here is not perfect. The chronology he seeks to describe extends primarily to 1660 (at times extending to the twentieth century), but his focus remains the sixteenth century. There are some glaring gaps of omission–the French Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years War receive very short shrift–and Anglocentricity is evident in more than one place. At the undergraduate level, in order to show the depth of Reformation debates, instructors will want to compliment Linder's narrative with further readings and clarification. Nevertheless, as a introductory text for high school students, *The Reformation Era* will certainly stimulate young readers and encourage scholars to bring not only fresh historiographical perspectives to the classroom, but also use innovative presentation and media.

Note

[1]. See Ethan H. Shagan, "Can Historians End the Reformation?" *Archiv fÃ¼r Reformationsgeschichte* 97 (2006): 298-306.

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