

continue to draw people to study and write about him long after the 500th anniversary of the Ninety-five Theses is past.

Marilyn J. Harran  
Chapman University, Orange, California

*Luther der Ketzer: Rom und die Reformation.* By Volker Reinhardt. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2016. Pp. 352. €19.95.

*Caveat emptor!* A red paper ribbon wraps itself around the dust jacket of this book, proclaiming: “GEHEIMAKTE LUTHER Vatikanische Quellen decken auf, was in der Reformation wirklich geschah C. H. BECK.” Beck, the publisher, has engaged in sensationalist, misleading advertising. Reinhardt never professes to reveal a secret dossier on Luther to explain “what really happened in the Reformation.” This expert on the Renaissance papacy, a historian at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, does use “Vatican sources,” however. These sources, “almost completely untapped” (13), are reports of the nuncios of the Holy See active in Germany particularly in the 1520s and 1530s. “These dispatches,” R. writes, “are on the one hand reports about events in plain view and behind the scenes and on the other documents of a virtuoso self-portrayal” (146). Too often neglected, the reports are far from secret. They were published in scholarly editions in Germany in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The *Nuntiaturrechnungen* alongside the Weimar edition of Martin Luther’s works underpin the signal contribution of R.’s book. Most Reformation studies approach religious division from one side, Protestant or Catholic. Reinhardt, however, offers what he calls “an equitable ‘*Simultanerzählung*’” that explains how Luther understood Rome and vice versa. He seeks not to salvage the reputation of the Renaissance papacy but “to reconstruct a complex historical process in a comprehensive way.” Viewing Luther from Rome’s vantage point does not put him in a dubious light, for “the historical dimension of his impact first appropriately emerges when the capacities of the opposition are also adequately appreciated” (previous quotations are from p. 16). What emerges is a story of escalating, mutual rejection.

Luther remains the book’s center of gravity. The five chapters set out a chronology of representations: Luther the monk (1483–1517), the critic (1517–1520), the barbarian (1521–1523), the forgotten man (1523–1534), and the heretic (1534–1546). Of course, Luther was suspected and accused of heresy long before 1534. Relating Girolamo Aleandro’s report to Rome in 1516 on the volatile situation in Germany, R. refers to the Germans as “the unruly barbarians” (56) already in the first chapter on Luther as monk. Unfortunately, R. does not document this claim. In the second chapter, Luther emerges as a barbarian. Pope Leo X (1513–1521) commissioned Silvestro Mazzolini, known as Prierias, with the task of rebutting Luther’s Ninety-five Theses. R. summarizes Prierias’s view without quoting him: “the typical heretic is at the same time the typical barbarian” (88). In his *Responsio* (1518), Prierias underlines the false and heretical nature of Luther’s Theses. He imagines Luther to be a biting dog and

accuses him of spiritual leprosy, blindness, and ignorance (*Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri* [1517–1521], 1: 96, 63, 70, 103), but he never mocks him for being a German or calls him a barbarian. Luther the barbarian dominates the narrative of Rome's interpretation of the Reformer. R., however, intersperses his own, more positive, assessment: Luther the shrewd manipulator of print. He was "the widely famous theologian and publicist" (172) and "the great communicator" (250). The latter epithet appears in the revealing chapter on "Luther, der Vergessene." During the papacy of Clement VII (1523–1534), Luther and Germany faded from the horizon of the second Medici pope, "who had no interest in the ecclesiastical situation in Germany" (265).

The popes who reigned in Luther's lifetime are all in bad odor with R. He exposes them, with the exception of Adrian VI (1522–1523), as crass tribalists, promoting the political interests of the Medici and, in the case of Paul III (1534–1549), the Farnese families. R. especially scorns Clement VII. Indecisive, nepotistic, pathologically stingy, and erratic, the pope was an appalling disaster. R. derides his "irrational politics" (217) and laments his "self-destructive policy" that rendered his diplomats in Germany "helpless" (266). He discredits the Netherlandish Adrian VI, "the barbarian pontiff" (197), as a failure for alienating the curia with his admission of the church's responsibility for schism in Germany, a "confession of abuses" that "completely gambled away his authority" (209).

What rankles more than the tendentious presentation of papal history is the sometimes unconvincing quality of two related discourses in the book: the papal profile of the barbaric Luther and German barbarians and the irreconcilable cultural conflict between Italy and Germany. The discourses engage in eisegesis as well as exegesis; too often R. insinuates. Nothing in *Exsurge Domine* (1520), the bull by which Leo X threatened Luther with excommunication, suggests the misguided attempt of the Roman curia "to broach the cultural and religious superiority of Italy" (122) or the image of Luther "as the prototype of the German barbarian" (125). The bull praises German loyalty to Catholic truth and fierce opposition to heresy. It denounces Luther as a "stubborn heretic" (125), yes, but it does not degrade him culturally. Only two explicit references to barbarism emerge from R.'s sources. The first came in 1535 from the pen of Giambattista Flavio Aquilano, former secretary to Cardinal Cajetan. In Augsburg in October 1518, Cajetan, as the pope's legate, met with Luther to examine his position on papal indulgences in order to have him recant it. On the second day of the discussion, according to the account of Aquilano, Luther approached Cajetan full of "barbaric rage." Luther's temper corresponds to Aquilano's assessment of Luther's character as ignorant and insolent, but nowhere in his account did he match Luther's temper or character with German cultural inferiority or Italian superiority. The second reference comes from Luther's vituperation, *Against the Papacy, an Institution of the Devil* (1545). R. quotes Luther: "When they call Germany the praiseworthy nation, it means: the beasts and barbarians, who are not worthy to feed on the pope's shit (*myst*)." R. incorrectly attributes the disparagement of Germans to "the Italians" (321). Luther is much more specific and more ecclesiological. He expounds the language of the papacy: *die sprache des Stuels zu Rom* (WA [Weimaar Edition] 54: 212). R. calls Paul III's 1536 instruction to Giovanni Morone as nuncio to Germany "a typical humanist

instruction for successful dealings in the land of barbarians” (303). The pope indicates that the heretics in Bohemia are not as bad as “the monstrosities of the heretics of Germany” (*Nuntiaturreichichte aus Deutschland*, 2: 60), but his instruction never dismisses Germany as barbaric. The absence of the discourse of barbarism in this and other sources undermines confidence in R.’s repeated appeal to this discourse.

At times R.’s sources undermine his emphasis on the Reformation as a cultural contest between Italy and Germany. As nuncio, Aleandro could not believe how “the august and pious German nation” could be deceived by a single monk (203). He denounced the monk in a theological, not nationalistic or cultural, category as “the new Arius,” which does not readily correspond to a superiority complex towards “a barbarian counterworld” (162). Travelling in Germany, Aleandro often exclaimed: “Here is our Italy!” (268). True, Pietro Paolo Vergerio studied the “heresies of this perverse nation” (270), and yet he predicted the outbreak of insurrection if Paul III did not convince “this nation” of the coming of a reform council (276). This nuncio, R. reveals, “spent his twilight years after various twists and turns and adventures as a Lutheran pastor in Tübingen, where he died in 1565” (270). How could an Italian have gone over to the barbarian German heretics?

Luther’s response to Paul III’s decision to call a reform council, the lengthy treatise *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), escapes R.’s attention. In principle, Luther supported the convocation of a council to reform the church, but he believed that under the papacy such a council would be an exercise in futility. The treatise is ecclesiological, not nationalistic. It reviews the history of the ecumenical councils from Nicaea I to Chalcedon, sets out the duties of a council, and establishes the external marks of the church. Luther casts himself as an opponent of papists, not Italians. The only adversarial “devils” he identifies are his German Catholic opponents, such as Hieronymus Emser and Johann Eck (WA 50: 630).

R.’s epilogue posits an ongoing “clash of cultures” (325) between Italy and Germany that gave rise to the Reformation. “Without wanting it (or perhaps even often without knowing it),” modern Lutheranism has moved closer to “Catholic notions” (327), although the papacy remains the main obstacle to complete rapprochement. R. ignores two important developments within modern Catholicism: the church since the 20th century has become a self-consciously global church and the popes since 1978 have not been Italian—indeed, Benedict XVI was German. One can no longer pit an Italian papacy against German Lutheranism. No doubt, agreement “between the churches and nations” requires historical understanding (328). But that understanding should not place more emphasis than can be historically demonstrated on cultural conflict.

Hilmar M. Pabel

Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia

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