

***The Making of Martin Luther*, Richard Rex**

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With the 500-year celebration of the Reformation, a new interest has been sparked in the personalities and history involved in this pivotal point in the church's story. Needless to say, numerous publications have surfaced on this topic and one is tempted to ask what different perspective could be offered in the telling of the Reformation history? Then came this extraordinary book by Cambridge professor of Reformation history, Richard Rex, titled *The Making of Martin Luther*.

From the onset, the book sparks intrigue by offering an insightful perspective on the historical "Luther's nailing of the 95-theses" on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. I will resist giving away the surprising conclusions, only but to suggest that it could not better set up the reader for taking interest in the unfolding of the story. As is widely known, Martin Luther was a Catholic priest, who had no intention of being instrumental in the formation of the Protestant tradition. Change, as he saw it, was needed within the Catholic tradition, strongly protesting against the abuse of power and the exploitation of congregants by means of manipulation and deception. Although this part of Luther's impact is well documented, little is told about what led him to taking such a strong stance. Who did he interact with? How was his thinking shaped by academia, church politics or his reading of Scripture? Rex's book aims at telling this back-story, suggesting that Martin Luther was not only an individual with strong personal convictions, but that Luther was a phenomenon, a coming together of a rising tide against what was seen to be the church's misuse of its claim to be the custodian of God's Word.

More than being a person who grew into his convictions, Luther also had to deal with the consequences of his daring act. Conviction by itself is not enough, when having to face the full onslaught of a religious tradition which he challenged. Rex documents the interaction between Martin Luther and Johannes Maier von Eck—a strong objector against Luther's statements—how the case against Luther managed to reach Rome and then the infamous Edict of Worms ... the backlash against Luther and the early Reformation movement was



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relentless, as Rex describes. Instead of curtailing Luther's efforts and convictions, these challenges only but propagated the Lutheran message of God's accessibility to all people.

The book goes on to tell the history of the Lutheran effect on history; a position worth seeing, not as an anti-church movement, but perhaps as one of the greatest gifts of accountability and reflection that the church could have received. Rex's rendition of the Reformation history is filled with interesting anecdotes, sharp wit and is a clear display that he truly is an expert in his field. Although the publication may appeal to academics as a valuable book on Reformation history, this work is equally accessible to a "popular" audience that wishes to gain a grasp on this part of the church's story. It is easy to read, written with humour, intrigue, and keeps the reader captivated by offering insights that will make the reader want to read more.

I can truly recommend Rex's publication and it is certainly going to occupy a special spot in my library, needless to say, filled with notes in the margins, reflecting my reader's appreciation for new insight gained into what has become for me, a path well-trodden.