



**Scott, Tom. The Early Reformation in Germany: Between
Secular Impact and Radical Vision**

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the voluble puritan. The anachronistic apparition of a ruined monastery in the revenge tragedy *Titus Andronicus* functions as “the present-absence of a salvific Christian horizon to transcend vengeful pagan Rome” (101). In *Measure for Measure*, Rust’s contrasting of the true love relations as aspects of a holy mystical body with the worldliness of exchange in the brothel plays on the hidden value of coinage, base and real, as joining all elements in true love—from the ruler through the people.

Milton’s Sonnet 18 on the Irish and Piedmontese massacres of the early 1640s attempts the “impossibility of locating a space or a history uncontaminated by foundational violence” (157). Rust brackets the sonnet with his dissection of the “martyrdom” of Charles I’s hagiographic memorialization, *Eikon Basilike*, as a signal failure against the Foxean formula. For many, Charles I was a martyr (175), where Mary of Scotland could never have been.

Rust’s discrete essays disinter politics of nostalgia, of violence, of degradation in English texts which might, in another light, seem a narrative of Protestant exceptionalism rather than anxiety. Historians, who might otherwise look wistfully upon the more vaulting connections of theologians and literary readers, will find that Rust enlightens in theologizing her textual investigations of an age where theology was a common language.

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Scott, Tom.

The Early Reformation in Germany: Between Secular Impact and Radical Vision.

UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. Pp. ix, 283. ISBN 978-1-4094-6898-1 (hardcover) \$124.95.

This collection of Tom Scott’s ten essays, some previously published and others appearing for the first time, has a purpose beyond the usual celebration of a senior scholar’s work on a given topic: it seeks to address the lacuna in Reformation scholarship on the Early Reformation and urge renewed attention to marginalized aspects of those heady beginnings of Reform.

In his introduction, Scott identifies the particular histories of the Early Reformation that offer “new adits and shafts of exploration into unresolved questions,” including connections between the Reformers and social and economic questions, the ideologies behind the Peasants’ War, the impact of the Reformation on women, the failures of the Reformation, and the role of the Radicals.

His collection, divided into three sections, begins in part A with a historiographical reflection on the state of the field, where he focuses on the nature and purposes of iconoclasm in the Reformation and the ideas behind the changes in religious priorities of the early sixteenth century. Perhaps most intriguingly, Scott also invites the reader to revisit the roles of anticlericalism and communalism in the Reformation, only to dismiss them as mere explicators of “how, when, and where,” and points, instead, to the need for imperial political and social reform for the “why” of Reformation beginnings. As evidence, Scott points to Thomas A. Brady Jr.’s demonstration that Luther’s true innovation was to reveal that “all previous pathways to reform—caesaropapal, nationalist, or communal—were doomed to failure: the only hope of reform lay with the princes” (23).

Scott continues his sociopolitical focus in part B as he takes up the Reformation and political economy, the Peasants’ War, and women. In “The Reformation and Modern Political Economy: Luther and Gaismair Compared,” Scott explores how Luther and the radical Utopian Gaismair reacted to the “substantial reorientation of economy and society in the early sixteenth century” (35). He concludes that both reformers sought solutions to the economic problems they encountered, and though neither advocated a “classless society” (55), both responded to the economic changes of the era with gospel-inspired perspectives on the centrality of land to wealth. In “The German Peasants’ War and the ‘Crisis of Feudalism’: Reflections on a Neglected Theme,” Scott addresses Peter Blicke’s insistence that the peasant uprising constituted a revolution that emerged out of an ill-defined “crisis of feudalism.” Scott is at his most convincing (and he is almost always very convincing) when he distills the complicated economic nuances of the early sixteenth-century and connects them to the sociopolitical developments of the era. Scott sees the roots of the peasant uprising of 1525 not in a “crisis of feudalism” but in the “competition between lords and peasants to exploit new opportunities *within* the existing feudal mode of production and [...] a struggle over the delineation of communal rights” (100).

In addition to another essay on the Peasants' War and its connection to the English Peasants' Revolt of 1381, this section also offers an essay on "The Collective Response of Women to Early Reforming Preaching," and another that asks "Why Was There No Reformation in Freiburg im Breisgau?" In the former, Scott challenges the assumption that "women had no opportunity for group action" (140) and argues that women asserted themselves in solidarity to defend their view of the Gospel. In the latter, Scott contends that Freiburg im Breisgau avoided Reformation primarily because of its relatively stable relationship with local clerics, its vigilance against unrest, and the lack of humanist consensus that might have promoted reforming doctrines.

In part C, Scott addresses radicals in the Reformation. In "The Problem of Heresy in the German Reformation," Scott notes that although Protestants are most often studied as schismatics rather than heretics, the sixteenth-century Church had no hesitation branding them heretics. As for the Anabaptists, both Protestants and Catholics agreed that they were dangerous heretics, primarily in consideration of "the civil implications of their religious separatism which marked them down for persecution by Catholic and Protestant authorities alike" (192), though Anabaptist theological heresy also concerned both groups. In "Hubmaier, Schappeler, and Hergot on Social Revolution," Scott explores the connections between the Reformation and sociopolitical resistance and asserts that for these radicals, "radical Christianity" inspired their views of social revolution. The final two essays in this section deal with Johannes Agricola's influence on the Peasants' War and Thomas Müntzer's use of the parable of the mustard seed. Both essays highlight the complex confluence of ideas that informed radical thought in the first half of the sixteenth century. In the afterword, Scott draws on his own and his colleagues' experiences researching and connecting with other scholars in the German Democratic Republic. The essay should be fascinating reading for any researcher, but most especially for those who have chartered new territories for research.

For scholars and students of the Reformations, the quick and the protracted, the radical and the English, Tom Scott's elegant and thought-provoking essays offer a comforting reminder that our subject yet offers questions unanswered, problems unresolved, and topics unexplored.

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