

Martin Lutero a Roma. Michael Matheus, Arnold Nesselrath, and Martin Wallraff, eds.

I libri di Viella 329. Rome: Viella, 2019. xxii + 556 pp. + b/w pls. €56.

Martin Lutero cinquecento anni dopo. Giovanni Puglisi and Gianluca Montinaro, eds. Piccola Biblioteca Umanistica 2. Florence: Olschki, 2019. vi + 130 pp. €19.

Two volumes on Martin Luther have recently been published in Italy to mark the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. The first work, *Martin Lutero a Roma*, is the Italian edition of a previous 2017 German edition that presented the proceedings of an interdisciplinary conference held in Rome in 2011. This rich and well-structured volume focuses on Luther's trip to Rome in 1510–11, using the trip and its reinterpretation in Luther's later memories as a springboard to examine the friar's complex relationship with the Eternal City, first revered and approached as a devout pilgrim and later labeled as *sedes Diaboli*. The book provides an invaluable contribution for scholars who seek to grasp the historical Luther, reconstruct his actual experience in Rome, and also gain a better understanding of the city itself in the early 1500s, by observing its religious, economic, and social development through an impressive variety of sources.

Debunking the post-Reformation myth that Luther's encounter with Rome was immediately characterized by his scandalized criticism of the papacy and its Babylonian capital, this volume attempts to free the German friar's experience from layers of a posteriori ideological reinterpretations and from the "veil of memory" that Luther himself had later cast on his reminiscences (37). As Leppin puts it in his essay on Luther's memories of his Roman pilgrimage, Luther used his recollections in a strategic manner by manipulating autobiographical details to substantiate his "theological war" against the Roman Church (41). Given the scarcity of sources and certain details about the scope, dates, and circumstances of Luther's pilgrimage to Rome, the volume does not attempt to propose a definitive solution, but rather it sketches an effective outline of Rome in the 1510s as a complex, kaleidoscopic, and cosmopolitan city. Focusing on the city and on its multifaceted history allows the reader to better contextualize Luther's experience in Rome by placing it alongside the experience of countless other pilgrims that every day reached the city driven by spiritual motives, devotional obligations, practical concerns, or a mix thereof.

The volume is structured in five parts. The first part reviews the few sources available that document Luther's trip and the young friar's earliest impressions of the journey. Schneider's essay on chronology presents the reader with persuasive evidence that Luther's trip happened later, in 1511–12, rather than in 1510–11, and in support of his master Staupitz, not in opposition to Staupitz's authority, as previous historiography claimed. As late as 1519, Luther seemed to remember his pilgrimage to Rome in

favorable terms: he spoke of falling on his knees at the view of the holy city, a city “honored by God above all others” (26), and of his desire of making a general confession in Rome. In spite of Luther’s criticism of the liturgical superficiality and scandalous behaviors he witnessed in Rome, Schneider points out how Luther’s early memories corroborate the idea that his trip to Rome was rather uneventful, unfolded as a typical pilgrimage around churches and catacombs, and did not prompt the shattering of conscience and rebellion against the authority of the church that later memories seemed to indicate.

The second part of the volume investigates the city itself by examining a variety of sources in an interdisciplinary perspective: the areas where Luther stayed and their urban development, the complex economic interaction between the Curia and the Roman elites, and the convents of the Augustinian Order in Rome. Esch’s essay on the Campo Marzio helps the reader see this bustling, crowded, and growing neighborhood as the stage of Luther’s days in Rome. Among other sources, the petitions from the Apostolic Penitentiary provide a glimpse into the problems the pilgrims presented and, therefore, the conversations that Luther may have witnessed during his stay. The third part of the volume specifically considers the Roman Curia and the complex interactions between foreigners and the intricate apparatus of papal politics and bureaucracy. Tewes’s essay on petitioners’ strategies when navigating the Curia and Schmutge’s chapter on the German Curial elites in Rome both delineate the experiences of foreign pilgrims in the years of Luther’s trip, while also reiterating the absence of sources that document Luther’s actual encounters within the Curia or the circle of influential German prelates.

A fourth section on theology and devotion has the merit of highlighting some of the problems and lacunae in the studies of Roman religion in the early sixteenth century, especially in reference to personal beliefs, devotional practices, and spirituality. The city’s pragmatic and essential faith, and its multifaceted charitable endeavors are the focus of Rehberg’s essay. Although he concludes that an abuse of indulgences and relics could have been encountered anywhere in the empire around the 1500s, Luther’s personal memories of Rome, together with additional information he later retrieved from pilgrims’ guidebooks, proved a useful rhetorical tool to stigmatize the city as “caput scelerum et sedis Diaboli” (“capital of crime and seat of the devil”) after his break with the Roman Church (346). Finally, a concluding section on art, culture, and science reconstructs the animated intellectual life of Rome and the plans for its urban renovations at the time of Luther’s journey, completing the picture of a city that, in Pagliara’s words, was continuously both “in decay and in formation” (495), and whose contrasting images of ruin and reconstruction permeated the urban landscape at the time of Luther’s pilgrimage.

The second book, *Martin Lutero cinquecento anni dopo*, attempts to investigate some aspects of the “dilemma” of interpreting Luther and the contradictions and misunderstandings that have characterized opposite views of the Reformation over the course of the last five centuries (9). The first half of this brief volume includes essays that look at Luther and the Reformation from a historical, philosophical, and sociological

standpoint. Not immune at times from the same biased interpretations the editors criticize in the introduction, the essays attempt to examine some of the long-term effects of the Reformation, presented as a disruptive force to a presumed European universalism or as an inspiration for those free thinkers who rebelled against the “yoke of the Churches” and the obscurantist and superstitious beliefs of the past (83). The volume does not offer the reader a cohesive perspective, but rather includes different scholars’ impressions and “divagazioni” (“digressions”) that attempt to assess Luther’s legacy within the cultural history of Europe (67).

Montinaro’s essay on Luther’s *Tischreden* (The familial discourses) contextualizes the writings and discusses some of the persistent problems when interpreting these informal memories as a tool for historical analysis. Nitti’s essay investigates Henry VIII’s *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum contra Lutherum* (a theological writing with a political intent), Luther’s vehement response to the king’s text, and the controversy that followed. The second part of this volume reprints the first Italian translation of a theology book by Luther, originally published in Venice in 1525 as *Uno ibretto volgare, con la dichiarazione de li dieci comandamenti, del Credo, del Pater noster* (A brief book in vernacular, with the declaration of the Ten Commandments, of the creed, of the Our Father). Printed without mention of the author’s name, since Luther’s book had been condemned by the church, the short volume contained Italian translations of Luther’s writings as well as pages probably written by Luther’s followers on “faith, sin, grace, predestination, and the value of works” (89). Unfortunately, the reprinted text is not accompanied by any new commentary or historical analysis, aside from a few introductory pages that summarize previous studies on the topic.

Alessandra Franco, *University of Mary*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2021.165

Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World.

Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin, eds.

Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture 59.2. Leiden: Brill, 2018. xxii + 356 pp. €154.

The book under review is a collection of essays and volume 59.2 in Brill’s Intersections series. Volume 59.1 in the same series is *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy* (ed. Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin [2018]), also a collection of essays. *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World* contains sixteen essays on a range of faiths and places around the world, interdisciplinary in the aggregate, and one introduction in which the editors explain that the collection examines domestic devotions from a global perspective between 1400 and 1800. It presents many interesting topics for consideration. The essays read as stand-alone offerings, meaning they neither reference one