

Sherman's somewhat disappointing explanation of Psalm 51:2–5 (16). That being said, the specifically corporate and social aspects of evil, highlighting that we are caught up from birth in an all-pervasive web of human sin, helpfully supplement traditional presentations, sometimes unduly limited to individually inherited guilt.

The upshot of all this is that, in redemption also, God's plan is not merely to save individuals but to redeem a people. This is, of course, classic Reformed theology. The practical outworking, however, is a refreshing emphasis on the role of the community for all of Christian life:

The scriptural witness makes it abundantly clear that salvation is a social, covenantal reality that unfolds in time toward a divine end, and that the God effecting this salvation is trinitarian. The Triune God does not save by plucking individuals up to heaven or by us establishing a particular social agenda or political regime following Jesus's example. Rather, salvation is the fruit of God's embedding persons in a community called and sanctified (which is to say, set apart) by the Holy Spirit to be a witness to God's own fulfillment of creation's ultimate goal in the work of Jesus Christ. (41)

On the whole, *Covenant, Community, and the Spirit* is a helpful reflection on how the church, as the community of those living together in the sphere of God's grace and lordship, can thrive in an increasingly individualistic, secularized, and postmodern culture. The book bristles with theological and practical thoughts on the church's life, call, and witness, and it will generously repay repeated meditation. Admittedly, some sections may be a challenging read for churchgoers with no formal theological education, while it might strike others as not going deep enough into certain issues. But this should not detract Christians, especially pastors and teachers, from grappling with the issues Sherman develops and asking how the church can better understand, and live out, her communal nature—and her communal testimony—in today's world.

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Herman Selderhuis. *Martin Luther: A Spiritual Biography*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017.

Among the many books published on Martin Luther in 2017 to commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of the Ninety-Five Theses, Herman Selderhuis's book *Martin Luther: A Spiritual Biography* offers a fascinating

portrait of the man behind this famous event. Instead of writing a hagiography of the Reformer, Selderhuis presents a fair and balanced view of Luther in his own historical context. From Luther's childhood to his career as a theologian and his death in 1546, various aspects of his life are told in a narrative form. What one consistently reads in the book is that Luther was a human being just like any other, a man with doubts and fears but who also had a deep desire to seek God. Luther comes alive in the pages of this book as a brilliant and humorous yet problematic man of his time. It is thus notable that the author begins his introduction with these words: "Luther was a problem" (19).

The book is divided into ten chapters. Each chapter deals with one phase of Luther's life in chronological order. The first four chapters, which covers the years 1483 to 1517, serve the purpose of introducing Luther's family history, educational background, and the internal spiritual struggles that drive him to reform the church. An important theme that emerges in these chapters is that Luther did not just happen to discover the Bible and its truth one day in contrast with the corrupted teaching of the papacy. Selderhuis describes Luther's path to discovery, showing how his internal struggle to find the assurance of salvation was the driving force that led to his breakthrough. Thus, Selderhuis correctly points out that Luther's arrival at the truth happened progressively and gradually. In chapter four, after mentioning the disagreements among scholars as to when Luther's breakthrough took place, he writes, "Instead of choosing an earlier or later date, it is probably better to speak of a reformational development that began in 1513 and was completed by 1518" (84). The author also emphasizes that Luther did not come up with new ideas on his own; rather, his understanding came from reading patristic and medieval sources. Although Selderhuis does not explain in depth the medieval philosophical thinking that shaped Luther's thought, he consistently shows that his thoughts did not occur in isolation from the past. Even Luther's emphasis on Scripture was not his unique contribution, but, as the author points out, it came at a time when there was a growing focus on the authority of Scripture.

In chapters five and six (1517–1521), Selderhuis describes the events that led up to Luther's excommunication, beginning with the famous story of the Ninety-Five Theses. Instead of simply repeating this story, Selderhuis argues that it is more likely that the beadle of the university would have posted the theses, not Luther, on October 31, 1517 (100). In these chapters, the author explains Luther's key theological changes of idea on humility, justification, the sacraments, and authority through an account of the Heidelberg Disputation, the Diet of Augsburg, and the Leipzig Debate.

Selderhuis explains that these are crucial years for Luther, which culminate in him burning of the bull of excommunication and the canon law as a sign of a definitive breach with Rome.

From chapter seven to the end of the book (1521–1546), Selderhuis narrates how Luther’s theology developed and matured as his ideas spread and attracted supporters as well as enemies. The church was Luther’s most obvious opponent. There were also others who seemed to be on Luther’s side at first but in fact turned out to be adversaries as differences emerged. In chapter seven, Selderhuis illustrates the mixed emotions surrounding such conflicts in Luther’s relationship with the peasants, Erasmus, and Carlstadt. Against the challenges to his Reformation thought, Luther continued to write many theological treatises. In chapter eight, Selderhuis discusses Luther’s debates with Zwingli on the Lord’s Supper. Luther also received many questions regarding faith and Christian life on topics such as marriage and the role of the government. He lectured on the books of the Bible, imparting his knowledge of the Scriptures to students at Wittenberg. Luther was also an ardent preacher. To ensure that people were taught right doctrine, Luther produced Large and Small Catechisms. Through these narratives, the author portrays the zeal that Luther had for the gospel. Then in chapters nine and ten, Selderhuis moves on to the later stages of his life, during which Luther expressed his frustration with the way the Reformation was going and the chronic illnesses he suffered. Selderhuis does not shy away from dealing with the controversial topics that emerge in Luther’s story, such as his approval of Philip of Hesse’s double marriage and his notorious claims about the Jews. While trying to see him in a world very different from ours, Selderhuis illustrates Luther’s difficult character, his stubbornness, and his shortcomings.

As Selderhuis unfolds the theological contributions of Luther, he also pays close attention to the social, political, and economic factors that shaped Luther’s thought and his Reformation. The invention of the printing press allowed his writings to disseminate quickly. The threats from the Turks diverted the emperor’s attention from the Luther problem at times. The political tensions between the emperor and the electors, and the emperor and the pope were also essential to Luther’s Reformation. As Selderhuis writes, “the matter of the Reformation had the advantage that all of them were a bother to each other” (119). These contextual factors indicate that Luther was the right man for the right time.

Furthermore, Selderhuis takes his readers into Luther’s personal life, including his roles as a husband and a father. The anecdotes about his family life are intriguing even for readers of the twenty-first century. For

example, Luther and his wife Katharina would have arguments about whether accepting money from Luther's enemies would be appropriate (198). At other times, Katharina would become frustrated with "Luther's fairly unorganized manner of doing things" (223) or admonish Luther to consume less wine (242). As a father, Luther had the deepest affection for his children. The accounts of his daughter's death communicate the overwhelming sadness that a father faces when burying his own child. By telling such stories, Selderhuis allows the readers to sympathize with Luther and to understand him at a personal level.

One strong feature of this book is the sheer number of sources that Selderhuis uses to shed light on Luther's life and his world. The author uses his own translations of Luther's writings from various theological treatises, sermons, letters, and the table talk. He tells the story using Luther's own words. At the same time, Selderhuis interacts with secondary sources from Luther scholarship, at times showing consent but at times criticizing other scholarly interpretations on Luther.

What one will not find in this book, however, is an in-depth theological analysis of Luther's thought. Although as a competent theologian Selderhuis is fully capable of doing so, his purpose in this book does not lie in writing a textbook on Luther's theology. Instead, as a churchman and a teacher, he guides readers to walk with Luther as he rises and falls with the daily tasks of his Christian life. Thus, the author invites readers to witness an example of a Christian brother who found his greatest joy in studying the Scriptures and lived fully devoted to his faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In sum, theological, pastoral, personal, and humorous aspects of Luther are woven into one narrative through which Selderhuis draws a complete and complex picture of a significant man who made a great impact in the history of the church. Written in an accessible and engaging style, this book is one of the best introductions to Luther's life for readership of all levels.

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Jonathan Willis. *The Reformation of the Decalogue: Religious Identity and the Ten Commandments in England, c. 1485-1625*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Jonathan Willis has written the first extended analysis of how the Ten Commandments were explained in the English Reformation and what social impact they had. Previous historiography argued that in the medieval