

The Essence of the Reformation

Kirsten Birkett's compact book with this title (Matthias: The Modern Beliefs Series) provides, as might be expected, a comprehensive picture of the social and religious settings in medieval Europe, from which arose that great spiritual revolution which we know as the Reformation. She also provides historical portraits of the key figures who led the revolution in Christian thought and doctrine, which spawned the Protestant churches of which Holy Trinity is a member.

When one thinks of the Reformation, the name of Martin Luther inevitably springs to mind. However, Luther was but one of several rebels against the corrupt church practices of his time, who, led by the Holy Spirit, became convinced of the truth of the Christian Gospel, and were determined to preach it. Others who are worthy of equal mention include Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, Tyndale and Cranmer, and the roles of each are succinctly described.

Important as it is to know this background, it is far more important to grasp the doctrinal issues, which were at the heart of the Reformation, and the book analyses these both in depth and with clarity:

- How can a person be right with God? *By grace alone.*
- How does this grace come? *By Christ alone.*
- How do we find Christ? *Through Scripture alone.*
- What is our part? *By faith alone.*

Perhaps the most powerful words in this book are contained in its concluding sentences:

"There was more than a change in 'religion'; it was a change in thought, in life, and what it meant to be a human being in God's world... Many Christians (today)... do not realise that the truths for which the Reformers fought and died are as much under threat now as they were then... We need to learn the lessons of the Reformation, and be reminded that the truth that inspired that generation to protest, and to reform, is still true today."

Highly recommended to all Trinity Times' readers.