

sometimes in different translation.) What becomes evident from the outset is that Esolen knows how to plumb the depths of this venerable poetry. Himself a devout Roman Catholic, Esolen treats the hymns with great care; only occasionally is there a theological point with which one might quibble. He regularly quotes the Scriptures—always from the King James Version, since this is the version that would have been known to all of these hymn writers—demonstrating just how richly these hymns draw upon the biblical text.

Equally impressive is the unassuming way in which Esolen teaches the finer points of poetry. The careful reader will note, for example, the nature and purpose of rhyme (11, 39), the importance of doxological stanzas (32), how rhyme and meter relate to the hymn tune (45, 94, 108, 114), the intricacies of meter (49, 63, 90), and the beauty of alliteration (61). The level of detail, which is never beyond the scope of the average reader, reminds us why Christians have returned to these and other hymns again and again: they have something to say and they say it quite well!

Included with the book is a CD that contains recordings of 18 of the hymns. Sung by the St. Cecilia Choir of St. John Cantius Roman Catholic Church in Chicago, these recordings reflect more of a Roman Catholic style of hymn singing than Lutheran. They are, nevertheless, a beneficial feature since it is in the very nature of hymns that they be sung.

This is a book that should be read by every pastor, church musician, and praise band leader. It is also highly recommended for anyone else who is involved in a congregation's music ministry. Finally, it is the perfect resource for a book study group or for a Bible class. You will not be disappointed.

Paul J. Grime

***Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career (Second Edition).* By James M. Kittelson and Hans H. Wiersma. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016. Paperback. 275 pages. \$27.00.**

James M. Kittelson (1941–2003) is remembered for his careful Reformation scholarship, robust humor, and his deep commitment to the Gospel proclaimed by Luther. First published in 1986, Kittelson's *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* was quickly recognized as a fresh and important Luther biography. Whereas Roland Bainton's classic and ever popular Luther biography, *Here I Stand* focused on the young Luther, Kittelson's book would see Luther all the way through, not shying away from the aged Reformer. I was serving as a campus pastor when the book first appeared and did not hesitate to recommend it to students who inquired who asked for a suggested Luther biography. It was a good book then

and under the able help of a Kittelson student, Hans Wiersma, a fine work is made even better.

Two observations are in order about this new edition of Kittelson's book. First of all, Wiersma has incorporated the insights of more recent Luther scholarship into his revision. Much has transpired in Reformation studies over the last three and a half decades. Wiersma knows the scholarship and judiciously weaves more recent research into the fabric of Kittelson's work in a seamless fashion. This is demonstrated not only in the narrative but also in the updated bibliography. Second, while the first edition placed a bit more emphasis on Luther's career, Wiersma balances this aspect with more attention to Luther's life. It is not that Kittelson neglected the Reformer's earthy humanity but this aspect is certainly more prominent in the present volume. We learn a little more about Luther as friend, husband, and father.

Like the first edition, the revised edition attends to the chronology of events in Luther's life as well as the context and content of his theology. While the political and philosophical aspects of the Reformation are by no means ignored, Kittelson and Wiersma narrate the story of Luther who saw himself as a servant and preacher of Jesus Christ.

In this anniversary year, the market is flooded with books on Luther. Certainly, there are many fine biographies both long and short to choose from these days. The three-volume work of Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther* is indispensable for the scholar. This fresh edition of *Luther: The Reformer* remains the best one-volume overview of Luther's life and teaching. It is concise without omitting necessary historical details but the reader is not burdened with excessive data in the text or in the footnotes. The book is accessible for ordinary pastors and laity. It should be in every congregational library and it would be an excellent text to use in an adult forum or book discussion group.

John T. Pless