Confederation. The book is especially strong on the “crisis” of scholasticism (chapter 2) and on Erasmus’s attempt to bypass this crisis through a direct appeal to biblical norms, and one looks forward to Levi’s forthcoming biography of him.

The volume features a comprehensive “thematic index” running to some forty-three pages, which includes subjects, persons, and occasionally places, but it lacks a bibliography: all references and authorities are buried in endnotes. Levi’s style is generally approachable and lucid, and frequently personal. His book is a solid and reliable single-volume history, priced affordably and containing the necessary resources for closer study of its contents.

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Franz Posset. *The Front-Runner of the Catholic Reformation: The Life and Work of Johann von Staupitz*. St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History. Aldershot, Hants; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003. Pp. xxii, 398.

Franz Posset, once a student in Germany of Hans Küng and Karl Rahner, holds his Ph.D. in theology from Marquette University. His “theological biography” (p. xiii) of Johann von Staupitz (b. 1463–68, d. 1524) fills a huge gap in Anglophone literature on the early Reformation and Catholic Reformation. It serves all scholars by systematically exploring Staupitz’s writings and recorded sermons and by challenging the prevailing view of Staupitz as a “fore-runner” of the Reformation. The relatively limited nature of Staupitz’s output and the fairly simple outline of his comings and goings allow for a quite thorough treatment in a single volume. As Posset points out, the lack of critical editions of several key works prevents any attempt at a definitive biography at this time. And so he is content to provide a “preliminary synthesis” (p. xv) of Staupitz’s life and accomplishments. Posset’s work is commendable for its clarity, the careful balancing and articulation of its judgments, and the deftness with which he constructs his arguments and reminds the reader of them. All told, this biography would be an asset in any library concerned with the Reformations of the sixteenth century.

Posset takes great pains to view his subject through lenses other than those provided by Staupitz’s relationship with Luther. But offering an alternative perspective proves challenging. Luther himself repeatedly credited Staupitz with having brought him to Christ. This spiritual father appears many times in Luther’s Table Talks, and these often supply necessary information for piecing together an accurate and satisfying picture of Staupitz. Posset largely succeeds in isolating the “Luther effect” by concentrating on the Augustinian connection that bound the two and that defined Staupitz’s own arena of action. Moreover,

he views the Reformation phenomena as part of a continuum of reform and regeneration that serves as a major thread running through all of Christian history. The Augustinians were born in an era of medieval reform, and Posset sees the mendicants more broadly as leaders of reform in the Church from about 1490 to 1530. But reform in the orders had to precede reform of the Church, just as Church reform had to precede broader reforms in society. Staupitz understood this clearly, and spent his entire career as an Augustinian leader pursuing reform in all three arenas. Along the way, he developed Christocentric theological positions on, *inter alia*, predestination and justification. These views might have sparked interesting and fruitful debate within the late Renaissance Church, had not Luther — and others — taken very similar positions and run off with them. In Staupitz's strong desire for Church reform, his Christocentrism and emphasis on pastoral preaching, and in his liberal theological views, Posset sees the mark of the "front-runner" in Reformation thought and direction, not that of the precursor or "fore-runner" ascribed to him by David Steinmetz and Heiko Oberman, among others. For Posset, Staupitz was certainly theologically reformed, but he was politically and ecclesiologically bound to the status quo. The tenor of his thought was formed in the matrix of late medieval theology and peculiarly German biblical and monastic humanism. His rejection of scholasticism put him in one of the mainstreams of European theology, in which rhetorical eloquence and the spirit of patristic pastoralism trumped contemporary dialectical niceties and popular preaching that relied on theological esotericism and nit-picking. Both his recorded sermons and his practical leadership reflect the *cura pastoralis* as understood and practiced by Augustine and Gregory the Great. In one of his early Tübingen sermons, he even criticized Pope Alexander VI as a "satellite of Satan" for his pastoral *laissez faire*.

In Posset's hands, Staupitz emerges as the major force in Luther's early development as a theologian and pastor. Long before their first meeting, Staupitz had contributed significantly to shaping the university at Wittenberg, thus aiding his childhood friend Frederick the Wise. As provost he helped fill the twenty-two new beneficed positions, and set about making the university a center for Augustinian teaching and formation. Avoiding even the label "theology," his principal faculty was to be of "Sacred Scriptures." As vicar general of the Observant wing of the Augustinians in Saxony, he worked long and hard — but unsuccessfully — to unite the reformed and conventuals, first in Germany, then more broadly. He recognized true talent and spiritual depth in young Luther, whom he called to Wittenberg to lecture on moral philosophy as early as 1507, shortly after his ordination. By emphasizing the "sweetness" of God and His mercy and love, Staupitz drove away Luther's inner demons, which fed on his fear of an angry and just God. For Posset, this theological insight into the nature of justifying grace — "the grace that makes God sweet

and pleasing to the believer” (p. 179) — was a key to both Staupitz’s and Luther’s spiritual development. Not unusually for one steeped in Augustine, Staupitz also leaned heavily toward predestination, which left Christ in absolute control of salvation. As for the sacraments, indulgences, and other outward signs of grace, Staupitz tended to sidestep them in favor of “personal satisfaction.” Luther’s decision to challenge their validity openly was but a step further. Luther quarried his cornerstones of *sola fides* and *sola scriptura* right out of Staupitz’s consistent teachings, as in this posthumous formulation: “God wants nothing more from us for our salvation than faith alone” (p. 307). Staupitz also convinced Luther to pursue his doctorate, the key to a preacher’s skill and respect. Posset concludes that, in terms of matters both subtle and deep, “there probably would not have been the Reformation in Germany as we know it” without Staupitz (p. 379).

In the end, Staupitz, like Frederick the Wise, remained an admirer of Luther’s efforts but not a follower of his early movement. Following Oberman, Posset characterizes this position as that of an “evangelical Catholic Reformer.” He forces us to rethink the originality of many of Luther’s positions and to review them in light of the long tradition of reform that lay just beneath the surface of Church consciousness in the first quarter of the sixteenth century.

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Jane E. A. Dawson. *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots: The Earl of Argyll and the Struggle for Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. xvii, 251.

Jane Dawson’s subject, the fifth earl of Argyll, was, as she ably shows, a crucial figure in the contexts of both Scottish and British politics in the mid-sixteenth century. As MacCailein Mor (the son of Great Colin), head of Clan Campbell and a Gaelic clan chief, he belonged to a trans-national Gaelic polity that, as Dawson repeatedly demonstrates, paid little attention to the official borders of England, Scotland, and Ireland; but as a peer of the realm of Scotland, he was also a personal friend and key ally of Mary, Queen of Scots. Indeed, so important was Argyll to Mary that when his marriage to her illegitimate half-sister neared collapse, the queen made common cause with so unlikely an ally as John Knox, with each working to bring round one of the two warring parties. (Although this strategy was successful in the short term, Argyll ultimately divorced his wife in pursuit of his doomed quest for a legitimate heir.) Argyll’s association with Knox also alerts us to the third crucial aspect of his career: charged by his father on his deathbed with overthrowing the Mass in Scotland, Argyll was a tirelessly committed Protestant. Dawson is particularly