BOOKS I HAVE READ: THE LAMENTATIONS OF A SINNER

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An interesting and encouraging book from an historically important author.
Category: Observations

To be honest, I'm not entirely sure what to make of this book. Let me throw out some adjectives that describe my reaction; important, encouraging, biblical, and hard-work. Lamentations of a Sinner is basically a testimony written by Katherine Parr the sixth wife of Henry The Eighth. It is published by the New Whitchurch Press a small publishing house who are dedicated to promoting works from the English Reformation.

Lamentations of a Sinner is a normal format paperback book of just under 50 pages, so it isn't very long. However, although I have read my fair share of Shakespeare and Puritan writers, I did find this book a struggle at times. It took me far longer to read than I would expect for a book of this length. Partly, this is the style in which the book is written, but also it is a reflection of the theological depth and density of the material. While I called this a *testimony* it is a long way removed from what often passes for conversion stories these days.

The book is beautifully produced, with red marginal annotations which both serve as sub-headings and point to relevant Scripture passages. To my old eyes, the grey paper on which the book is printed looked very attractive, but it was difficult to actually read the text in anything other than bright light. It will set you back Â£5 on the publisher's website. However, if this modest sum should prove too much, you can find the whole text on the publisher's website.

Broadly speaking, the book falls into three sections, though it is not strictly linear and the different sections interweave a good deal. It starts off with a lengthy meditation on Queen Katherine's sinful, pre-conversion state. I've mentioned the theological depth of this book and while a lengthy meditation on sin may seem morbid to contemporary readers, the depth of understanding that she shows of the human situation is well worth reading.

The second broad section comprises a meditation on the cross and on Jesus power to rescue us from death and hell. Again, this is well thought through, well reasoned and wide ranging.

The last section, engages with the reality of life for the believer. As might be expected for a book written early in the Reformation, it spends a good deal of time engaging with those that the author considers to be false teachers.

So who should read this book? I don't think that this is a book for the average Christian reader. You will need a degree of familiarity with Tudor English to get the best of it. That being said, it is an important book historically. Katherine Parr was the first woman to publish a book under her own

name in the English language. However, anyone with more than a passing interest in the history of the English Reformation or of the Church in/of England would do well to hurry over to the publishers and get hold of a copy.

I will admit, that I struggled to get the best out of this book, it was hard going. However, at life group, last week we were asked to name something that had encouraged us in the past seven days, and I didn't hesitate to name this book. It is well worth a read.

I am grateful to the publishers for providing me with a review copy of this book. I have attempted not to allow this generosity to influence what I have written.