

BOOK REVIEWS

Martin Luther, The Bible, and the Jewish People: A Reader. Edited by Brooks Schramm and Kirsi I. Stjerna. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. 247 pp.

This volume, a collection of 28 texts on the topic of Jews and Judaism, is a welcome addition to recent studies in Luther's thought and the history of Jewish-Christian relations during the Reformation era. The editors, Brooks Schramm and Kirsi I. Stjerna, teach at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. They compiled these documents to supplement course readings during a series of thematic seminars on the topic of "Luther and the Jews." The collection is designed therefore as a practical guidebook for advanced undergraduates and seminary students who are exploring the foundations of Christian animosity toward Jews in the early modern period and the roots of Luther's anti-Judaism as revealed through his own writings. A central claim is that the Jews are a core component of Luther's thought, and that this was the case throughout his career, not just during the later stages when he published infamous attacks such as "On the Jews and their Lies" (1543). According to Schramm and Stjerna, "it is essentially impossible to understand the heart and building blocks of Luther's theology (justification, faith, salvation, grace, freedom, Law and Gospel, and so on) without acknowledging the crucial role played by 'the Jews' in his fundamental thinking" (4).

In two introductory essays the editors locate the roots of Luther's anti-Judaism in his extensive writings on the Old Testament, which spanned a thirty-two year period while Luther was *Professor in Biblia* at the University of Wittenberg. In these exegetical writings, Luther attacks the Jews for three fundamental reasons: the Jews refuse to recognize that Jesus is the Messiah, the Jews fail to understand the theological unity of the Old and New Testaments, and the Jews have remained stiff-necked for so long that they have been judged by God and cursed for their behavior (13-14). Schramm and Stjerna emphasize that Luther was fundamentally a biblical scholar and theologian in his

outlook; his understanding of Jewish beliefs and practices was not based on actual knowledge but reflected general tropes and prejudices that had been present since the early years of Christianity (18).

The primary documents are organized chronologically; they were authored exclusively by Luther with the exception of Josel of Rosheim's "Letter to the Strasbourg City Council" (1543). Each text is introduced with notes about the source and translation, as well as contextual information. Among the exegetical works included are selections from Luther's writings on Romans (1515-1516), Galatians (1519), the Psalms (1519-1521, 1526), Deuteronomy (1525), Zechariah (1525-1526), Jeremiah (1526), Isaiah (1527-1530), Daniel (1530), Genesis (1537, 1538), and Ezekiel (1541). Published treatises exposing Luther's thought on the Jews and Judaism include "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew" (1523), "Against the Sabbatarians" (1538), "On the Jews and Their Lies" (1543), "On the Ineffable Name and on the Lineage of Christ" (1543), "On the Last Words of David" (1543), and "An Admonition against the Jews" (1546). The collection also includes personal letters from Luther to various colleagues and public figures, including George Spalatin (on Christians studying Jewish books), Bernhard the baptized Jew (procedures for conversion), Josel of Rosheim (an admonition to believe in Jesus of Nazareth), and Katharina Luther (impressions about the Jews in Eisleben). In addition to these texts, the book contains a chronology, a statement by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on Lutheran-Jewish relations (1994), and a useful bibliography.

Although this volume does not fully engage the complex historiography of anti-Semitism or Jewish-Christian relations in the Reformation period, it clearly presents vivid source material from an era that is nuanced and complex. I fully agree with the statement by Schramm and Stjerna that "contemporary Lutheran Christians . . . who have been positively affected by Luther's courageous articulation of the gospel, have a moral obligation to reckon with how Luther sounded—and sounds—to Jewish ears" (5). This book will help students and scholars achieve this perspective. It is a significant resource for teaching Reformation history and Lutheran theology.

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