

**Martin Luther, The Bible and the Jewish People: A Reader.** Ed. Brooks Schramm and Kirsi I. Stjerna.

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Brooks Schramm and Kirsi I. Stjerna provide selected readings exemplifying Martin Luther's statements about Jews over the course of his career. It supplements recent works by Eric W. Gristch and Thomas Kaufmann. The editors believe that Luther's expressions of anti-Semitism must be acknowledged, while making some distinction between this religious anti-Semitism and the more modern racial anti-Semitism. This religiously based bias was and is dangerous, especially coming from the pen and mouth of such an influential leader. They argue that Luther's statements cannot be dismissed simply because they echoed what others said at the time, because he was in a position to make a difference by taking a different stand. The editors intend this work to help students deal with a difficult subject and its enduring effects.

Schramm and Stjerna each provide preliminary essays. Schramm's introduction notes Luther's distinction between biblical and postbiblical Jews, explaining Luther's Christological

approach to the Old Testament and his belief that rabbis were the source of Jewish resistance to conversion. Schramm asserts that Luther wrote more, both in volume and vitriol, than his contemporaries. Stjerna's introduction provides background on the circumstances of Jewish life in early modern Germany, focusing on the hurdles and restrictions. She notes that these were the aspects of Jewish life on which Luther focused and from which he took his examples rather than being reflective of the totality of Jewish life. Evidence is also provided that Luther had little direct contact with Jews from which to make his judgments and interpretations. The editors use a chronological approach to demonstrate the consistency of Luther's anti-Semitism and the consistency of his belief in the biblical foundation for his views.

The editors' first selection, Luther's First Psalm Lectures, clearly demonstrates Luther's negative attitude toward Jewish peoples. He associated them with ungodliness and idolatry, holding them responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. The frequent scatological references in this work support the editors' position that Luther's anti-Semitism was not a later-life development. Other early works marked the Jews as blasphemers who should return to the faith, but also called for compassion in dealing with them. The Romans lectures introduced a theme of the dichotomy between Law and Gospel, synagogue and church, which reappeared in a number of later works.

The cccccccc from the early to mid-1520s demonstrate a more moderate tone, which the editors attribute to Luther's own circumstances, asserting that his personal status after the Diet of Worms caused him to be more sympathetic to others who were persecuted for their beliefs. Luther's commentary on the Magnificat and other works from this period emphasized that kind treatment and education were required to convert select Jews, while noting that some could not be converted. He levied criticism of Jewish exegesis of the Old Testament and rebuked the Catholic Church for inadequately educating Jewish converts or resorting to forced baptism.

A turning point was evident in 1525 when Luther's writings regarding the possibility of Jewish conversion became less optimistic. The exemplars offered for the period between 1525 and 1530 reveal a more stern judgment with frequent references to the Jews as godless blasphemers and false teachers. This was accompanied by regular references to Jews committing a sin of the Spirit which could not be forgiven; thus, they were cursed as evidenced by the 1500 years since the fall of Jerusalem.

Elector John Frederick's 1536 prohibition against Jews' living, working, or passing through Electoral Saxony brought Luther into his final phase of writings against the Jews. He distanced himself from any perceived sympathy for the Jews that his earlier writing created. Luther accused Jews of dishonesty and connected them with the Turks. He reiterated his idea that contemporary Jews were no longer Abraham's seed. Luther emphasized the Old Testament and the need to read the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament. His works from the 1540s were laden with additional accusations. In these final works, Jews were accused of poisoning wells, killing Christian children, calling Mary a whore, crucifying Jesus, using inaccurate numerological interpretations, daily blaspheming and crucifying Christ, and lacking human qualities, as well as causing Luther's illness during his last trip to Eisleben.

Schramm and Stjerna provide a parallel chronology delineating Luther's life and writings alongside events that provided their context, as well as a thorough bibliography and informative endnotes. Each document is prefaced by a commentary preparing the reader for the context of each selection and attributing the effect of external events on Luther's writing. They successfully demonstrate that Luther's writings contain anti-Semitism at all stages of his career; however, aside from the First Psalm Lectures, his early works were notably less

virulent than those written later. Note was made in a number of instances that Luther had very little direct contact with Jews, creating an implicit suggestion that more extensive contact may have led the reformer in a different direction. The afterword addresses this implication more directly. *Martin Luther, The Bible and the Jewish People: A Reader* is a useful and focused volume. It introduces students to aspects of the reformer's thought and to attitudes toward Jews in early modern Europe of which many may not be aware.

