



**Rolf Decot, Matthieu Arnold, eds.** *Christen und Juden im Reformationszeitalter*. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern Verlag, 2006. xvi + 315 pp. EUR 39.90 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-8053-3709-0.

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## Christians and Jews

This volume contains brief German and French introductions by the editors and sixteen essays (eleven in German and five in French) on a wide range of topics related to the theme of Jews and Christians in the period of the Reformation. The essays presented in this volume were delivered at an international conference in Fall 2005 as part of a broader and ongoing discussion about the cultural and religious transformations resulting from the Reformation. According to the editors, the essays fall into five categories: theologians of the Reformation and the Jews; Catholic positions on the Jews and Judaism; Jewish perceptions/awareness of Christian attitudes; imperial politics, imperial law, and the Jews; and Orthodox Christianity and the Jews. As the broad outline of these themes makes clear, the volume deals less with Jews and Christians than it does with Christian attitudes toward (and discussions of) Jews (evidenced, perhaps by some errors in the small amount of Hebrew in the notes). As in any collection of essays, the contributions here are a bit uneven. Some articles are little more than position statements and many retain their features as conference papers.

The first five essays fit into the first category. Nicole de Laharpe reviews the Jews in Luther's *Tischreden* (1566). Laharpe asks how the Jews were represented in the *Tischreden*, a compilation that by its very nature offers a second-hand account of Martin Luther's opinions. Laharpe begins, however, by considering how Luther defined "Jews," distinguishing between the Israelites of the Hebrew Bible, Jews of the New Testament and Jews of

Luther's own contemporary world. Laharpe points out that often the target of Luther's comments were none of these Jews, but rather contemporary Christians. The discussion of Jews also served other purposes, such as criticism of the papacy. Laharpe discerns a wide range of views in the *Tischreden*, arguing that Luther at times appears to have been sympathetic to the Jews, even when continuing medieval traditions of anti-Jewish thought and extending his own anti-Jewish positions. Matthieu Arnold further explores Luther, but from a modern perspective, tracing the French translation and discussion of Luther's polemical treatises against the Jews.

Several essays focus on other leading Reformation thinkers as well. In an excellent essay on Jean Calvin's relationship to Judaism (which appeared in English in Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett, eds., *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* [2006]), Achim Detmers meticulously explores Calvin's possible encounters with Jews, and his remarks about biblical and contemporary Jews. He argues that Calvin's position on the Jews was theological. Detmers also discusses Calvin's covenantal theology at great length, which was used at times in the service of polemics against other Christian groups. Similarly, Annie Noblesse-Rocher examines the pedagogical role of Jewish sources and expressions of piety in Martin Bucer's *Tzephaniah Epitomographus* (1528). Noblesse-Rocher provides a quick overview of the history and status of the Jews in Alsace at the time before considering Bucer's use of Hebrew sources. Noblesse-Rocher

asks how Bucer could apparently admire and utilize these sources on the one hand but separate them from Jewish communities on the other. She identifies the various Jewish sources utilized by Bucer and, in an approach similar to that of Detmers, explores the various theological uses to which Bucer put them, especially in his attack on Anabaptists and his emphasis on typology as a means of establishing continuity between the Christian Old and New Testaments.

Martin Rothkegel examines early modern Sabbatarians, beginning with an historical context for Luther's writing against the Sabbatarians and the Jews who allegedly missionized among them, as well as the various divisions of Moravian Baptists. Despite being portrayed by some as Judaizers, and despite finding that the early Church Fathers observed the Sabbath on Saturday, these Baptists clearly saw themselves as quite different from the Jews. Rothkegel, who draws extensively on the work of Oswald Glaidt and Andreas Fischer, also considers the theological directions and motivations of the Baptists.

The volume next turns to Catholic views of Jews, with an engaging article by Johannes Brosseder on the Jews in Johann Eck's theological works, a theme that Brosseder points out has received limited attention, especially within the context of Eck's complete works. At the heart of much of Eck's discussion of Jews was the authority of the Church in interpreting Holy Scripture. Throughout Eck's works, Old Testament texts were utilized and interpreted to support Eck's own theological positions, even on such questions as the just war against the Turks, for example. For Eck, Hebrew is a language replaced by Latin, the Jews of the period of Jesus play a subordinate role, and Jews are castigated for an overly superficial and literal reading of the Bible. Here Eck exhibited no novel approaches to Jews or Judaism. Instead, he drew upon typical anti-Jewish motifs, including accusations of perennial hatred of Christians and perpetration of gruesome deeds such as host desecration, ritual murder, and poisoning of wells. At times, Eck uses the Jews as a means to battle the Reformation and the Reformers, many of who are presented as "Judaizers," and in some cases as themselves worse than Jews or Turks. Brosseder also reviews some of Eck's works that more directly consider Jews, and he discusses Eck's response to Johannes Reuchlin and to Andreas Osiander's anonymous defense of Jews against ritual murder charges. For Eck, as for other late medieval and early modern theologians, post-biblical Jews in a sense were no longer to be considered Jews, with continuity instead passing from Old Testament Jews to New Testament Christians.

Continuing the theme of Catholicism and the Jews, Adriano Prospero examines the papacy and the Jews during the Counter-Reformation. Prospero notes that the drive for doctrinal purity and religious cohesion both had an impact on the Jewish minority. Offering a comparison between Luther's anti-Judaism and that of the inquisitors, Prospero begins by sketching late medieval suspicion of post-biblical Jews and their practices and writings, especially the Talmud. Between the reigns of Paul III and Gregory XIV, the previous rapport between the Roman papacy and the Jews was profoundly altered, shifting from a position of protection to one of severe persecution. This period featured the establishment of the Inquisition in the Roman community and papal vacillation between policies of expulsion and confinement in ghettos.

In the third part, the volume turns briefly to Jewish sources and perspectives. Freddy Raphael discusses the complex, important figure Josel of Rosheim, along the way providing background information about the history of the Jews in late medieval Alsace. Raphael primarily reviews and synthesizes older scholarship on the subject, in overview fashion and with no footnotes. The theme of Josel is continued in an essay by Monique Ebstein, which again provides a very brief and general overview of Josel's life and activities.

Andreas Lehnhardt examines Christian missionary sermons in Hebrew in the period of the Reformation, tracing the melding of the Jewish mission with the growing interest in and use of Hebrew by Christian scholars in the sixteenth century for a variety of purposes, including polemical ones. By the end of the sixteenth century, a variety of Christian texts in addition to the New Testament, such as catechisms and confessionals, were translated into Hebrew. The focus of the analysis is on an anonymous missionizing document from Stuttgart, which is presented in Hebrew and German translation. The text contains the Old Testament scriptural evidence typical of such missionizing works, but no traces of rabbinic or kabbalistic writing.

In one of a couple pieces to look at the Reformation theme through more modern lenses, Marcus Pyka assesses the reception of the Reformation in Jewish historiography in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Pyka gives the greatest attention to Heinrich Graetz and Simon Dubnow, but brief discussions are also included of the work of Selig Cassel, Isaac Marcus Jost, and Abraham Geiger, as the author evaluates these historians' broader engagement with and understanding of the Reformation

(and often of Luther specifically).

J. Friedrich Battenberg, in a typically learned, meaningful essay, investigates the Jews as “citizens” of the Holy Roman Empire in the sixteenth century, and asks whether there was a paradigm shift in Jewry law during the period of the Reformation. Battenberg notes the important distinction between two different legal contexts for the Jews, the first a unified ecclesiastical and secular context in which the Jews played a certain role in sacred history; the second, in which the Jews were placed within the governing structures of secular society and in which their place in sacred history. Battenberg identifies a redefinition of Christian and Jewish relations in this broad Reformation period, in which the earlier paradigm propounded by the humanistic jurist Reuchlin (with a fundamentally religious character of civic citizenship) was transformed into a new paradigm by which the Jews were seen as citizens of the Roman Empire, allowing for greater imperial centralization when it came to Jews (as well as Christians). This shift paralleled the shift from civic to territorial (and in part to imperial) levels of political organization to which the Jews were subject.

Rolf Decot examines the Jews in Mainz in the early modern period, with details about their history there before the Reformation. Decot also presents a brief excursus on the Reuchlin affair as it played out in Mainz, before discussing the expulsion plan of 1516 within a local and territorial context and the Jewry policies of the sixteenth century more broadly. In the last part of the essay, Decot offers notes on some key developments in the Jewish community of Mainz after its reconstitution in 1583 and into the seventeenth century.

The last three essays turn the reader’s attention eastward. Mikhail V. Dmitriev examines the visibility of Judaism in sixteenth-century Russia. Among the interesting sources offered for investigation is the polemical text of Josef Wolotzkij aimed at the “heresy of Judaizing.” For Dmitriev, the activities of these alleged Judaizing heretics can be divided into black magic and sorcery, the denial of the divinity of Christ, preaching of the Ten Commandments in place of the Gospel, and following Mosaic Laws and adoption of circumcision. As in other Reformation-era texts, according to Dmitriev, this text is primarily concerned with dissidents, and with Jews only secondarily. The second source Dmitriev examines is the anti-Jewish “The Circular Letter to the Jews and the Heretics” (1480s), by the Russian monk and polemicist Sawwa, which Dmitriev analyzes structurally for its key anti-Jewish themes and arguments.

The eastern focus of this section of the volume continues with Mikhail Kizilov’s essay on the Karaites and Christian scholars in early modern Europe. Kizilov attempts to understand the discussion, and in some cases idealization, of Karaites in some Protestant writing and as part of the context of Protestant and Catholic controversy. Interest in the Karaites was based in part on the group’s anti-rabbinic orientation, as well as on the missionary and theological program of Christians. For Protestants in particular, Karaites provided an attractive parallel to their own situation—a group outside the regnant religious hierarchy that was focused on the Bible rather than rabbinical glosses (or those of the Roman Church). Kizilov discusses the first encounter of Karaites and Protestants, in the Hebrew polemics of Isaac of Troki in the sixteenth century, tracing developments through the academic discussions of the topic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with particular emphasis on the millenarian context of the seventeenth century and the Christian missionary efforts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The last essay in this group explores the examination of Luther and Protestantism in the work of Lev Sestovs in the early twentieth century. In this essay, Dmitrij Belkin traces the thought of this “Jewish-Protestant” philosopher, with particular attention to his changing reception of Luther and the context of his thought in the world of religious philosophy of the period.

Overall, the volume lacks a clear focus and covers a wide range of topics, though the extensive bibliography and indexes of names and places tie the essays together somewhat. While some essays are quite interesting and contribute to the scholarship in their fields, many are short, synthetic, and apparently unrevised conference papers. Some themes receive particularly useful attention, as, for example, in the contributions on Christian theological discussions of Jews, the position of the Jews within theoretical legal frameworks, and the representation and discussion of Jews in an eastern Orthodox context.

The volume works with a broad notion of the “Reformation,” in terms of chronology, geography, and intellectual and historical development. It does demonstrate that Reformation-era Christians used Jews and Judaism as significant foils for political, religious, and polemical tools. It also points to the growing importance of the theme of Jews and the Reformation in scholarship. The volume highlights the importance of individual studies to help form a larger, more comprehensive picture of the topic. It also illustrates the rich range of available sources

to historians, while simultaneously pointing to the need for more information and study of Jewish sources, perceptions, responses, and developments. In the end, the volume contains some interesting and engaging articles that, collectively, help to further the research agenda of “Jews and the Reformation,” sparking some new questions and exploration of new sources and connections, while underscoring the research that remains to be conducted.

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