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Review:

Jews and Protestants: From the Reformation to the Present,
edited by Irene Aue-Ben-David, Aya Elyada, Moshe Sluhovsky,
and Christian Wiese.

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Jews and Protestants: From the Reformation to the Present, edited by Irene Aue-Ben-David, Aya Elyada, Moshe Sluhovsky, and Christian Wiese (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2020), ISBN 978-3-1106-6108-8, pp. 280, £59.

This volume of essays about interactions between Jews and Protestants (indeed, between Judaism and Protestant Christianity) from the Reformation (especially Luther's Reformation) to the present is both ambitious and concise. The volume is based on the proceedings of an international conference about these five centuries of interactions between Jews and Protestants which took place in Jerusalem in February 2017. The contributors, who number more than a dozen, represent fields that include Jewish Thought and Philosophy, Religion, Jewish-Christian relations, German History, Jewish History, and Israel and Middle East Studies. Despite the predominance of chapters on Germany, Luther, and Lutheranism, this collection of essays does manage to cover both a broad chronological range and a wide thematic landscape. Taken together, the volume's introduction, as well as essays by Lars Fischer, Christian Wiese, and Kyle Jantzen, demonstrate this thematic and chronological range.

In their introduction, Moshe Sluhovsky and Aya Elyada introduce some of the problems and themes addressed in the volume. They begin with the rather stark supposition that Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* has, since its publication in 1996, shaped "discussions of Protestant-Jewish relations, the impact of the Reformation on the history of Germany, Jews, and German-Jews, and, in fact, European history tout court" (p. 1). Setting aside whether or not this extremely broad and unambiguous thesis can be demonstrably proved, to some extent the themes – but not the arguments – of Goldhagen's controversial tome set the parameters for this essay collection.

At least nine of the volume's thirteen essays deal explicitly with some aspect of German Protestantism and its interactions with Jews and Judaism; the index entries for Luther and Lutheranism roughly cover an entire page while just four lines are needed for those related to Calvin and Calvinism. More than half of the Introduction is devoted to Luther's antisemitism and its after-effects in German history. Given the horrors of the Shoah, perhaps none of this should come as a surprise. Yet, the essays that touch on Luther and German Protestantism are uniformly excellent. Further, the inclusion of, for example, essays about anti-Judaism in

Bach's sacred cantatas and the response of mainline Protestants in the U.S.A. to the Jewish refugee crisis of 1938 give the volume greater thematic and geographic depth.

In his fascinating essay "The Legacy of Anti-Judaism in Bach's Sacred Cantatas", Lars Fischer analyses the relationship between Lutheran orthodoxy and Judaism in Bach's sacred cantatas. While noting that Bach left no personal documents that elucidated a position on either Judaism or Jews, Fischer stresses that Bach was both "steeped in the Lutheran orthodoxy of his day" and committed to the same by virtue of his remit as the cantor in Leipzig (p. 71). Taking a broad view that, for example, "supersessionist" (or substitution) theology, Christian polemic against Judaism, and Christian claims that "the Christian version of the Tanakh, the Old Testament, primarily or exclusively prefigures the New Testament narrative", made eighteenth-century Lutheranism "fundamentally anti-Judaic" (p. 73), Fischer contends, using Cantata 42 as a case study, that anti-Judaism is indeed present in Bach's sacred cantatas, a conclusion that he argues should be troubling to Bach scholars and enthusiasts alike. Scholarly studies such as these are especially welcome, as they cast light on Protestant-Jewish relations in the realm of the arts, an arena in which the more subterranean means of affect and sensibility can deliver propositions about religious belief.

Christian Wiese's insightful essay on Jewish and Protestant interpretations of Luther's writings on the Jews from 1917 to 1933 focuses on the extent to which the reformer's "attitude towards Jews and Judaism strongly influenced – and overshadowed – Jewish-Protestant relations, particularly in the German context, and is part of the complex history of modern anti-Semitism" (p. 162). Wiese brackets his study around years in which "highly symbolic Luther celebrations" took place (1917, the 400th anniversary of Luther's Reformation, and 1933, the 450th anniversary of the reformer's birth). He examines the ways in which Jewish historians and philosophers, including Hermann Cohen, Leo Baeck, and Simon Dubnow, interpreted Luther's significance in relation to contemporary deliberations about Jewish emancipation and assimilation. As such, the essay fills a lacuna in the scholarship on Jewish readings of Luther during the modern era (studies of Protestant readings of Luther during this epoch, especially German Protestant readings of Luther during the Third Reich, have, relatively speaking, abounded).

Wiese concludes that these Jewish figures largely stressed discontinuity between Luther's early, purportedly more "tolerant" *Judenschriften* and his

later, more virulent anti-Judaic and antisemitic treatises. In so doing, they hoped to persuade non-Jewish Germans to reject antisemitism and embrace the more open-minded, less strident progenitor of modern Germanness (pp. 163–4). The exceptional anti-antisemitic work of the Stuttgart theologian and pastor Eduard Lamparter aside, hardly any other Protestant theologians, in the meantime, adopted this narrative (p. 170).

Kyle Jantzen offers an incisive essay titled “Nazi Racism, American Anti-Semitism, and Christian Duty: U.S. Mainline Protestant Responses to the Jewish Refugee Crisis of 1938”. Rejecting an emphasis put forward by some scholars on what U.S. Protestants “failed to do in response to Nazism and the Holocaust”, Jantzen focuses instead on “how they perceived Hitler, Nazism, and the persecution of Germany’s Jews in the prewar era, and what kind of responses, if any, they proposed” (p. 207). His argument is multifaceted and nuanced, perhaps reflecting the ambivalent, even contradictory, impulses driving U.S. mainline Protestants during this era. He contends that the writers and editors of the mainline Protestant church press in the U.S. were extremely wary of Nazism in this period, were most anxious about Nazi persecution of Christians, and expressed concern about persecution of Jews – all while both condemning and perpetuating antisemitic arguments. Above all, they “understood the challenge of Nazism in terms of a cosmic battle between Christianity and irreligion” (pp. 207–8). Despite genuine sympathy for Jewish victims of Nazi persecution – and despite the vastly different experiences that characterized German Christian and Jewish life, even in the era prior to the war and the Holocaust – the thought leaders of U.S. Protestantism reframed Jewish and Christian fates as intertwined. Moreover, they affirmed “that it was Christianity, and Christianity alone, that had the power to rescue civilization, save democracy, and preserve the world from self-destruction” (p. 227).

Other notable essays include Dean Phillip Bell’s piece on how the Reformation impacted early modern German Jewry, in which the author rejects the older lachrymose view of Jewish history (p. 17) even while recognizing that “the religious, social, and political discussions of the Reformation era significantly impacted early modern German Jews” (p. 29); and Ursula Rudnick’s article, titled “Lutheran Churches and Lutheran Anti-Semitism: Repression, Rejection, and Repudiation”, in which the author analyses how the Lutheran churches have sought both to condemn Luther’s antisemitic writings and to foster theological dialogue between Jews and Lutherans in the decades following the Holocaust.

This fine collection of essays offers special insights on Jewish self-understanding from the Reformation to the present that are sometimes lacking in the literature on Jewish–Protestant relations during this period, as well as incisive chapters on more well-travelled ground, including the relationship between Luther, Lutheranism, and antisemitism since the reformer offered up his Ninety-Five Theses. Students and scholars who study religion, theology, antisemitism, Jewish–Christian relations, and the Holocaust will find the volume extremely valuable.

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