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On the following pages are extracts from three of the contributions at the Berlin conference. Footnotes in the original manuscripts are not included here. All contributions from the Berlin conference will be collected in a book that is expected to be published by Paternoster Press in 2009.

Martin Luther and the Anti-Jewishness of His Time

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Dr Berthold Schwarz¹ theme was "Martin Luther and the Jewish People with Implication for Jewish Mission." The preface and conclusion of the paper are printed here.

*To talk or to teach about "Luther and the Jews" could be a somehow dangerous undertaking. Dangerous at least because of two major reasons. First: "Because Luther was terribly wrong in his reasoning against Jews, he can't be right in other parts of theology either; therefore, he should not be received as an authority of the church anymore." Well, I don't share this opinion. But it **is** taught in several ways, and it is often heard in the case against Luther's anti-Jewishness. And - this **is** also a major problem in dealing with the mentioned topic above - if someone does not share this judgment against Luther, he finds himself immediately labeled as an anti-Semite, too.*

Second, another danger could be that Luther's reasoning against the Jews is wrongly understood. Indeed, there exist several opinions on how Luther's anti-Jewishness should be interpreted. The popularized, non-academic extremes are either, "Luther is all in all the believer's enemy because of his cruel words against Jews" (total condemnation); or, "Luther has said some wrong things against Jews and erred in his understanding of the Jews, but he is still our hero of faith. Therefore his words against Jews are of minor importance" (somehow a glorification).

I do not condone Luther's anti-Jewish writings. He was deeply wrong in saying what he said. I have sadness and anger toward Luther's later anti-Jewish writings and his treatment of the Jews. Honest answers must be given as to why Luther said what he did, and those answers do not completely free him of anti-Semitism.

While I do not consider myself an expert in Luther studies, I try nevertheless to present a reasonable and fair solution, based on experts' research. According to this research I cannot agree with these extremes. Neither can I accept Luther's teaching on Jews as if it was just a minor lapse (it was not!), nor can I condemn him as a *persona non grata* (a person not acceptable at all) as if he should be erased out of Christian theology. Both extremes are taught today among Christians, Jews, scholars, and in Messianic Jewish circles. But both extremes should be avoided.

The Historical Setting and the anti-Jewishness of Luther's Time

The historical setting must also be considered. Luther was not the first to speak unkindly about the Jews. The Romans disliked them, the Christians slaughtered thousands of them during the crusades. In 1290 England expelled them, thirty years later France did likewise, in 1492 they were murdered and expelled from Spain. R. Bainton speaks to this situation: "If similar tracts did not appear in England, France, and Spain in Luther's day, it was because the Jews had already been completely expelled from these countries." Luther's actions are almost mild in comparison. One last consideration centers on the fine art of quot-

ing out of context. The critics who condemn this writing of Luther only, of course, quote what will promote their cause, -although most critics quote only a few pages. They quote Luther without considering the times or the context of his entire article. The following examples show the need for context: It would be quite out of place to use Luther's and Erasmus' strongly worded writings against the Turks as a weapon against modern Turkey, or to quote the pamphlet of King Henry VIII against Luther as a weapon against present-day Lutherans.

Johann Eck also wrote some virulent anti-Jewish tracts. "The absolute champion of anti-Jewish polemic in the early modern period was Luther's Catholic opponent Johannes Eck, whose 1541 Refutation of a Jew Book was 'a summa of the anti-Jewish literature of the Middle Ages, leaving out no accusation of genocide, blasphemy, or treason'" (Carter Lindberg). The Roman Catholic Church (especially that of Luther's time and before) doesn't have a spotless record of defending the Jews and other groups against intolerance and hatred. "In 1553 all copies of the Talmud found in Rome were burned in public. Pope Paul IV (1555-1559) ordered measures to be taken against the Jews, and twenty-four men and one woman were burned at the stake. On July 12, 1555, he issued a bull that renewed all the oppressive medieval legislation against the Jews, excluding them from professions, limiting their financial and commercial activities, forbidding them to own real estate, and humiliating them by obliging them to wear yellow hats" (Lewis W. Spitz).

"Although Johannes Eck, Luther's dedicated opponent, and others wrote vitriolic attacks on the Jews, some of Luther's colleagues, such as his dear friend Justas Jonas, present at Luther's deathbed, Andreas Osiander, reformer in Nuremberg, were very understanding of the position of the Jews" (Lewis W. Spitz).

"When Osiander ventured to publish an anonymous tract defending Jews against the charge of ritual murder, Eck, knowing the true identity of the author, calls him the 'evangelical scoundrel' who dared to defend the 'bloodthirsty Jews.' The Lutherans, Eck curses on, were all evil monks who had stirred up the Peasants War and were now defending the archenemies of Christendom . . . Eck concludes his long-winded vituperation by accusing Osiander of slander against the whole of Christianity, because by denying the truth of ritual murders, the evangelical reformer was in essence accusing Christians of murder, magic, and lies" (Po-chia Hsia).

Despite this, these slanderers insist on quoting Luther to promote ideas he never had any intention of saying. And yet we need not defend Luther too far. The words from Luther's pen were not inspired. Gordon Rupp had it right when he wrote about Luther: "I confess I am ashamed as I am ashamed of some letters of St. Jerome [and] some paragraphs in Sir Thomas More . . . and must say that their authors had not so learned Christ, and that, thank God, this is not the major part of what they had to say."

Martin Luther was a sinful human being, and his writings against his opponents, especially against the Jews, show this. At times we may wish that Luther would have "tread more lightly" and exercised a little more tactful restraint. To reason that Luther's work is somehow nullified because *Conference participants visited both the Jewish Museum and the Holocaust Museum in Berlin. Pictured: the monument above the Holocaust Museum; the museum itself is underground.* Of his anti-Jewish writings is perhaps an argument for an impossible standard: it is to say that one must live a life of perfection in order for one's work to have validity.

Many examples can be drawn from the Scriptures to prove that God uses sinful people to proclaim his truth. I would have never imagined that Peter, who walked daily with the Lord Jesus Christ, would deny the gospel and face correction by Paul (Galatians 2:11-21). Solomon "offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places" (1 Kings 3:3) to ap-

pease the multiple "foreign women" he married (1 Kings 11). The most striking example is King David, whose legacy includes adultery and conspiracy to murder. Yet God used these men despite heinous sin.

The Bible presents the Christian life as a struggle with sin (1 John 1:8-10; Romans 7). It also presents the normal Christian life as a living faith showing itself alive by its works (James 2:14-26; Ephesians 2:8-10). As I would stand against Peter's denial, Solomon's idolatry, David's adultery and conspiracy to murder, so I would stand against Luther's anti-Jewish writings. That a holy God chooses to use sinful men to accomplish his will is an example of his mysterious divine providence: all things work together for his glory. Therefore, on the other hand, we dare not let others falsely accuse and slander a man whom God used to restore the truth.

Some Implications for Jewish Mission

Simply because Luther was wrong in his attitude toward the Jews does not necessarily mean he was wrong on the need for church reform, the proclamation of the gospel of justification by faith alone (so/a fide), the uniqueness of Christ for salvation (so/us Christus, sola gratia), or the hermeneutical principle of so/a scriptura. No Protestant with a clear understanding of biblical anthropology argues that Luther was an infallible interpreter, a divine authority, or immaculately conceived.

We realize Luther was a man of many faults. Yet when he proclaims the gospel, he is in many cases correct because the Bible clearly teaches what he had discovered. When he speaks out against the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church he is right because Scripture proves it. When he makes terrible statements about the Jews, he's not right (or wrong) because he was somehow a Protestant pope or the originator of Protestantism. He's wrong because a clear exposition of the Scriptures do not support such terrible statements. Nevertheless, believers in Jesus Christ are challenged in several ways by Luther's position towards the Jews.

1. In Luther's view the "bad" example of the papacy with its self-righteousness was a hindrance for Jews to become believers in Christ. If Christians were instead a "good example" of God's love and compassion, an example of true words and godly deeds, Jews could become more and more open to listen to the gospel-truth of Jesus as their Messiah and Lord.

2. Compassion, endurance, and kindness are necessary while sharing the good news with Jews. In proclaiming the gospel -the truth about Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation -steps of recognition and faith are helpful, e.g. the understanding of the deity of Christ, the Trinity, the cross, the state of total depravity of sinners, the righteousness of Christ for believers, etc.

3. As we have seen in Luther's case, each missionary to Jews should be aware of his "own" doctrine about Israel and Jews. He should also be aware how he would describe the biblical relationship between the church and Israel in the past, the present, and the future. Without a thoroughly thought through and biblically based position, problems could arise in addressing Jews with the gospel.

4. The different existing models of replacement theology have to be acknowledged and judged on biblical reasoning. Every missionary to the Jews needs to have a solid understanding of what supersessionism is, what it teaches, and how it could be avoided. Some severe problems of the days of Luther occurred because of the "Zeitgeist" (mindset)

against Jews from the medieval age. What kind of mindset do today's believers carry in their hearts regarding the Jews and Israel? What kind of theology about Jews is accepted by the missionary to the Jews? Orientation is mandatory.

5. The understanding of Romans 9-11 should be clear, based on hermeneutical and theological reasoning.

6. Is a mass-conversion of Jews to be expected at any time, or only at a specific salvation-historical time in the future?

7. The uniqueness of Christ and salvation in him has to be deeply understood by everybody who ministers among Jews. Luther's emphasis on these central issues has to be discussed and reflected on. That means: how many ways of salvation exist? Luther had stressed the one way of salvation in the crucified and resurrected Christ. Is there any second or even a third way of salvation "without faith in Christ" (as a matter of *revelatio generalis*), e.g. for Jews because of their relationship to Yahweh from biblical times on? Luther rejected this view. Nowadays an increasing number of theologians see a way of salvation and eternal life in Judaism without faith in Christ. What about the center of reformation theology, the justification by faith in Christ?

8. We also have to carefully consider matters of eschatology: (a) What is said about Israel's future in Romans 9-11? What does "Israel" mean in this context anyway? (b) What could be taught about the eschatological fulfillment of the OT promises (return to the promised land, the reign of the Messiah on the throne of David, etc.)? (c) How should believers deal with the salvation-historical schedule mentioned and taught in Scripture?

9.1 assume we should add to the matters of doctrine and of missiology the aspect of "Israelology," a theological reflection of the relationship of church and Israel on many levels.

10. Another important implication for Jewish missions is hermeneutics:

how shall we interpret the OT? Led by the light of the NT only? Is there an understanding of the OT without the NT? How is the relation to be understood between OT and NT?

11. Reuchlin, Osiander, Justus Jonas (later Spener, other German Pietists, and Franz Delitzsch) are good examples that the study of Judaism (Hebrew language, Hebrew texts, rabbinic literature etc.) and the love of Jews, Judaism, and their traditions is still a central issue for the dialogue with Jews today.

12. Avoid abusive and harsh language in criticizing Jewish theology or traditions

Luther is a warning example to anyone who is active in evangelizing Jews. He started somehow well in 1510, 1514, and 1523, and ended tragically in 1537 and the 1540s. Today's missionaries among Jewish people should be aware that there could be frustration ahead in their ministry, because the conversion of Jews needs patience and endurance. Quick conversions are usually not to be expected.

Luther's theology is still a challenge. Neither was his teaching inerrant, nor his writing inspired. He was terribly wrong in his cruel teaching on Jews. But even as a sinner, his emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ and his salvation, and his understanding of justification by faith in Christ without works or merit, have to be discussed in fulfilling the task of Jewish mission.