

A new book edited by Howard Clark Kee and Irvin J. Borowsky
Reviewed by James F. Strange

This is an important set of essays and sermons by Christian academics and pulpiteers in two parts. The first part is comprised of eight essays devoted to a treatment of the subject. Each contributor makes specific recommendations about what can or should be done to remove anti-Judaism from Christian pulpits. Those contributing to the first part are Martin E. Marty, Cone Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Modern Christianity at the University of Chicago, John T Pawlikowski, O.S.M., Professor of Social Ethics at the Catholic Theological Union, Clark M. Willimason, Indiana Chair of Christian Thought at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Ronald J. Allen (co-authoring with Williamson), Assistant Professor of New Testament and preaching at the same institution, Harry James Carps of the Department of Religion at Webster University in St. Louis, Robert J. Daly, SJ., Professor of Theology at Boston College, David H.C. Read, Minister Emeritus of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, Frederick D. Holmgren, Research Professor of Old Testament at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, and Peter C. Phan, Professor and Chair of the School of Religious Studies Department of Theology at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

The second is comprised of five “real” sermons which serve as examples of how one can go about being true to the gospel yet not give in to traditional anti-Judaism, even if it seems to appear in the text for the sermon. These are contributed by Carol Ann Morrow, Assistant Editor of the St. Anthony Messenger, Nancy M. Malone, O.S.U., co-editor of Cross-Currents, Wallace M. Alston, Jr., Senior Minister of Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, Stanley Hauerwas, Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke, and William H Willimon, Dean of the Chapel at Duke and also a Professor of Christian Ministry at Duke. Hugh Anderson, Professor of New Testament Emeritus of the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, rounds out the second part with a commentary, while the conclusions are penned by Joseph Stouzenberger, though his affiliation and location are not given. Howard Clark Kee, Professor of Biblical Studies, Emeritus of Boston University wrote the introductions to the two sections, while Irvin J. Borowsky, Chairman of the American Interfaith Institute, contributed the Foreword.

In the first part the recommendations about what can be done are simple, yet profound, fundamental and difficult. If Christians as a whole actually believed in the “essential Jewishness of Christianity” (Carps, p. 46) because they heard it from their pulpits, perhaps some of the warp might be removed from the collective Christian psyche. Establishing such a belief also calls for a thorough-going educational program. Cargas also stresses the need for seminar courses in the basically theological relationship of Judaism and Christianity. He calls for finding a new terminology for “Old Testament” and “New Testament” so that Jews are not insulted. Most controversial, in some circles, is his call that preachers abandon attempts to convert Jews.

In like fashion Daly calls for the preacher to give up supersessionism or the idea that God's covenant with God's people is no longer operational or has been replaced by the Christian "new covenant" (p. 52). Daly's scholarship almost sings the melody of the sermon when he says, "it is from Jesus the Jew and from his Jewishness that there comes to us all that is most sacred, most loving, most healing and most forgiving, all that is most directly promising of the eternal life of God for which we yearn." (p. 54)

Williamson and Allen go beyond the recommendations of their book, *Interpreting Difficult Texts* (1989), by insisting that it is not enough to view Jesus as Jewish. Rather, "...Jesus Christ is a gift of God to the church from the unconditional love of the God of Israel..." (p. 41). Furthermore, Williamson and Allen suggest that preachers preach against the text, on the ground that "Not everything in the Bible is biblical?" They appear to mean that this specifically refers to what one hears around Passion Sunday, Good Friday, and during Holy Week with its undigested polemics against the Jews.

The sermons are sometimes deeply moving calls to repentance for Christians' sins against the Jews. But there are more than calls to repentance. For example, Stanley Hauerwas contributes a deeply prophetic sermon which reminds the listeners, "...the resurrection not only means that we Christians have an obligation to accept forgiveness for the Holocaust, but we must ask the Jews to forgive us." I cannot imagine that such a statement will fall on ready ears.

Hugh Anderson contributes an analysis of his own, a response to Willimon's sermon on the Prodigal Son. Anderson contributes his own exegesis of Romans 15:7-9 in order further to nuance the relationship of Gentile and Jew.

Joseph Stoutzenberger's Conclusion, reviews the focus of each essay and sermon of the collection. This essay, together with Borowsky's contribution at the beginning, *The language of Religion*, forms a provocative précis of what one finds in this volume, namely both a formidable program for removing anti-Judaism from the Christian pulpit and a set of examples from preachers engaged in that very task.

These insights and concerns would find support in such works of theologians as those of Darrell J. Fasching: *Narrative Theology After Auschwitz: From Alienation to Ethics* (Fortress, 1992), *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Apocalypse or Utopia?* (SUNY Press, 1993), and *The Coming of the Millennium: Good News for the Whole Human Race* (Trinity Press International, 1996)

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