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Stjerna, Kirsi I. Word and Faith

David Boehmer

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Wengert, Timothy J.

The Roots of Reform.

The Annotated Luther 1. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. Pp. xvi, 574 + ill., maps. ISBN 978-1-4514-6269-2 (hardcover) US\$39.

and

Stjerna, Kirsi I.

Word and Faith.

The Annotated Luther 2. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. Pp. xiv, 514 + ill., maps. ISBN 978-1-4514-6270-8 (hardcover) US\$39.

The Roots of Reform and *Word and Faith* are the first two volumes in The Annotated Luther—a new six-volume collection of Luther’s writings published by Fortress Press. (They are followed by *Church and Sacraments*, *Pastoral Writings*, *Christian Life in the World*, and *The Interpretation of Scripture*). For the most part, the texts included in these two volumes are revisions of previously translated and published material. In The Annotated Luther, they appear with extensive new visual aids, notes, and introductions, and with an eye toward contemporary scholarship, sensibilities, and language, especially inclusive language. Hans J. Hillerbrand, Kirsi I. Stjerna, and Timothy J. Wengert serve as the collection’s general editors.

The first volume, *The Roots of Reform* (TAL1), presents writings from the period 1517–1520, a time in which no formal break had yet occurred between Luther and Rome—years in which one might say that Luther’s *reform* was taking *root*. These texts show Luther’s initial problems with the ecclesiastical bureaucracy, particularly with respect to indulgences; his difficulties with aspects of popular piety; and his arguments with late medieval theology. They also illustrate his initial ideas for reform—notably his creative position on justification, but also his thinking on such interesting matters as the relations between church and state. In particular, the selections include accounts of Luther’s dealings with the Roman hierarchy; a number of short sermons; his appeal *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*; and landmark theological texts such as the *95 Theses*, the *Heidelberg Disputation*, and *The Freedom of a Christian*. (Conspicuously absent are *Two Kinds of Righteousness* and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, but these appear elsewhere in The Annotated Luther.) Each text is handled by one of the volume’s five contributors, all of whom are extremely competent—especially Wengert, the volume editor,

who is a Lutheran pastor, an emeritus professor, and a scholar and translator specializing in Melancthon, Luther, and the Lutheran Confessions. In terms of audience, *The Roots of Reform* will interest students of history and theology alike. In this ecumenical age, it might also be of special interest to Roman Catholics, who surely must sympathize with many of the early Luther's complaints.

Following *The Roots of Reform* is *Word and Faith* (TAL2), a thematic collection. Written from 1519 to 1538, the texts in this volume illustrate key aspects of Luther's theology, i.e., his understanding of God's *Word* and Christian *faith*. They are classics—depicting one or more of Luther's doctrines with special clarity and/or possessing a definite historical or ecclesiastical significance. In particular, they include sermons, such as that on *Two Kinds of Righteousness*, where Luther outlines his position on justification and the distinction between Law and Gospel; polemical works such as *Against the Heavenly Prophets* and *The Bondage of the Will*, where he clarifies his views on, for example, the Mass, externals, and (again) justification; formal confessions, such as *The Smalcald Articles*; and *The Large Catechism*, a sort of summa. Some of the longer works are abridged, but the abridgments generally preserve the flow of the text, and cursory investigation reveals them to be quite reasonable. As in *The Roots of Reform*, each text in *Word and Faith* has its own handler. There are eight in all, chosen from various institutions in North America and Northern Europe. Stjerna, the volume editor (and a contributor), is quite well-qualified, being a Lutheran pastor, a professor, and a respected scholar and translator in fields such as Luther, gender studies, and church history. The texts in *Word and Faith* are important in the disciplines of both History and Philosophy, but it seems likely (and regrettable) that the volume will be read more exclusively by those with a personal interest in Luther's theology.

As volumes in *The Annotated Luther*, both *Word and Faith* and *The Roots of Reform* are distinctive in their appearance, their introductions and notations, and the feel of their text. The volumes have extra-wide pages to accommodate oversized margins. Here the reader finds both the contributors' notes and a pleasant white-space in which to create fresh marginalia. Placed throughout the text and margins are various relevant images, including paintings, woodcuts, and printed pages. These are often interesting and evocative, but they can also be distracting. The introductions, on the whole, are well written and helpful; they often have an objective and irenic air which will recommend them to many. Some highlights include Wengert's introduction to the *95 Theses*; Dennis

Bielfeldt's to the *Heidelberg Disputation*; James M. Estes's to *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*; and Hans J. Hillerbrand's to *Against the Heavenly Prophets*. Also quite good in these pieces, and in others, are the notes. There are two sets of these in each volume, one in the margins, generally explaining points of history or theology, and a set of footnotes that usually deal with textual matters, though remarks on either subject can appear in either location. At one point, the same note appears in both places on the same page (TAL1, 61ni and n17). One of these, and a number of other glosses, could have been revised or eliminated; moreover—as is the case with all annotated volumes—the notes can often interrupt the flow of the text. On the other hand, many of them will strike the reader as quite interesting, helpful, and even necessary.

For many, however, the most striking feature of these two volumes will be the feel of the text itself. As noted above, the translations have generally appeared in a previous form, mainly the American Edition of *Luther's Works*, which was published by Fortress Press and Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, beginning in the 1950s and is still being expanded by Concordia. (Note that Wengert's rendering of *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace* is original. This and a majority of the other texts are ultimately based on the Weimar Ausgabe.) cursory investigation reveals that most of the translations follow their antecedents quite closely, with the exception of certain words or phrases. Often the contributors have made more-or-less isolated attempts to improve flow and/or fidelity to Luther's original text. Some such attempts have been successful; but others have rendered passages more awkward—particularly when they have been made, in *Word and Faith*, by non-native speakers. In most cases, however, previous translations have been systematically altered with an eye toward inclusive language.

Inclusive language is meant to help people of all genders feel included (in an idea, group, etc.) and typically operates by excluding gendered words. In many cases, revision in terms of such language is both reasonable and commendable. For example, as the general editors note in their introduction, the Latin *homo* and the German *Mensch* mean “human being” rather than “man” (TAL1, ix). It therefore makes perfect sense to alter previous translations of *homo* and *Mensch* accordingly. Unfortunately, the matter of pronouns is more complicated. English is in transition, and it seems that a universally-accepted and natural-sounding pronoun for a generic human being has yet to appear (though “they” is becoming standard). Various words have been used in these volumes, and they can make

the text sound awkward—and/or they can alter Luther’s tone, as when the plural is used to replace what was singular in the original.

Luther’s tone, and his meaning, become yet more changed when inclusive language is applied to the Deity, i.e., when the volume contributors (or editors) take an existing translation and exclude the English equivalents of Luther’s clearly masculine terms for God. This practice frequently involves replacing a masculine pronoun with the word “God,” but it can take a number of other forms as well. For example, although the general editors promise to preserve Luther’s language concerning the Trinity (TAL1, ix–x), his terms are often conspicuously altered. Seemingly confined to *Word and Faith*, this practice multiplies footnotes, makes for awkward reading, and can push Luther in the direction of either Arianism (as when the relation between Father and Son is changed to that between “God” and Son, e.g., TAL2, 365) or Modalism (as when the Father’s action is changed to that of God acting “as Father,” e.g., TAL2, 270). The substance of Luther’s thought obviously precludes such positions, but this new terminology remains problematic. Some may see it as liberating and including; but many others will find it frustrating and even alienating. (What is intended to remove barriers for some often ends up creating barriers for others.)

The results of these two volumes, then, are mixed. Whether or not a particular reader will prefer these books over some previous edition will depend on that reader’s perspective and needs. But everyone can take something from them. *The Roots of Reform* and *Word and Faith* should perhaps not be taken to supersede previous translations, but to provide new perspectives and fresh options.

DAVID BOEHMER
Independent Scholar

Yiu, Mimi.

Architectural Involutions: Writing, Staging, and Building Space, c. 1435–1650. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015. Pp. 320 + 67 ill. ISBN 978-0-8101-2986-3 (hardcover) US\$89.95.

In its examination of how shifting discourses of perspective and spatial design influence performances of subjectivity and interiority, *Architectural*