Scott Mandelbrote and Joanna Weinberg, eds.

Jewish Books and their Readers: Aspects of the Intellectual Life of Christians and Jews in Early Modern Europe. Series in Church History and Religious Culture, volume 75. Leiden: Brill, 2016. Pp. 384 + x. Hb, \$190.

The twelve essays in this volume stem from presentations made at the European Seminar on Advanced Judaic Studies and focus on the circulation and readership of Jewish writings among Jewish and Christian readers in the early modern period. In doing so, the essays collectively present a rich, nuanced, and multivalent picture of early modern Jewish culture and life and the complex relationship of Judaism with Christianity and Jews with Christians. The book profitably includes a select bibliography of secondary sources and an index—rare, but valuable additions to an edited conference volume.

The essays probe an enviable range of sources and examine perceptions of, as well as interactions between, Jews and Christians, dipping into both contemporary concerns and historical representation. Along the way, the volume subtly challenges many traditional understandings of the term Christian Hebraism, to more thoughtfully center the work, goals, and perspectives of early modern Christians engaging with Jewish texts. Covering Western Europe writ large, the authors of the various essays address myriad issues among both Protestant and Catholic readers, providing a valuable balance and comparative framework. Simultaneously, the volume offers new insights into the impact of printing and the role of censorship in the creation, dissemination, discussion, and application of Jewish texts.

Rather than summarize individual contributions, let me point to some broader themes and insights that cut across the volume. The depth of the intellectual exchange between Jews and Christians could be substantial and serve both pragmatic and pedagogical purposes. It was revealed in more formal and published scientific treatises, but also in commentaries, grammars, ethnographies (including those that were relatively “objective” and those that were intently anti-Jewish), and even epitaphs and private correspondence, as well as marginal notes and glosses in Hebrew texts (offering intriguing opportunities to track the movement of books and the reading of both Christians and Jews). At times these materials reveal substantial Christian familiarity with and understanding of a wide range of texts in Hebrew, including rabbinical works. To give one example of a source treated at length in one of the volume’s contributions, the famed Greek text of the Letter of Aristeas encouraged numerous translations but also significant discussion. The work was mined for insights into the Bible and the Septuagint. In such cases, insights could be drawn from the scholarship of Jews but also through interactions between Jews and

Christians, often through tutoring but also printing and through more substantive intellectual exchange.

The range of scholars referenced throughout the volume is extensive—from well-known Christian and Jewish figures such as Johannes Buxtorf the Elder, Joseph Scaliger, John Selden, Edward Pococke, and Azariah de Rossi to other, often less discussed scholars, such as Domenico Gerosolimitano and Antonio Brucioli. In some cases, the study of Hebrew texts created opportunities for such scholars, but could also lead to accusations of negative political positions, Judiazing, or heresy more generally.

While many and diverse Christian thinkers engaged with Hebrew literature, their path to acquiring Hebrew facility and familiarity with Hebrew works could differ dramatically. In some cases, Christian scholars engaged Jewish tutors; in other cases, they appear to have learned a good deal in a somewhat auto-didactic way, from a range of Hebrew books, glosses, grammars, and dictionaries authored both by Jews and Christians. In some cases, Christian scholars added new interpretations to their own traditions—contextualizing the New Testament or offering explanations for certain Christian practices, for example—and to the Hebrew writings themselves, for example by comparing them with other legal codes and contemporary writings. In the process of utilizing Hebrew writings, Christian scholars could advance their study, even as they might present them for specific purposes or distort and rip out of context their very content. Hebrew literature and Judaica could be used extensively in a range of scholarship that included polemics against Jews, internal Christian apologetics, and theological, spiritual, and mystical explorations. Petrus Galatinus, for example, engaged Hebrew works simultaneously to confirm the Catholic faith and support the Talmud. Johannes Reuchlin's mystical extracts similarly defended the Talmud, but nevertheless garnered critical response from Italian Jews.

As many of the essays in the volume reveal, Christians reading Hebrew texts, regardless of their theological leanings, frequently ran afoul or ran the danger of running afoul with their own religious authorities. This was due in part to the ongoing suspicion that Hebrew writing engendered, but also because of the novel insights or interpretations that as a result they sometimes grafted into Christian theological discussions.

Not surprisingly, the issue of censorship takes center stage in several essays in the volume. Among the provocative questions raised are whether censorship had a negative impact on the production of Hebrew literature. The means by which printers could circumvent the censors to serve different audiences is explored, as are some of the more recent assumptions about the nature and function of censorship. The act of censorship, as well as the varieties of

censorship, are also discussed in detail, allowing insights into intellectual, religious, and political concerns as well as the mechanics of printing itself. Among the core concerns explored is the place of censorship in broader Counter Reformation culture. In addition, the questions of how Jewish writers themselves engaged with and evaded censors, as in the work of Leone Modena and Natanel Trabotti, are also considered.

Christians interested in Hebrew texts were not always or only interested in religion per se, as the case of some scientists and naturalists makes clear. In such cases, Hebrew and Hebrew texts were seen to be tools to understand the “human sciences,” including medicine. In these, as in other cases, we find opportunities for both collaboration and less formal intersection between Christian and Jewish scholars.

Although this volume does not directly examine core Jesuit concerns, in the end it brings together a range of thoughtful essays that cover a good deal of ground and it adds substantially to the study of individual figures and broader themes in many different aspects of early modern intellectual history and the history of Jewish and Christian relations.

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DOI:10.1163/22141332-00504010-05