As Mulder himself observes in his interesting essay to accompany the edition (in Ezekiel and his Book [ed. J. Lust: Louvain, 1986, p. 110]), 'soll die Ausgabe des Leidener Projektes [rather than earlier editions] in wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten immer benutzt werden.'

R. G. Jenkins


The story of the Ten Martyrs is one of the most influential narratives which the Jews of the Middle Ages received from ancient times. Both the ideology and the historical phenomenon of kidush ha-shem were influenced by the detailed description of the sufferings of ten of the most prominent tannaim, during the period of persecutions after the failure of the Bar-Kochbah rebellion. Together with the biblical story of akedat Yitzhak, this memory of the martyrs who faced the evil kingdom of Rome, which was later identified with Christianity, and adhered to their faith, served as a supreme example for Jews facing the medieval Crusaders. The history and development of this story is, therefore, an important subject to the understanding of Jewish spiritual life in late antiquity and during the Middle Ages.

Dr. Gottfried Reeg dedicated this book to a detailed presentation and analysis of the texts of this story which reached us. The problem of the system of presentation of the material was one of the most important problems which he faced. The story is found in about two dozen manuscripts, and a simple synoptic presentation was impossible 1). He decided, therefore, to divide the manuscript material as well as the printed versions into ten versions, and to present—in Hebrew—these ten side by side, with a brief apparatus criticus devoted to each of them. In this way the reader can see almost at one glance all the versions and variations, without having to turn a leaf; everything is concentrated on one page. Such presentation seems to be the best possible way to present textual material, enabling a scholar both to review the work of the editor and to use the material for other purposes. Dr. Reeg added translations of four versions into German in a synoptic way, and a special translation of the best-known text, "Eleh Ezkrah".

Six of the versions presented in this volume have been printed before (among them three included in A. Jellinek's Beit-Hamidrash, and others published by Lövinger, Herschler and Oron), while four are published from manuscripts. The six previously-published versions have been compared to manuscripts and earlier printed versions. It seems that as far as
the text is concerned, we have before us as exhaustive a work as can be expected or even desired. The detailed description of the manuscripts and the various sources is invaluable; the author has succeeded to present and analyze in a critical way all possible sources relating to the manuscripts and the printed versions. The translation, however, is extremely literal, reflecting the strict adherence to textual accuracy which characterizes this edition as a whole.

One of the main conclusions to emerge from this edition is the fact that the manuscript material concerning this text is surprisingly late; at best it is medieval, but most sources are either late-medieval or belong to the early modern period. Assuming that the roots of this story go back to late antiquity, this means that our text dates nearly a millennium after the text was first written in its earliest versions. This vast gap in our knowledge demands the historian to be extremely careful when using this material, but it also demands a comprehensive attempt to identify and analyze earlier sources. Dr. Reeg devoted a section in the book to early quotations, but a rather brief one dealing mainly with midrashic parallels, neglecting almost completely the use of medieval writers of this story. It seems to me that a more comprehensive effort to collect quotations and references to this story in the Hebrew sources of the 10th-13th centuries (especially Ashkenazi Hasidic literature) could indicate which versions were known in the early Middle Ages and contribute to the understanding of the development of the narrative.

Attempts made by earlier scholars to view this story as reflecting an actual historical event have failed, and the narrative is understood today to be a work of fiction. Yet, there is one element in its history which can assist in identifying the historical and cultural background to its composition, and that is its relationship to Hekhalot Rabbati, the ancient mystical work which contains most of the central themes of the Story of the Ten Martyrs. Dr. Reeg was right, I believe, not to include the versions of Hekhalot Rabbati as one of the recensions of the story itself, but his discussion of the relationship between the story and the ancient mystical book is not exhaustive. It should be remembered that one of the most important versions—designated version III in Reeg's edition—including almost all the mystical material from Hekhalot Rabbati within the Story of Ten Martyrs, proving the close connection between the two works (I tend to believe that this is the earliest and most original among these versions). Here again Dr. Reeg devoted himself mainly and almost exclusively to textual analysis, leaving the wider ideological and literary problems outside the scope of his edition.

Another historical question was left unclarified in this work: The problem of the development of ancient and medieval Jewish martyriology, and its relationship to the parallel development of Christian martyriology. To elaborate on this problem the author had to view the text from a wider