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# A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions

Oscar Cole-Arnal

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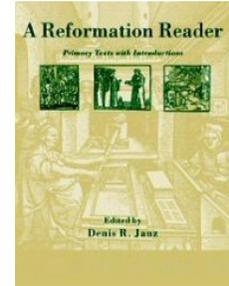
## Book Review

### **A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions**

Denis R. Janz, ed., Second Edition

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008

Having taught the history of the Reformation for thirty-plus years I have watched and waited for such a collection of primary texts as found in this marvelous anthology gathered and edited by Denis R. Janz. For most of my teaching career I used Hans Hillerbrand's excellent collection called *The Protestant Reformation*. However, when the Janz first edition appeared almost ten years ago, I gobbled it up immediately and made it the basic text in my elective course on the Reformation.



At that time, my only substantive critique was the almost total exclusion of women's voices. When I brought this to the attention of the second class where I used the book, a resourceful student pointed out how Janz had made up for this lack by having a CD-Rom, with entries relating to women, included in a back pocket of the book. I was delighted by how promptly Janz' scholarship addressed this problem. Now Fortress Press has published a second edition which, of course, includes entries by female reformers in hard copy with their male counterparts.

Beyond the inclusion of numerous women's writings in this recent edition (reason enough for its publication), the second edition of *A Reformation Reader* offers a number of qualitative changes which turn this already fine work into a nearly perfect collection: The inclusion of views about women as well as their own voices is not stuck in a separate category standing off on its own. Rather they are integrated chronologically and/or topically into the context where they belong historically.

Unlike the earlier version, this new edition has useful and engaging illustrations as well as mini-bibliographies for secondary reading at the end of each chapter.

Finally, some gaps in the earlier edition have been closed by judicious and vital additions. Some especially interesting examples include the piece by Christine de Pizan, significant additional material from Thomas Müntzer, and a richer inclusion of pieces from the watershed events surrounding the Peasants' War. It is always a challenge to contain both the variety and depth of Anabaptism in an anthology such as this. Janz succeeds admirably in this score through adding to his earlier judicious collection material from the Münster experiment, martyr trials of both females and males, and the poignant letter of jailed Janneken Munstdorp to her recently born daughter.

My two criticisms of this work can be characterized as matters of personal preference. Any anthology of primary materials demands choices on the part of the editor – what to include and what to exclude – which involves pressures pertaining to size limit and the cost of the book as well. Yet I would like to express my regret that *A Reformation Reader* did not include examples from the Strasbourg Reformation, especially a sample from the pen of Katarina Zell, or examples of the Jesuit work in the Far East, especially a piece by Matteo Ricci. In all honesty, one could make a strong case to include my wishes, yet I cannot contest any of Dr Janz’ choices. Finally, I feel the urge to cite that both editions of his fine work demonstrate clearly that “Reformation” applies to both Catholic and Protestant alike. Thank you, Dr. Janz for adding this stellar anthology to the field.

Oscar Cole-Arnal  
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary  
Waterloo, Ontario