

The Experience of Being Luther's Student

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Despite the fact that in recent years increased attention has been given to the fact that Luther was not formulating his theology in isolation, relatively little attention has been given to the largest group of those who participated in reform in Wittenberg: the students. This essay focuses on the student reaction to Luther and the way in which one of them put his insights to use. It was these students who carried his message to the common people, preaching it and reading his treatises to the majority of their congregations who could not read or write. In this way they planted his thinking among the people throughout the German-speaking lands and beyond. Luther's students came from a variety of backgrounds. Some were sons of his followers who were pastors, early converts to Luther's call for reform. Students were not only learners. Some of them advanced into partners — junior partners, to be sure — of the reformers in the activities of spreading reform. Three student estimations are analysed by Cyriacus Spangenberg (1528–1604), Johann Mathesius (1504–1565) and Joachim Mörlin (1514–1571). They give us no more than impressionistic depictions of the man whom they encountered on the streets, in the pulpits, in the lecture halls of Wittenberg. Their pictures of him are dramatically positive. They illustrate how his captivating personality and talent as a teacher supported the spread of his ideas. They reveal the impression the Reformer made on the thinking of his contemporaries and generations to come.



Key words: Wittenberg, university, Cyriacus Spangenberg, Johann Mathesius, Joachim Mörlin

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