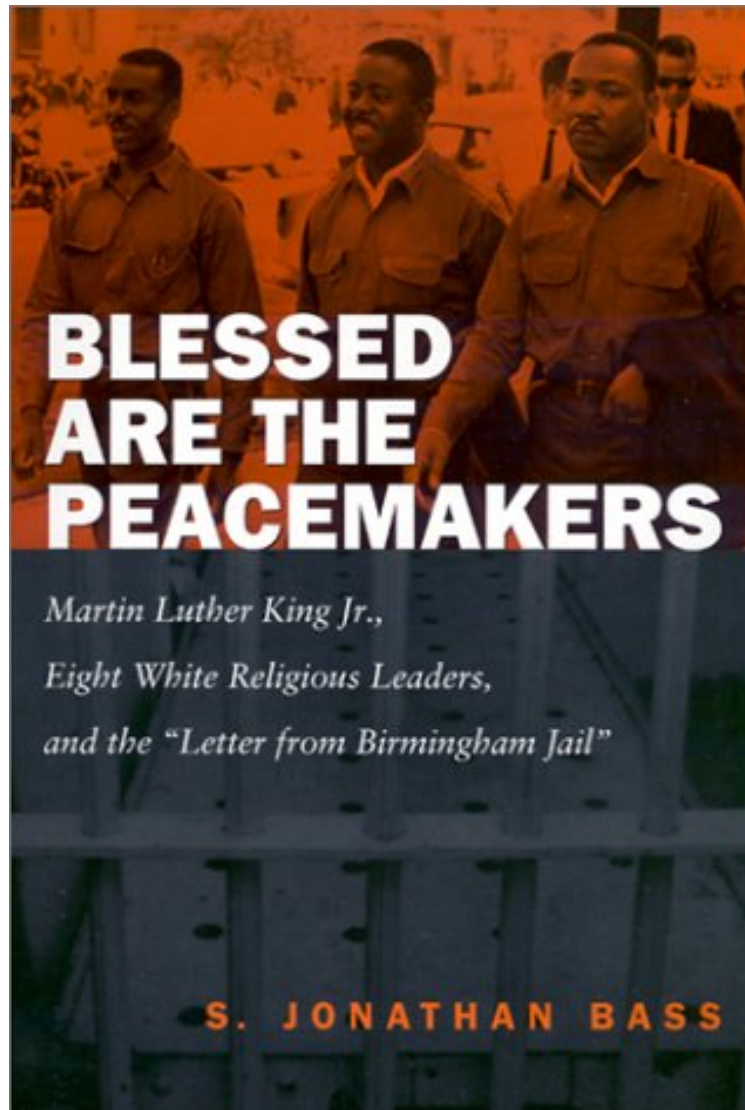


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Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

S. Jonathan Bass

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Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is arguably the most important written document of the civil rights protest era and a widely read modern literary classic. Personally addressed to eight white Birmingham clergymen who sought to avoid violence by publicly discouraging King's civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, the nationally published "Letter" captured the essence of the struggle for racial equality and provided a blistering critique of the gradualist approach to racial justice. It soon became part of American folklore, and the image of King penning his epistle from a prison cell remains among the most moving of the era. Yet as S. Jonathan Bass explains in the first comprehensive history of King's "Letter," this image and the piece's literary appeal conceal a much more complex tale.

"Bass uncovers the true story behind King's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' and the southern religious leaders to whom it was addressed." -- Publishers Weekly"Bass leaves us with a new and lasting admiration for the moderates of the South as unsung heroes of the civil rights movement." -- Gainesville (FL) Sun"One among a growing number of fine historical studies that restore nuance and context to the history of American race relations in the mid-twentieth century." -- London Times Literary SupplementAbout the AuthorS. Jonathan Bass is a professor of history and university historian at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.