

Irene Dingel, ed.. *Die Debatte um die Wittenberger Abendmahlslehre und Christologie (1570-1574)*. Unter Mitarbeit von Johannes Hund und Henning P. Jürgens. *Controversia et Confessio*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008. ix + 1190 pp. EUR 169.00, cloth, ISBN 978-3-525-56200-0.



Reviewed by Amy Nelson Burnett

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The tried and true model for a critical edition is to publish all of the works of an individual author, corresponding to the traditional approach to intellectual history, that of "what X thought on Y topic." Starting in the nineteenth century, this model resulted in the *Weimarer Ausgabe* (1883ff) of Martin Luther's works and the *Corpus Reformatorum* (1834ff) editions of the writings of Philipp Melancthon, Jean Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli, as well as the ongoing editions of the works of Martin Bucer and Heinrich Bullinger. These editions are vital tools for historians and theologians studying sixteenth-century Germany and Switzerland, and their very existence has made possible the development of Reformation studies over the past century. They are not, however, entirely unproblematic. Quite apart from changing standards of what constitutes proper editorial practice, these editions pose issues of their own, as scholars who study the history of books, reading, and reception are quite aware. By focusing attention on individuals, they draw attention away from broader debates; by making available

only the texts by major figures, they obscure the less famous contributors to a public discussion. To give one obvious example from the early years of the Reformation, to follow the outbreak and spread of the Eucharistic controversy, one must compare works published in all of these editions and have access as well to the writings of major contributors, such as Johann Oecolampadius, whose works are not available in a modern critical edition. The difficulties increase exponentially for the second half of the sixteenth century, when contributors to the major debates of the day were on the one hand more numerous and on the other less important than the major figures of the early Reformation. These two factors seem to guarantee that even the most influential publications of this later period will never appear in critical editions.

The new editorial project *Controversia et Confessio* was conceived to counteract this difficulty. Rather than presenting the works of an individual author, its volumes will be organized topically and will contain the most significant contributions to the public debate by a number of indi-

viduals and groups. As the editor, Irene Dingel, explains in the foreword to this volume, the series is intended to make more easily accessible precisely those works that contributed to the development of doctrine and confessional identity in the period between the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims of 1548 and the formulation of the Formula of Concord in 1577. In addition to the volumes to be published in this series, the project's Web site (<http://www.adwmainz.de/index.php?id=600>) makes available a searchable database with bibliographical information for over 1,700 polemical works from this period, as well as brief biographies of the individuals who wrote them. The central concerns of the project are theological, but many of the topics, such as the definition of adiaphora and the acceptance (or rejection) of the Interim, have obvious cultural and political ramifications. By arranging and publishing these works according to theme rather than author, this edition will make clearer the nature of theological debates and confessional formation through the third quarter of the sixteenth century and allow scholars to identify individual positions and general trends within the discussion of specific issues.

The first volume to be published in the series is actually the last of the projected eight. The debate over Christology and the Lord's Supper that centered on Wittenberg's theology faculty in the early 1570s concerns the precise boundaries that were being drawn to define "Lutheranism" and to separate it from the "Reformed" confession in the years immediately preceding the Formula of Concord. This volume presents the most important works either attacking or defending the Wittenberg "crypto-Calvinists." [1] The issues of Christology and the Lord's Supper may seem to have little to do with each other, but in the later sixteenth century, they became connected because the Lutheran theologians of Württemberg developed an argument for the ubiquity of Christ's human nature to explain how Christ's body could be present in the elements of bread and wine. The Wittenberg theologians, however, rejected the

Württembergers' understanding of ubiquity and argued that Christology and the Lord's Supper were two separate issues. The pamphlets here make clear the different positions of the Wittenberg and Württemberg theologians, as well as that of a third group, the pastors of Lower Saxony, who rejected the Wittenberg arguments but did not fully endorse the arguments of the Württembergers. The issues debated in the early 1570s would help shape the contents of the Formula of Concord of 1577.

The historical introduction to the volume provides the background and context needed to appreciate the fourteen works it contains. These begin with the theses debated at the creation in May 1570 of ten new doctors of theology in Wittenberg, several of whom would become involved in the "crypto-Calvinist" movement, and end with the Torgau articles issued as the official doctrinal position of Electoral Saxony in the fall of 1574. Probably the two most important works are the *Grundfest* (1571), a lengthy work published by the Wittenberg theologians in defense of their Christology and eucharistic theology, and the *Exegesis perspicua* (1574), which provoked the elector of Saxony to take action against the theologians he had become convinced were guilty of teaching false doctrine. Also included are the Wittenberg catechism of 1571 that was the immediate cause of the controversy, various works of individual authors attacking either the catechism or the *Grundfest*, as well as the two public confessions of faith produced in response to the Wittenberg publications by the theologians of Lower Saxony and of Württemberg. Each of these pamphlets is provided with a brief historical introduction, biographical information on its author(s), and a summary of its contents. The editors of the individual works have kept their notes to a minimum; these are most useful for identifying the source of the many citations incorporated into the texts, either to support the authors' own orthodoxy or to prove the doctrinal errors of their opponents.

With only a few exceptions the pamphlets were written in German, and most of them went through multiple editions, suggesting that the debate reached beyond a small group of clergy to involve the educated laity. A recurrent theme in the pamphlets of the anti-Wittenbergers was that readers should be aware of the deceptive words and ambiguities that enabled the Wittenberg theologians to introduce Calvinist or Zwinglian teachings while still maintaining their faithfulness to Luther. Both parties appeal frequently to Luther, but they use him in different ways. While the Wittenbergers quote Luther and Melanchthon along with an array of patristic authorities, their opponents tend to cite Luther exclusively, making him perhaps not more important than scripture itself, but certainly its definitive interpreter. Quite apart from the theological issues, these pamphlets raise interesting questions about the rhetorical strategies applied by each side.

The importance of this edition is underlined by two points that Dingel makes in the historical introduction to the volume. First, she points out that Philipp Melanchthon was much more important for the Wittenberg "crypto-Calvinists" than Jean Calvin was. A quick glance at the index of citations at the end of the volume supports this claim, since the list of Melanchthon's works is far longer than the list of references to Calvin's works. Second, she states that the Torgau Articles imposed as the official doctrinal position of Electoral Saxony were not a radical rejection of Philippist teachings, as they are often described, but instead emphasized the agreement between Luther and Melanchthon. These two observations, both of them challenging older interpretations of the Wittenberg controversy, demonstrate the value of this volume and of the editorial project as a whole. By making these important primary sources more easily accessible, this series will promote a deeper understanding of the theological debates and confessional developments of the later sixteenth century.

Note

[1]. The Wittenberg "crypto-Calvinist" movement is also the subject of a recent study by Johannes Hund, who edited several of the texts included in this volume; see Amy Nelson Burnett, review of Hund, Johannes, *Das Wort ward Fleisch: Eine systematisch-theologische Untersuchung zur Debatte um die Wittenberger Christologie und Abendmahlslehre in den Jahren 1567 bis 1574*, H-German, H-Net Reviews, March, 2008, URL:<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14321>.

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