

Johannes Hund. *Das Wort ward Fleisch: Eine systematisch-theologische Untersuchung zur Debatte um die Wittenberger Christologie und Abendmahlslehre in den Jahren 1567 bis 1574.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006. 744 pp. EUR 108.00, ISBN 978-3-525-56344-1.



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In 1574, Elector August of Saxony arrested four men, including Philipp Melanchthon's son-in-law and one of his own court preachers, and fired three professors of the four-member Wittenberg theology faculty for secretly trying to introduce Calvinism into his territory. The purging of the Wittenberg "crypto-Calvinists" was a major turning point for Electoral Saxony and for Lutheran Germany as a whole. Religiously, the clear rejection of the Christology and Eucharistic theology that had been taught at Wittenberg eased the negotiations that would eventually lead to the Formula of Concord. Politically, the Elector now became the most outspoken opponent of any alliance with Reformed territories within or outside of the Empire. Accordingly, the episode of Wittenberg Crypto-Calvinism has drawn the attention of both theologians and historians seeking to understand how Reformed doctrines could gain a foothold in Luther's home university. Each group has approached the topic with its own particular set of blinders—historians by ignoring the complexities of the theological debate, and theologians by interpreting that debate within the frameworks of their own confessional commit-

ments. The result, according to Johannes Hund, has been a failure to appreciate continuities within the Wittenberg theological tradition, and especially the loyalty of that university's theology faculty to the teachings of Philipp Melanchthon. Hund's book, with its context in systematic theology, clearly leans towards the theological side, but it pays careful attention as well to the chronology of events and the evolution of the debate over the doctrines espoused by Wittenberg's theology faculty.

To be fair to previous generations of scholars, the study of the developments in Wittenberg is made difficult by the sheer quantity of sources. In the years before 1574, both the Wittenberg theologians and their opponents produced a flood of polemical works, intimidating in both their number and in the length of the individual contributions. Hund therefore faced a daunting task when he set the goal of reading all of these works in order to get at the heart of the issues being debated: a specific formulation of the relationship between Christ's two natures and the characteristics of his human nature that had implications for under-

standing Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. His efforts have paid off by bringing to light a level of complexity to the theological debate that earlier studies have missed.

Hund argues that Wittenberg's theologians were not "crypto-Calvinists" trying to introduce the teachings of the Genevan reformer but rather "consequent Philippists" working out the implications of the Christology developed by Philipp Melancthon in the last three years of his life. These implications brought them to many of the same conclusions that Calvin had reached: most notably, the belief in a topographically defined heaven where Christ's human body was located after the resurrection. The truly human nature of Christ's body made it impossible for it to be contained in the bread and the wine of the sacrament. Following their preceptor's lead, these "consequent Philippists" were most concerned with refuting anti-Trinitarian errors, and their theological conclusions made them open to concord with the Reformed. It also brought them into conflict with the theologians of Württemberg, who used the doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body, first expressed by Luther and developed by Johannes Brenz, to explain Christ's real presence in the Lord's Supper in opposition to the nearby Reformed churches of the Electoral Palatinate, Switzerland, and France. The differing starting points and purposes of the Wittenberg and Württemberg theologians would have made genuine dialogue difficult, even if the polemical atmosphere had not made such dialogue impossible from the outset.

Although the differences between Wittenberg and Württemberg developed through the 1560s, they became more obvious at the end of that decade, as the older "classical Philippists" on the Wittenberg theology faculty, faithful to the positions taught by Melancthon before 1557, were replaced by a new generation of "consequent Philippists." The earliest disagreements over Wittenberg's Christology were conducted largely via

letters and unpublished memoranda, but the publication of the Wittenberg catechism in 1571 generated a round of public polemic. The catechism's chief critics were not the Württembergers, but instead the theologians of Lower Saxony, who rejected the ubiquity of Christ's body but shared Württemberg's opposition to what they perceived as the infiltration of Calvinism. The Dresden Consensus, written at the command of Elector August and accepted by the theology faculties of both Wittenberg and Leipzig as well as the territory's leading churchmen, proved unable to silence charges that Electoral Saxony endorsed Calvinist views, a claim made more plausible by the positive response to the Consensus from Reformed theologians. In the end, a quarrel between the court preachers in the spring of 1574 proved the last straw. Already made suspicious of his theologians by the anonymous publication of a pamphlet that rejected central aspects of Luther's Eucharistic theology, Elector August ordered the interrogation of both theologians and students in Wittenberg and the arrest and imprisonment of those perceived to have deviated from Luther's theology.

This brief synopsis does not do credit to the depth and the detail of Hund's theological analysis. The book is not light reading in any sense of the word. It weighs in at over seven hundred pages of text, much of it devoted to technical points of Christology that demand a sound grasp of the underlying theological and philosophical issues from the reader. For this reason the book will be appreciated most by historical theologians and church historians, as well as by those who want a concentrated and detailed introduction to the theological disagreements within Lutheranism in the decade before the Formula of Concord. But for this audience, Hund provides an in-depth examination of the many polemical works published by both sides in the years leading up to 1574 that goes far beyond previous studies of the Wittenberg theologians.

The encyclopedic nature of this discussion is both the book's strength and its weakness. The discussions of individual works are clear summaries that distill in a few pages what often took their authors several hundred pages to argue. But these summaries also stand in the way of the narrative, making it harder for the reader to follow the chain of events. Consequently, Hund's book is more useful as a reference for those wanting to learn more about a specific issue, author, or work, rather than as an overview of developments. Despite a few references to the political situation--most significantly, the danger that Electoral Saxony would no longer be included in the provisions of the Peace of Augsburg if it were perceived as abandoning the Augsburg Confession--Hund does not consider the larger political implications of the theological developments in Wittenberg. He may also place too much emphasis on the distinction between the positions taught by Melanchthon before and after 1557, to which Hund attributes the differences between the older "classical Philippists" and the younger "consequent Philippists." Surely other factors as well contributed to the generational differences, particularly since the younger generation grew to intellectual maturity in an environment marked by more bitter debates over Christology and the Lord's Supper than their somewhat older colleagues had. Lastly, Hund's schematicization of the differences between "Reformed" and "Philippist" positions can give the impression that the two parties were quite distinct. In fact, Hund demonstrates that the boundaries between them could be quite porous, as when he discusses the Wittenbergers' adoption of Beza's translation of Acts 3:21 to defend their Christology.

These points are relatively minor, however, when compared to Hund's overall achievement in describing and analyzing the origin and development of Wittenberg theology as a distinct strain within later-sixteenth-century Lutheranism. The book demonstrates an admirable grasp of the sources and a willingness to listen to their argu-

ments without trying to fit them into a pre-conceived theological mold. As such, it provides a model to be followed by both theologians and historians who study the bitter confessional debates of the later sixteenth century.

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