

Cornelis Augustijn, ed.. *Martin Bucers Deutsche Schriften, Vol. 9/2: Religionsgespräche (1541-1542)*. Martini Bucer Opera Omnia, Series I. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007. 464 pp. EUR 128.00, cloth, ISBN 978-3-579-04891-8.



Band 9/2 Religionsgespräche

Stephen E. Buckwalter, ed.. *Martin Bucers Deutsche Schriften Vol. 12: Schriften zu Kirchengütern und zum Basler Universitätsstreit (1538-1545)*. Martini Bucer Opera Omnia, Series I. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007. 661 pp. EUR 168.00, cloth, ISBN 978-3-579-04892-5.



Band 12 Kirchengüter

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In the years surrounding 1540, efforts to reunite the church within the Holy Roman Empire reached a high point. Theologians from both sides met at colloquies sponsored by the emperor at Hagenau, Worms, and Regensburg. Their goal was the reform of the entire German church, both Protestant and Catholic, and their efforts had major implications for not only religious but also political developments within the Holy Roman Empire. The process was strongly opposed by the papacy, but it had the support of both Protestants and Catholics within the empire who hoped to end the religious divisions and introduce much-needed institutional reform.

No one worked more energetically for the establishment of a united, reformed German church than the Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer. The two most recent volumes in the critical edition of Bucer's German works contain treatises, letters, and memoranda that relate directly or indirectly to the creation of this united German church. They are more concerned with the reform of institutional structures than with doctrine, and they address major issues such as the applicability of canon law to the new evangelical churches, the use and abuse of church property, the failure of Germany's prince-bishops to carry out their spiritual responsibilities, and the right of secular au-

thorities to institute ecclesiastical reforms. They also make available important primary sources concerning the Regensburg Colloquy and imperial diet of 1541. Last but not least, they provide some of the background to Bucer's involvement in the attempted Reformation of the archiepiscopal territories of Cologne.[1] They will therefore be useful not only to Bucer specialists and scholars of the Reformation narrowly defined, but to anyone interested in the broader impact of the Reformation on imperial politics, on the development of ecclesiastical institutions at the territorial level, on the redistribution of the church's wealth in the wake of the Reformation, and on the Protestant understanding of the relation between church and state.

The first half of volume 9, edited by noted Dutch church historian Cornelis Augustijn, was published a dozen years ago and contains documents relating to the colloquies of Hagenau and Worms. Included in that volume is the draft of the so-called Regensburg Book, the presentation of doctrinal and ceremonial issues written in secret at Worms by Bucer and Johannes Gropper, the Catholic advisor to the archbishop-elect of Cologne, and submitted to theologians at the Regensburg Colloquy as the basis of their discussion. Volume 9/2 is Augustijn's swan song, for he passed away at the beginning of this year, only a few months after the volume was published. It contains documents related to the Regensburg Colloquy and the imperial diet that followed it in the spring and summer of 1541: drafts of revisions made to portions of the Regensburg book, Bucer's proposals for reform of the entire German church following the practices and canons of the early church, and his publication in both Latin and German of official documents from the diet, provided with his own commentary. Roughly half of the volume is in Latin, reflecting the decision to publish all of the pertinent documents in one place rather than arbitrarily dividing them according to language.

The most important portion of the volume is taken up by Bucer's two document collections. The first of these, the *Acta colloqui*, was published less than two months after the diet's adjournment. The rapidity of its production made numerous printing errors almost inevitable, and a corrected edition, in which Bucer revised his preface and some of his commentary, was published the following February. The international audience for whom the *Acta* were intended was expanded through a French translation by Jean Calvin and an English translation by Miles Coverdale. Bucer's own German version, *Alle Handlungen und Schriften*, was published before the end of 1541. The critical edition of the Latin and German works does not provide complete versions of either text. To save time and space, only those documents not previously published in the nineteenth-century edition of Philipp Melanchthon's works are edited here.[2] Because of the significant number of revisions to the second edition of the Latin work, the two editions are reproduced on facing pages; the German text immediately follows it. Bucer's commentary in German follows the same general train of thought, but is not an exact translation of his commentary in the Latin edition.

One consequence of this presentation is a sharpened focus on Bucer's interpretation of the colloquy and diet as it emerges from his commentary. Prominent throughout is the idea of reform as a return to the practices of the early church. Bucer hoped to win reform-minded Catholics by pointing to the failure of the Roman church to obey its own laws as embodied in the oldest, and therefore in his eyes the most authoritative, of its canons and decrees. He praised the steps towards concord made at the colloquy and diet and supported by the majority of its participants. The papacy and its supporters are presented as the villains, for this obstinate minority stood in the way of genuine reform. By downplaying the significant differences in beliefs and practices between Catholics and Protestants, Bucer could hold out

the prospect of a united German church, a vision similar to that which shaped the Anglican Church.

The canons and decrees of the early church also figure prominently in Bucer's discussion of the rightful possession and administration of the church's wealth, the topic of most of volume 12. Through the 1530s, the secularization of church property was challenged in the imperial courts, and Protestant rulers and city governments who took control of that property were accused of sacrilege for seizing what belonged to the church. Bucer's response, like that of other reformers, was to redefine sacrilege by looking not at who had the right to administer church property, but at the uses that were made of it. According to this definition, it was the prince-bishops who were guilty of sacrilege for using the church's wealth to support their own luxurious lifestyle, not the cities and rulers who applied that wealth to the support of the ministry, schools, and the poor.

The centerpiece of volume 12 is Bucer's lengthy dialogue *Von Kirchengütern* (1540), but the volume is particularly valuable for making available a number of newly discovered manuscripts found in archives outside of Strasbourg. These illuminate the development of Bucer's ideas about the use of the church's wealth and, more broadly, the role of secular authorities in undertaking the reform of the church. The volume also contains three previously unpublished documents written by Bucer and his colleague, Wolfgang Capito, in their role as mediators in a conflict that developed within Basel's church and university in 1538-39.

In order to speed production of both volumes, editorial comments have been kept to a minimum, but the introductions to each document provide background, an outline of the document's content, and a brief discussion of its impact. In addition to indices of Scripture texts, persons and places, each volume includes a lengthy index of citations from canon and civil law, which under-

scores the importance of both collections for Bucer's thinking about institutional reform. The publication of these volumes not only fills a gap in the critical edition of Bucer's works but also makes available a significant group of primary sources pertaining to the efforts for the institutional reform of the church within the Empire in the late 1530s and early 1540s.

Notes

[1]. Bucer's works related to the attempted Cologne reformation are contained in the three parts of volume 11 of Bucer's *Deutsche Schriften*.

[2]. K. G. Bretschneider, *Philippi Melanthonis Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, vol. 4 (Halle: C. A. Schwetschke, 1838).

those documents--which were previously published in the nineteenth-century edition of Philipp Melancthon's works--are omitted.

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