

H-Net Reviews

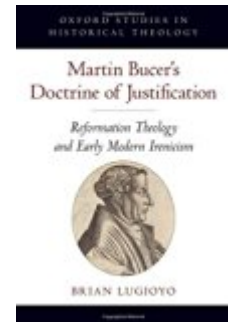
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Brian Lugioyo. *Martin Bucer's Doctrine of Justification: Reformation Theology and Early Modern Irenicism.* Oxford Studies in Historical Theology Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. xiii + 256 pp. \$74.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-538736-0.

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Looking to rescue Martin Bucer from the shadow of Martin Luther and John Calvin, Brian Lugioyo argues that the Alsatian was no theological lightweight who waffled and accommodated divergent perspectives due to political expedience. Refuting modern scholars who characterize Bucer's irenicism as zeal for unity rather than the truth, Lugioyo maintains that Bucer was a coherent theologian of the first degree. The central thesis of this book is that Bucer's understanding of justification by faith was consistent, from his *Romans Commentary* in 1536 through his discussions with Catholics ending in 1541; additionally, Bucer's position was as soteriological as it was missiological, hoping as he did to reclaim lost sheep under the influence of the Antichrist. The book will naturally be of great value to Bucer and Reformation scholars, but those interested in Christian irenicism of any period or location will also find wading through its theological thickets a worthwhile enterprise.

The brief introduction lays out in plain language the principal argument and scholarly issues at play. Lugioyo positions himself against those who pin Bucer as a *Vermittlungstheologe* (mediating theologian) variously between Wittenberg and Zurich, or Desiderius Erasmus and Luther. Rather than use others to describe Bucer, Lugioyo aims to have the reformer speak for himself. Through his own works and throughout this book, Bucer's doctrine of justification emerges along the lines of the Socratic dictum, "to know the good is to do the good" (it remains unclear, though, whether Bucer ever directly cited Plato's *Protagoras* for this idea).

Chapter 2 investigates Bucer's irenic approach to reform during the 1520s and 1530s. Lugioyo avoids his-

torical anachronism by recognizing that Bucer's irenicism was not the same as modern ecumenism and that his multifaceted motivations do not easily fit inside tidy scholarly categories. During these years, Bucer wanted to reeducate society on the truths of scripture via sermons; commentaries; face-to-face dialogues (rather than impersonal printed polemics); and schooling. With such an educational infrastructure beneath him, Bucer qua missionary-minded reformer comes through as a truly intellectual shepherd. Of doctrinal matters, justification by faith was the keystone for Bucer's entire system. It was the chief fundamental that could not be accommodative, but other issues of ceremony and structure were of less significance; indeed, diversity on adiaphora was to be tolerated so long as the fundamentals were agreed upon. Thus with a hardline attitude on the most central of Protestant doctrines, Bucer wrote equitably with the common good in mind (with ἐπιεικεία) and advocated a sort of Nicodemism regarding Catholic traditions.

Chapter 3 is the book's most significant contribution. Lugioyo's deep investigation of Bucer's doctrine of justification in his *Romans Commentary* is to be commended not least because of the work's notoriously poor, prolix, and run-on style. To demonstrate the complex nature of Bucer's doctrine, and to refute scholarly interpretations arguing for a "double justification" in Bucer (i.e., both faith and works justify formally), Lugioyo shows how Bucer held one formal cause, God's goodwill, and acknowledged human works as a secondary and dependent cause; according to Lugioyo's Bucer, "humanity's righteousness is derivative and insufficient in itself to merit salvation" (p. 49). Lugioyo also emphasizes Bucer's intellectual search for truth and salvation. In short, Bucer's

soteriological order starts with election or predestination by God, followed by a two-stage calling or inspiration and a multistage justification by faith and knowledge, and concluded by glorification. Although the nonspecialist reader may at times get bogged down in the discussion, Lugioyo drives his points home with fine summary statements, like “for Bucer, faith and works of love are like fire and heat, inseparable” and the pithy “justification is *sola fide*” (pp. 87, 100).

Chapter 4 is an evaluation of Johannes Gropper’s doctrine of justification as put forth in his *Enchiridion* (1538). A moderate Catholic theologian who eventually collaborated with Bucer in 1539 and beyond, Gropper offers an interesting case. As Lugioyo shows, his Erasmian impulses and reformist tendencies led him to a perspective similar to Bucer’s on justification; in fact, just as Bucer was, Gropper could be lauded by moderates while hated by hardliners. (The historian of Tudor England may think here of the *via media* as both sweet moderation and leaden mediocrity.) As he did for Bucer, Lugioyo argues that Gropper did not hold a doctrine of “double justification.” The key difference between them was principally one of emphasis. For Bucer, soteriology took precedence over ecclesiology and the sacraments, but Gropper’s view was the inverse. With a strong “framework of sacramental incorporation,” Gropper held that people are brought into the body of Christ by the sacraments just as if “baked into the bread of Christ” (pp. 109, 117). In addition and like Bucer, for Gropper a justifying faith was evident in a person’s actions or works, but then again merit played a larger role in Gropper’s system than in Bucer’s. Thus, according to Lugioyo, the two men had different theological priorities, but their frameworks were not entirely incompatible.

Chapter 5 is an investigation running to nearly seventy pages on the series of dialogues between Protestants and Catholics from Leipzig in 1539 to Regensburg in 1541. During this period, Bucer’s political actions were theologically motivated and his doctrine of justification not an irenicism. Holding consistent to his position in 1536, Bucer stood fast on the primacy of faith over works as a formal cause of justification while accepting works as a secondary and dependent effect. Lugioyo does well to illustrate Bucer’s precarious position as negotiator between the Wittenberg reformers and their Catholic adversaries. And yet, Bucer’s tact and skill as a negotiator did not compromise his theological integrity on the *hauptarticul* of the German Reformation, “the *hauptstück* [sic] of the doctrine of justification alone from the grace of God and the merit of Christ” (p. 149n60). During later

stages of negotiation Bucer secretly collaborated with Gropper to develop the first five articles of what became the Worms Book discussed at Regensburg. The fifth article went through three versions; concerned justification; and used, according to Lugioyo, Gropperian or ambiguous language in places but contained nothing contradictory to Bucer’s evangelical position. Article 5, therefore, represented Bucer’s crowning moment to some but final betrayal to others. As Calvin beamed with praise for Bucer in May 1541, Luther voiced his frustration that as mediator Bucer had conceded too much to the pope. Therein lay the problem for moderates looking to repair the fracture of Christendom during the first decades of the Reformation: no matter how principled or consistent he remained in efforts for reconciliation and dialogue, Bucer was caught between two popes—one in Rome another in Wittenberg.

Lugioyo’s argument for Bucer’s evangelical motivations is convincing. A close reading of Bucer’s texts and contexts shows that he was a religiously driven and savvy political negotiator who understood national colloquies as missiological opportunities to advance the Reformation and retrieve lost sheep. Because a modern edition of Bucer’s *Romans Commentary* has not yet been published (though it is forthcoming from Brill), Lugioyo supplies three passages in translation as appendices; the fourth appendix is Anthony Lane’s English translation of Article 5. These final additions complement the scholarly apparatus in the chapters’ footnotes, which are in a small font and often occupy half the page. The book’s obvious strengths are its revision of scholarship on Bucer, most notably, Athena Lexutt’s *Rechtfertigung im Gespräch: Das Rechtfertigungsverständnis in den Religionsgesprächen von Hagenau, Worms und Regensburg 1540/41* (1996), and fine-toothed combing of difficult texts. Also welcome are Lugioyo’s comparisons between Bucer and his contemporaries, primarily Luther. The deep analysis of an intense period demonstrates Lugioyo’s skill in this regard, but the reader is left somewhat hanging after the collapse of the Regensburg discussions on subsequent articles in 1541. Indeed, the concluding chapter is just over three pages, and Bucer lived on for an additional ten years. (Readers of H-Albion might have liked to see some treatment of Bucer’s years in England.) Also, because the book’s focus is the five years after 1536, the reader may wonder why more attention was not paid to the doctrine of justification in Bucer’s *Gospels Commentary* of 1527 (Lugioyo admits as much, p. 39n8). Typographical slips, at times cumbersome cross-references, and redundancies between the text and notes are few and do not distract

from an otherwise well copyedited and attractive book. ding further light on Bucer and, in so doing, helping to
These quibbles aside, Lugioyo is to be praised for shed- bring him out of the shadows.

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