Buchbesprechungen


Müntzerforscher dürften Bernhard Lohse zu Dank verpflichtet sein, daß er in diesem Bändchen eine gelungene Zusammenfassung erreicht hat, die dem Stand der Müntzerforschung bis 1989 gerecht wird. Es gelingt Lohse, einige Vorurteile aus dem Wege zu räumen und noch bestehende Lücken aufzudecken. Er kommt aber am Schluß nicht umhin, eingestehen zu müssen, «was Müntzer konkret von der Durchsetzung der Gottesherrschaft erwartet hat und wie im einzelnen die veränderten Zustände aussehen sollen, bleibt undeutlich». Lohse hat überzeugend demonstriert, daß ein noch weiter Weg zu beschreiten ist, ehe Müntzerforscher und andere Historiker über Müntzers theologische Ansätze differenzierter als bislang urteilen können.

E. J. Furcha, Montreal


Librairie Droz (Geneva) presents the first harvest of a decades-long project of the late Prof. Rodolphe Peter (Strasbourg), brought to completion by Prof. Jean-François Gilmont (Brussels). In the late 1950’s, Peter conceived the plan of a complete new bibliography of works by and about John Calvin, and began to collect hundreds of microfilms and photocopies, and make thousands of notes. Over the years, his research enriched Calvin scholarship in many ways, but the major bibliographic task was left unfinished at Prof. Peter’s death in 1987. At the suggestion of Prof. Bernard Roussel, the Peter family invited Prof. Gilmont to bring the dream to fruition. Gilmont’s labors have not been easy; much remained to be done: more materials to be collected, and form to be given to a massive undertaking, which Gilmont himself indicates is not the definitive bibliography. It is, however, an enormous step in that direction, and Peter and Gilmont have put all Calvin scholars deeply in their debt.

Bibliotheca Calviniana 1532–1554 is the first of a series of volumes. Gilmont explains that space and time constraints have dictated certain modifications in Peter’s original plans. The bibliography will not include works about Calvin, but will cover all publications by Calvin during his lifetime, from the commentary on Seneca 1532 through the reformer’s death in 1564. The first major part to be published is devoted to theological, literary, and legal works of which Calvin was the principal author. For reasons of convenience, this part has been divided arbitrarily into two volumes, the present one (1532–1554) and
a second yet to appear, which will carry the index for both volumes. Another smaller section will group works in which Calvin appears as a secondary author (usually contributing a preface). A second major part of the series will include the «ecclesiastical» works: liturgical, confessional, catechetical writings, ecclesiastical ordinances, and Biblical prefaces, which are viewed as published under the name of the Genevan church.

Gilmont organizes Calvin's works chronologically by year of publication, with entries in alphabetical order within each year, assigning numbers for easy cross-reference. For example, 43/2 means year 1543, publication No. 2 in alphabetical sequence. This system is generally easy to follow, although it does mean that sometimes one finds a translation listed before the original publication. For each entry Gilmont gives a photocopy of the title page (sometimes full-size, sometimes reduced), plus the fullest bibliographic data possible. This may include title, description of publisher's mark, printer and publication place and date, and colophon. Then follow a listing of contents, physical description, locations and catalog numbers of known exemplars, references in earlier Calvin bibliographies, and notes. The notes focus on the story of the book; they include a brief summary of the nature of the contents, but refrain from critical theological evaluation. The notes are in fact one of the most interesting parts of the bibliography, since Gilmont has collected from contemporary sources, especially correspondence, many references to the progress, production, and reception of Calvin's writings. Cross references make it possible to trace any given work through its various editions and translations over the years, to provide a fascinating history of individual works.

In such a large, not to say daunting, undertaking, one could not expect perfection, although in fact the Bibliotheca Calviniana achieves a high level of completeness and accuracy. The section on notes includes «modern editions» and occasionally (haphazardly?) «recent studies», but not modern translations. It is naturally in this section that a bibliographer would have the greatest difficulty, and here that future collections will include the most additions to Peter's and Gilmont's work. This reviewer noted the omission of the first modern edition of the 1539 Institutio: Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin. 1539: Text and Concordance, ed. Richard F. Wevers (Grand Rapids, MI: Meeter Center), 1988. It might be helpful if the editor would explain in future volumes the principle of selection for the «recent studies» included, and a list of modern translations would be a useful supplement to this monumental work.

Bibliotheca Calviniana 1532–1554 whets the appetite for more. Calvin is well served by this collection, and Calvin's readers can only be grateful to both Prof. Peter and Prof. Gilmont for their patient, skillful, and welcome contribution to the better knowledge of the Calvin corpus.

Elsie McKee, Princeton Theological Seminary