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Review of *Johannes Bugenhagen. Selected Writings*, introduced and translated by Kurt K. Hendel

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BOOK REVIEWS

Johannes Bugenhagen. Selected Writings. 2 volumes. Introduced and translated by Kurt K. Hendel. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. 1458 pp.

Johannes Bugenhagen is the third man of the Wittenberg Reformation, far less familiar to most people than Martin Luther or Philipp Melanchthon. Yet Bugenhagen was an influential reformer in his own right, influencing the shape of Lutheranism not only through his theological and pastoral works but also through his church ordinances, which institutionalized the Lutheran Reformation throughout northern Germany. As pastor of Wittenberg's parish church, he was Luther's spiritual advisor, while as a member of the theology faculty he helped train a generation of Lutheran pastors. Kurt Hendel, the Bernard, Fisher, Westburg Distinguished Professor of Reformation History at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, has translated a selection of works by Bugenhagen in order to introduce Luther's close friend to an English-speaking audience. His endeavors are certainly to be welcomed, even if the volumes themselves could have benefited from a stronger editorial presence.

Volume One begins with a detailed biographical essay that is both appealing and informative. The essay is an outstanding introduction to Bugenhagen's life and career, and it will be especially valuable for students and those not comfortable reading the existing German scholarly literature on Bugenhagen. Unfortunately, this splendid introduction to Bugenhagen's life is not followed up through the rest of the volume. Hendel does not provide either a general introduction explaining why these particular texts were chosen or introductory material for the individual works describing their historical context. This is not necessarily a problem for scholars familiar with the Wittenberg Reformation, but it is a major drawback for everyone else, especially since many of these works were written as contributions to larger debates about issues such as the Lord's Supper, clerical marriage, and the value of monasticism. Many of the works

are discussed in the introductory essay, but that is not a sufficient substitute for separate introductions. The volume has an index of subjects and names, but the entries are undifferentiated, so that many of the terms (such as faith, forgiveness, and grace) are over a column long, and not much help in locating specific ideas.

Frustration with the lack of editorial assistance, however, is more than offset by the translations themselves. Hendel notes in the preface that he has tried to translate as literally as possible, and the texts retain the flavor of the early modern German, but the translations are flowing and easy to read. The two volumes are paginated sequentially, with the thirty translated works organized under four headings. Volume One contains “The Man and his Times” and “The Theologian,” while Volume Two is divided between “The Exegete” and “The Pastor.” Most of the works are fairly short and cover a range of genres: open letters warning against Zwingli’s errors and describing the dangers of allowing sacramentarian preaching, instruction on the purpose of confession and on preparation for death, theses justifying the armed defense of the gospel written on the eve of the Diet of Augsburg, and an account of the dangers faced by those in Wittenberg at the time of Elector John Frederick’s defeat by the emperor in April 1547. There are also samples of Bugenhagen’s exegetical work taken from his 1524 commentary on the Psalms. Rather than translating the commentary from the original Latin, Hendel has based his English translations on German translations that were done in the sixteenth century. Only a few longer works are included: a defense of clerical marriage from 1525, a lengthy treatise on faith and good works written to the city of Hamburg in 1526, and another concerning communion in one kind from 1532, which also discusses the theology of the mass and the role of tradition more broadly. The second volume closes with a translation of the church ordinance for Braunschweig, which established the structure and practices of the institutional church, including not only worship and the administration of the sacraments but also the oversight of schools and of poor relief.

Two topics deserve mention for their importance to a broad readership. First, a number of works deal with the Lord’s Supper, written both before and after the outbreak of the eucharistic controversy at

the end of 1524. Although Bugenhagen published several treatises on the sacrament, his role in the eucharistic controversy is rarely acknowledged, and so these translations are particularly welcome. Second, Bugenhagen's discussions of monasticism and marriage are important sources for the study of Lutheran ideas about women, gender, family, and sexuality. His 1529 treatise *What One Should Think About Monastic Life* was written especially for nuns, who had few options for support besides marriage once they left the cloister. He wrote *On Marriage Matters* in 1539 to supplement Luther's book of the same name. In it Bugenhagen discussed adultery and desertion (an unofficial means of ending a failed marriage), both topics that Luther did not address in his treatise.

Despite their lack of editorial apparatus, then, these translations are a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Wittenberg Reformation. They are all the more important because the critical edition of Bugenhagen's works has only recently begun. The *Selected Writings* is therefore the easiest way for English-speaking readers to become acquainted with the career and thought of this influential Wittenberg reformer.

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