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Christopher Ocker. *Church Robbers and Reformers in Germany, 1525-1547: Confiscation and Religious Purpose in the Holy Roman Empire.* Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006. xx + 338 pp. $139.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-15206-9.

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The German Magisterial Reformation and Church Property

Reacting to teleological narratives that root the historical origins of modern secularization in Protestant seizures of monastic property, Christopher Ocker's most recent monograph seeks to re-conceptualize the magisterial Reformation by connecting the state-building efforts of evangelical and political authorities in the Holy Roman Empire with both the survival of evangelical belief and the parallel confessionalization (Lutheran, Catholic) occurring in early modern society. Positioned within these larger debates, Ocker's book examines how evangelical theologians negotiated terms with imperial princes and towns for the establishment of dominion over ecclesiastical property in the Protestant temporal world.

Emphasizing his interest in the religious history of church property disputes, Ocker augments existing research by replacing the imperial and confessional significance usually attributed to a few Lutheran theologians with a focus on the actions of the Protestant clergy as a group. His study therefore attends to the doctrinal and political contributions of city and court clergy, who represented a spectrum of Protestant beliefs and a variety of urban and political interests. The geographic range of the study is technically the Holy Roman Empire, but is primarily focused on the territories of the signatories of the Augsburg Confession and their allies in the Swiss Tetrapolitan states. Two introductory chapters of survey character are followed by six chapters that provide a roughly chronological look at the dynamic beliefs of Protestant theologians and clergy, territorial princes, and urban magistrates about the confiscation–and later dispersal–of ecclesiastical property. The internal chronology of the chapters is kept purposefully fluid in order to reflect the ongoing discourses between Protestant theologians as well as to underscore the lack of a Protestant consensus on almost any issue.

Ocker begins by providing the intellectual context for the terms of the debates over church property. In doing so, he depicts first-generation Reformers as the heirs of a long medieval religious and legal tradition of imperial nobles' combative attitude toward but symbiotic relationship with church property. Catapulted into this arena by their assaults on monasteries during the Peasants' War of 1524/25, lower-order perpetrators of violence and iconoclasm provided these Reformers with a horrifying vision

of a world without the steadying effect of a more unified religious orthodoxy. The social chaos caused by the war demanded that clergy that followed the new teachings take responsibility for their flocks' actions as well as for their own doctrinal claims, a duty ultimately fulfilled through the reliance of evangelical sympathizers on magisterial support for the success of Protestant property reform. As Ocker points out with the case of sacramentarians in the 1520s, however, this attitude did not always entail savory behavior by Lutherans, who were quick to associate politically damaging beliefs and practices with those of rival groups. Watching the fallout from the war, imperial nobles had also been shocked by the possibilities it revealed: church property could be legitimately confiscated in the wake of evangelical reforms.

The 1530 Diet of Augsburg provided a convenient forum for notable Protestant theologians to unite and debate their Eucharistic differences. Despite failing to create a doctrinal consensus among all negotiating parties, however, the resultant Augsburg Confession and the reformed Tetrapolitan Confession of the same year united evangelicals along a more politicized front. For instance, while Strasbourg had signed the Tetrapolitan rather than the Augsburg Confession, Ocker claims that Martin Bucer, one of Strasbourg's most prominent theologians, and Philip Melanchthon used the comparative flexibility of the Augsburg Confession's position on the Eucharist to negotiate with potential political allies in constituting the Schmalkaldic League. As its acceptance was a basic requirement for membership in the League, the Augsburg Confession established the precedent of a politicized evangelical orthodoxy and promoted the idea of a confessional (rather than a general) Protestant religious identity.

The Schmalkaldic League, for its own part, worked over the 1530s and early 1540s to create a Protestant political identity through negotiations with the mostly Catholic jurists of the Imperial Chamber Court, the highest secular court, over confiscated church property. While not unified in purpose outside of protecting the political and religious interests of German Protestant princes and cities, the League did provide its members with legal defenses (into which category theological advice fell) and diplomatic aid. This shared general purpose of protecting Protestant territories did not mean, however, that its members shared political goals or even the same theological (or legal) ideas about the jurisdiction of secular authorities in religious affairs. Ocker uses Philip of Hesse and Ulrich of WÃ¼rttemberg to illustrate colorfully that the impetus for the reforms of many League princes had more to do with using confiscations to fund secular political ends than with actually promoting religious reform, an area of intense interest for League cities and their clergy.

Protestant clergy throughout the areas influenced by the Reformation wielded great political influence through their shared duty to tend to the religious needs of their congregations. Evangelical theologians set about this task on a mass scale in two main ways: first, by determining together how the new churches should be organized for their long-term spiritual success, and second, by resolving doctrinal disputes. Backing them up on the ground level, evangelical ministers in urban centers focused on spreading reform into rural parishes and delivering sermons that influenced magistrates to implement religious reform by inciting public riots. Theologians also used lay pastoral needs to justify shifting the emphasis of debates at Imperial Diets and the Imperial Chamber Court from the legitimacy of confiscations towards the use of confiscations to serve the common good (by which was meant the funding of evangelical parishes and their clergy). As Ocker portrays them, evangelical theologians were so far from being half of a well-organized or orthodox magisterial Reformation that, by the late 1530s, they were only just arriving at an official Protestant position that recognized the jurisdiction of imperial princes and city councils in spiritual and temporal affairs. The German Reformation, which ended in the confessional establishment of (Lutheran) Protestantism, was thus carried out instead over several decades of internal and imperial diplomacy on the part of evangelical theologians as well as of localized coercion by evangelical preachers.

The magisterial Reformation, as Ocker presents it, took place during a troubling period of political heterodoxy as well; some members of the Schmalkaldic League eventually became concerned that evangelical theologians were promoting doctrine that might fracture the stability of its political union. Depending on theologians to provide legal, theological, and moral grounds for their monastic confiscations, the League princes and cities required a theological consensus. The political insecurities of the League and of evangelical Protestantism brought the crisis to a breaking point: the urban-princely political divide in terms of imperial politics was paralleled in the fissures between the two groups on claims to political dominion over former ecclesiastical properties. The theological debates leading up to the Schmalkaldic Diet of 1540 showed Protestants divided between the long-term, patronage-based plans of some evangelical theologians, such as Wolfgang Musculus and Bonifacius Wohlfahrt,

who supported the claims of princes to temporal dominion, and the long-term urban-governing objectives of others like Bucer, who felt that city council officials were both better positioned to maintain the spread of reform and more likely to use the property for its original purposes. Bucer's urban-oriented concern about the preservation of funds for the support of evangelical goals for the community also ran counter to the comparatively short-sighted, personal-debt funding goals of League princes, again, notably those of Philip of Hesse. In the end, the Schmalkaldic Recommendation, a doctrinal agreement between Wittenberg and urban theologians, forced the League's theologians into a compromise that provided the League with a persuasive legal argument: morally justified confiscations of church property by concerned Protestant princes and city councils.

The Recommendation and the subsequent religious colloquies of Hagenau-Worms (1540) and Regensburg (1541) together were significant for Protestants as marking what Ocker sees as a further–but not yet determined–step towards their eventual unity within an evangelical rather than Catholic Church. In the case of the Regensburg Colloquy, neither the Catholic nor the Protestant camps of the Imperial Diet later that year accepted its compromises on original sin or double justification. Despite hopes that the Diet would reunite Protestants and Catholics, Lutherans still recognized the primacy of the Augsburg Confession, while Catholics, who had by this point begun an internal Reformation of their own, continued to doubt the sincerity of Protestant pushes for religious reform. On the issue of church property in particular, Catholic representatives and theologians did not take kindly to the confiscation of monasteries, which were becoming central areas for Catholic reforms and revival, to fund Protestant ministries and line the pockets of League princes. The results of these negotiations between the papal and imperial delegates were also influenced by the successful efforts of Philip Melanchthon towards gaining imperial recognition of the legitimacy of evangelical beliefs (and theologians). As a result of Melanchthon's strategy in Regensburg, Charles V acknowledged that Protestant confiscations of church property could be permitted if used to fund schools and ministries, but only among parties subscribing to the Augsburg Confession.

As the author concludes, both evangelical clergy and League members were unable throughout the Reformation to come up with unified support for a single, clear, mutually satisfactory plan for temporal sovereignty. Despite providing numerous theological models on the topic, neither Bucer nor Martin Luther fully resolved Protestant conflicts over the reflection of the spiritual-temporal divide in politics and daily life. The cities and princes of the Schmalkaldic League had adopted conflicting legal strategies when it came to justifying confiscations of monasteries and other Church properties to the Imperial Chamber Court. Evangelical theologians, however, did lay the conceptual groundwork for the political and theological views that ultimately secured the confessional churches.

Ocker's study promises to be a valuable resource for graduate students and scholars in the field of Reformation history. It will also be of particular interest to historians of early Protestant theology.