

Funden zu rechnen. Dies gilt auch für eine weitere Liste von insgesamt 34 Handschriften von fremden Händen, die sich ebenfalls nachweislich in Gessners Besitz befanden.

Die Beschreibung der einzelnen Titel folgt den üblichen Richtlinien und bietet die Titelangaben in normalisierter Form, das Format, Seiten- und Lagenbezeichnungen, ein etwaiges Kolophon, eine bibliographische Referenz, die Standortsignatur, Angaben zu früheren und späteren Besitzern sowie – von besonderem Interesse – die Gründe, weshalb der Band Gessners »Bibliothek« zugewiesen werden kann. Der Katalog wird erschlossen einerseits durch diverse Indizes, andererseits durch Ausführungen zu den Zürcher Bibliotheken im 16. Jahrhundert und zur Überlieferung von Gessners Privatbibliothek sowie durch eine geographisch-thematische Analyse. Über die Hälfte der Bücher in Gessners Bibliothek erschienen in den drei Druckzentren Basel, Paris und Venedig. Zwei Drittel des Buchbestandes lassen sich den Disziplinen Medizin und Pharmakologie, Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft sowie »Naturwissenschaften« zuordnen. Den Rest teilen sich Theologie, Philosophie, Geschichte und Miscellanea.

Insgesamt gibt die Publikation ein ebenso wertvolles wie hoch willkommenes Hilfsmittel ab und wird in der Gessner-Forschung – welche Aspekte des vielfältigen Schaffens des Universalgelehrten auch immer im Vordergrund stehen werden – rasch zu einem Standardwerk avancieren.

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Irena Backus, Life Writing in Reformation Europe: Lives of Reformers by Friends, Disciples and Foes, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008 (St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History), VII & 259 p. – ISBN 978-0-7546-6055-2.

The first full-length study of *Life*-writings of the Reformers by Irena Backus is a delightfully original integration of intellectual and cultural Reformation history. Backus's easy mastery of primary source material once again confirms her established reputation in Reformation research, despite the fact that this book was »not written to provide an exhaustive survey of lives written du-

ring the Reformation period, but as an analysis of the roles and function of selected *Lives* of the more important reformers« (p. 229).

Beginning with an extensive introduction to the history of life-writing and its purpose among ancient writers such as Possidius, and then moving through medieval hagiography, Backus builds a historical foundation for exploring what she coins as »a chasm between biography and history.« With carefully selected citations from the various friends, disciples and foes of key Reformers, a representation of culture in three major 16th century Reformation centers is achieved that provides a survey of the intricate and significant social networks of the period. Backus disagrees that Calvin and other Reformers' *Lives* should be viewed as merely polemics or apologetics, and that doing so ignores several factors and takes a reductive view.

The volume follows the chronology of the Reformation and addresses the process of life-writing, its maturation in early modernity, as well as the evolution of the concept of objectivity in early modern religious biographies. The first chapter, on Luther, examines the challenges that *Lives* raise for the interpretation of 16th century figures. Backus is sensitive to the relational conjunctions of various church figures as she begins her assessment of the Luther *Lives* with Mathesius *Life* (1566), in which he models Luther after the tradition of medieval sainthood; Melancthon's *Life* of Luther (1549), a handbook for behavior; and in the heat of the confessional conflict of 1549, Luther's *Life* by Cochaeus, which includes many of the myths and rumors that tainted Luther's reputation for generations to come. Chapters two and three illuminate the lives of the Swiss Reformers and suggest a Swiss shift toward the writing of *Lives* that were meant to define and establish the Reformers' character and social standing – perhaps merely as a reflection of the Zurich context? As, for instance, in the *Life* of Zwingli by Oswald Myconius (1536) that is an apologetic justifying Zwingli's moral character, thoughts and actions. The final two chapters, on the lives of Calvin and Beza, go into great detail and examine the many 16th century *Lives* written about these two Genevan Reformers. In the case of Calvin, Backus continues the story that resounded well into the 18th century by including a number of examples

of the Calvin *Lives* that in turn valorize and demonize Calvin himself, often with what we would dismiss today as legend, slander or myth.

A notable feature of *Life Writing in Reformation Europe* is the consequent inclusion of the wives of key Reformation leaders, who were praised, criticized, and used as pawns in the arguments of the *Life* writers as they elucidated the character of these women's men. For example, Josias Simler describes Vermigli's first wife Catherine Dompmartin, as »a blueprint of a pious wife,« and Vermigli's second wife, Catherine Merenda, as a »child bearer.« The Reformation opponent James Laing, who wrote a hostile life of Vermigli, contends that Catherine Dompmartin was never married to Vermigli at all and that they »fornicated publicly«; and Vermigli's second wife, Catherine Meraud »moved to Geneva to enjoy carnal liberties.« The function of women in *Lives* is a welcome aspect of Backus work that integrates women into Reformation social history.

A suggestion for making the book more accessible to a larger audience would be to supplement the current introduction, which constitutes an entire chapter, by adding a brief preface or introductory section at the onset of the volume and adding a more detailed table of contents; then the book would be an even better tool for teaching and research purposes. Such quibbles aside, Backus book is the arrow of a pioneer aiming for a historical overview of Reformation history that attends to contemporary voices, examines the interaction of history and text at multiple levels, and is, moreover, inclusive of gender concerns. The book is thus a model for future research that integrates social and intellectual history by deeply discerning the relationships and conflicts between individual historical figures.

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