

REVIEW

Katalog der hutterischen Handschriften und der Drucke aus hutterischem Besitz in Europa (eds.) RAUERT, Matthias H. – ROTHKEGEL, Martin. Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer XVIII. Vols. 1–2. Gütersloher Verlag: Gütersloh, 2011, 1480 pp.

This catalog, consisting of 462 entries, is the most comprehensive list of the survived Hutterite manuscripts and prints used in the Hutterite communities from 1565 to the 1760s. The chosen period is not incidental; the start date indicates the beginning of the Hutterite practice to bind the manuscripts collected in the bishopric archive, while the end coincides with the decade of forced Catholicisation of the Hutterites. For the researchers dealing with the theology and history of the Anabaptists in general and Hutterites in particular, this catalog is undoubtedly an essential tool.

For a wider public it might be interesting for the historical additions that go beyond the classic cataloging. First of all, one can get a complete picture about the Hutterites' extraordinary literary activity. No other group of Anabaptists has produced such an amazing amount of devotional literature as have the Hutterites. The content of the codices listed in the catalog is varied: they contain epistles, songs, municipal codes, sermons, Bible interpretations and catechisms, but also medical books and recipes. The authors limited the presentation to books and manuscripts found in the European libraries, archives and private collections (59 in total). Those writings which are in the possession of the Hutterites in the US and Canada are therefore not listed here. The editors revisited Robert Friedmann's pioneering catalogue, *Die Schriften der Huterischen Täufergemeinschaften: Gesamtkatalog ihrer Manuskriptbücher, ihrer Schreiber und ihrer Literature, 1529–1667* (Vienna, 1965) that listed 257 manuscripts kept in 21 institutions. This is a timely endeavor because many new (to be more precise, 71) Hutterite manuscripts have been identified in

the meantime, and many collections have become accessible. The present catalog diverges from the previous one in the organizing concept as well: whereas Friedmann only listed the sources written by the Hutterites, Rauert and Rothkegel include printed materials that made their ways into and were kept in the Hutterite communities, as well as non-Hutterite copies of the Hutterite texts.

Accurate and detailed entries in this catalog give a full scholarly apparatus with name, place and subject indexes. The records not only describe the collection holding the manuscript, the codices' catalog number, content, author, subtitles and short descriptions of content with excerpts, format, origin and dating, but also the scope and completeness of the manuscript, the binding, ownership marks, bibliographic notes, and available microfilm copies. The history and provenance of the manuscript is another important historical addendum of the catalog since it reflects the troubled history of the Hutterite communities: most codices were confiscated during the numerous campaigns against the Anabaptists. The most sensational discovery connected to the Hutterite manuscripts was the find of 136 codices hidden in the ceiling of a Haban house in Sobotište, the site of a large Hutterite Bruderhof.

A third interesting aspect beyond the strictly scholarly description of the catalog is the high level of literacy and elaborate penmanship, despite the fact that members of the Hutterite Brotherhood were of modest origins. In the Hutterite colonies they learned reading and writing and of course the spiritual foundations of their life. They also studied the writings of those who lived and suffered before them. Equipped in this way, they were eager to write under any situation. Imprisoned missionaries always procured paper, ink and quill, and there were always messenger-brethren for the contact back and forth with Moravia. At home all letters were carefully preserved, copied, collected in separate codices. The most favorable period for producing these codices was the so-called 'Golden Years' of the Hutterite community from 1565 to 1591. The seat of the bishop also functioned as a scriptoria and an archive, and it had its own binding shop where the beautifully embossed, leather-covered books with clasps were made. The physical appearance of the covers maintained a uniform, late Renaissance style. Recognizing it as an important segment of early modern book culture, the editors give the visual reproduction of the embossed leather covers, of the cover structures and relief ornaments.

Not only the sheer number of the Hutterite codices is impressive, but also their spread in spatial terms. The bulk of the codices are to be found in Slovakia (187 in Bratislava alone), Hungary and Romania, but codices are held in Copenhagen, London, Zürich, Hamburg, etc. In Hungary, the biggest collections are in Budapest (43 items) and Esztergom (33 items), but various public and ecclesiastic libraries in Kalocsa, Pannonhalma, Pécs, Sárospatak, and Szeged also hold a smaller number of these invaluable remains of the long and troubled Hutterite history.

Emese BÁLINT