

Letter 426: 13 September 1530, Strasbourg, Capito to Martin Bucer

Printed in CorrBucer 4, pp. 275-86, Ep. 340.

[*Summary*]: Capito gives a fuller report of his journey to Basel [see above, Ep. 421 and 425a] and Zurich [see above, Ep. 424]. In Basel, the mayor [Jacob Meyer zum Hirzen] and the master of the guilds, [Balthasar Hiltbrand], decided that Oecolampadius should join Capito at the meeting with Zwingli in Zurich. They also sent a messenger to ask for a representative from Bern, either Bertold Haller or Caspar Megander [Megander joined them; see above, Ep. 424]. The Zurich reformers asked for a representative from Schaffhausen, but the council, which is hostile to the reformers, made excuses. They assured them, however, that they would accept any decisions made at Zurich. Capito arrived in Zurich on 31 August and remained until 6 September. He and his companions were received hospitably and accommodated at public expense. Capito praises the discipline kept in Zurich. Oecolampadius' efforts to introduce a system of church discipline in Basel have so far been unsuccessful. The Franciscan [Johannes Lütthard] and Marcus [Bertsch, parish priest of St. Leonard's at Basel] are preaching against him. Capito would like to discuss with Bucer the possibility of introducing church discipline in Strasbourg.

The question of coming to an agreement with the Lutherans was on the agenda. Oecolampadius accepted Bucer's formula, with some reservations. Zwingli, who wrote a sharply worded letter [not extant] to Bucer, is somewhat more amenable to his position now that he has heard Capito's interpretation. While they were waiting for the arrival of Megander, a packet of letters came from Philip of Hesse with a proposal concerning [the Schmalkald League] and its rejection by the Elector of Saxony; also Bucer's proposal [Ratschlag A, cf. CorrBucer, Ep. 296] with Melanchthon's and Brenz's response. On 2 September, Capito reported to the Zurich preachers, in the presence of four councillors, about their negotiations in Augsburg with Melanchthon, Brück, and Brenz [see above, Epp. 416, 417, and 420b] and Melanchthon's readiness to seek a formula on which they could all agree. Zwingli insisted on reading certain materials written by the Lutherans against Zurich and the Zwinglians, which greatly offended the councillors present. He furthermore reminded them of the hostile reception he had in Marburg. Capito emphasized that the attitude of the Lutherans had changed. They were more inclined to make peace after the discussions they had with them in Augsburg. Zwingli resented Capito's efforts to promote peace at first, but finally agreed to have Bucer draw up articles for discussion. At that point Capito wrote the official report to Bucer [i.e. Ep. 424], which he hopes will give Bucer an opportunity to continue negotiations with Zurich, in person, if necessary. If he does, he must first speak to Ulrich Funk (cf. above, Ep. 400) and Leo Jud and get their cooperation.

Capito is glad to hear that Bucer will have an opportunity to speak with Luther personally [on 26 September at Coburg]. He has made a presentation to the Committee of the XIII in Strasbourg concerning the matter of organizing schools and has received a positive reply from them through Egenolf [Roeder von Diersburg]. While in Zurich, the preachers wrote a joint letter to the [Five Swiss Towns; see above, Ep. 425] to urge peace. There will be a disputation between the reformers and Catholics at Solothurn [cancelled because of the Kappel War]. Oecolampadius and Capito talked to a magistrate from Solothurn [Urs Stark?], who happened to be in Basel when they returned. They must carefully monitor the situation in Solothurn, where the Catholic party is strong. He hopes that war can be avoided.

Fridolin Meyer [public notary of the bishop and a sympathizer of the Anabaptists] has died of the plague; Martin Herlin's wife has died of phthisis. Bucer's family is well. Jacob

Rieher reports that Johann Schneid has been set free [see above, Ep. 420b]. Ideally the apostolic creed should be sufficient basis for Christians. Capito regrets the need for further articles. He wishes for a more charitable approach. He has received a letter from Erasmus [not extant] and has read his [*Responsio ad epistolam apologeticam*, 1530] replying to Bucer's [*Epistola apologetica*, 1530]. He has not had time to read it carefully, but he can see that Erasmus is a "virulent creature" (*virulenta bestiola*). He regrets the slow progress in Strasbourg to institute elementary schools; he finds the council more cooperative in other matters. He misses Sturm and Pfarrer [who are still in Augsburg] and other supporters who are busy at the Frankfurt Fair. He has read Luther's two letters to Melancthon, [not identified] which are cryptic. The Elector [Johann Friedrich I of Saxony] is staunch in his support of the reformers; the emperor relies on Fabri and Eck. He wishes Bucer would return with news of peace with the Lutherans. He sets his hopes on the personal meeting between Bucer and Luther. If Luther sees Bucer's sincerity he will no doubt be moved. It is regrettable that Luther is surrounded by flatterers and does not recognize his own shortcomings. Capito will see to it that Bucer's letters are transcribed and shared with Oecolampadius and Zwingli.

Schwenckfeld, who is on his way to Silesia, asks to have the enclosed letters transmitted to Christian [Fridbolt, master of guilds in St. Gallen]. [The jurist Franz?] Frosch is impoverished. He asks for Bucer's support. Gerard Geldenhouwer [cf. above, Ep. 336] is in a similar position.