

Die Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft

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German Baroque

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Die Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft

IDC Publishers is delighted to present a collection of unique primary sources on the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* on microfiche. The material in this collection about Germany's first learned society (founded 1617) will bring the German Baroque period vividly to life for researchers. The great Baroque scholar Martin Bircher spent thirty years collecting the materials presented here. The collection includes a great many printed books, manuscripts, copperplate engravings, maps and other graphic materials. These items cover a wide range of subjects, including law, art, religion, theology, history, near eastern philology, geography, music, hagiography and mathematics. The *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* collection will prove a valuable addition to any library which supports the study of Germany and Central Europe in the early modern period.

Discovery and experiment

The German Baroque period, viewed through letters and science, is marked by a flowering of intellectual activity within a dazzling array of new scholarly fields. It is particularly interesting for students of German cultural history as it is the period in which the German language, after a long period of neglect, once again became the medium for scholarly and literary communication of the highest calibre. The Baroque was deeply imbued with the spirit of discovery and experimentation, and it gave rise to the creation of new styles of literary craftsmanship. This culminated in the classical forms of German lyric, drama, narrative and epic in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Baroque period can, with considerable justification, be regarded as the cradle of modern German literary culture.

Learned societies

A particularly interesting aspect of the Baroque was the emergence of social structures that promoted literacy and the humanistic arts and sciences. Throughout Europe "learned societies" such as the *Accademia della Crusca* in Florence were founded to bring scholars and writers together as well as to encourage humanistic discourse. In Germany, the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*, or the Fruitbearing Society, was formed in 1617, and amongst other things, it set itself the task of propagating German as both a scholarly and literary language. The Fruitbearing Society was also known as the *Palmenorden* (Order of the Palms) because its emblem was the then very exotic coconut palm tree, and its motto was "Alles zu nutzen" – everything for a purpose – in keeping with the German

conception of the palm tree as the source of countless material goods used in housing, clothing and nourishing the indigenous peoples of the new world that Europe was in the process of discovering. The *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* was Germany's first such learned society, and was one of its most important in terms of the role it played in encouraging the use of written German.

M. Bircher

The great Baroque scholar Martin Bircher spent thirty years collecting books, manuscripts, engravings and

other art objects relative to the Fruitbearing Society. His remarkable collection concerning the membership and publications of the Fruitbearing Society includes over 685 printed books, 335 manuscripts, 300 copperplate engravings, and 21 maps and other similar graphic materials. These items cover a wide range of subjects, in keeping with the interests of the Society's membership. The manuscript materials, in particular, offer a rich variety of official documents and correspondence by and about the members of the Fruitbearing Society, and the graphic materials



Illustration from: Christian Friedrich Wilisch. *Index bibliothecae ... in vsvm ill. gymnasii Fridericiani Altenburgi avgescit*. Altenburg, 1721.

provide a unique source of primary information from this period.

Eminent authors

Representative of the kind of rare and valuable printed works in the collection is Justus Georg Schottelius' *Ausführliche Arbeit Von der Teutschen HauptSprache*, published in 1663. Conceived as a vehicle for the propagation of "correct" German and as a tool for linguistic unification of the German-speaking lands, there is no more significant publication in the annals of the Society. Schottelius, known as "*Der Suchende*" or "The Seeker" to his Fruitbearing brothers, attempted to create an exemplary vocabulary of German based on the works of contemporary authors, and in the process has created more than just a dictionary of the language, but rather as Martin Bircher writes, "*eine kleine barocke Literaturgeschichte*." Curt Faber du Faur was of the opinion that this work makes him "if not the father, then the grandfather of Germanic philology". Similarly the collection is rich in other rare volumes and first editions by many eminent German Baroque literary authors such as Martin Opitz, Andreas Gryphius, Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, Johann Philipp Moscherosch, Friedrich von Logau, and Philipp von Zesen.

Autograph documents

The autograph documents in the collection offer another exciting dimension to students and scholars of the period. They range from the official records of the Society to private correspondence between, to and from Society members. Those concerning Prince Ludwig I of Anhalt-Köthen are reasonably representative of the collection's scope and breadth: Martin Bircher collected 26 distinct items in connection with Ludwig, which vividly detail the political turmoil surrounding the confessional disputes raging in Germany at that time. Among them are a letter from Wallenstein to Ludwig in response to the latter's entreaties that Wallenstein's army spare the principality of Köthen, in which Ludwig writes of "the deplorable condition of this miserable country" and of the fields, which "lay unsown, bare and deserted, the cattle and victuals eaten up, the landscape ruined, credit wiped out and all the country's property gone." Wallenstein's response to Ludwig is reassuring and indeed



Illustration from: Kaspar von Stieler. *Die Teutschen Sprache Stammbaum und Fortwachs ...* Nürnberg, 1691.

bestows upon the prince a generous travel pass, which allows him to pursue a badly-needed cure at the baths in Wildungen. Other important letters to Ludwig include those from Maria Eleonore, Queen of Sweden, widow of Gustavus Adolphus, and from the Emperor Ferdinand III dated 23 August 1645, in which he summons his electors to a peace treaty congress to be held in Osnabrück or Münster later that year – the first step on the long path which led to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

Pictorial materials

Likewise the iconographic materials in the collection give a vivid sense of the persons, places and artistic themes of the German Baroque. Many portraits of Society members have been included, as well as the "emblems" or coded engravings which depicted their most striking personal characteristics and gave rise to each member's "cognomen" in the Society, the sobriquet by which he was known to other members. Other valuable kinds of pictorial materials include maps and aerial views of cities, ornately decorated proclamations and decrees, and various sorts of highly inventive tables and graphs which codify the elements of German grammar and word formation.

Valuable addition

The Fruitbearing Society collection is a valuable addition to any library that supports the study of German and Central European history in the early modern period. The careful and knowledgeable manner in which it has

been compiled combined with the scholarly thoroughness of its cataloguing make it a truly unique resource for both students and advanced scholars alike. For researchers, it is a breathtaking collection of primary sources which vividly portray the period and place. Furthermore, it serves as a microcosm of 17th century German culture which stands in stark contrast to the terrible depredations that marred a great part of that period.

James H. Spohrer

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General information

Scope	685 books 335 manuscripts 300 copperplate engravings 21 maps
Number of fiches	3,857
Size of fiches	105 x 148 mm
Film type	Positive silver halide
Reduction ratio	Varies according to the size of the original
Internal finding aids	Eye-legible header with collection title and Bircher catalogue number on every fiche
Bibliographic information	Core level cataloguing records in MARC21 format will be delivered with all monographs (807 records) ordered. All graphic materials and manuscripts will be provided with finding aids in EAD format. Title information is also available online, please see below under "External finding aids".

Prices

Current prices and order information are printed on a separate insert, enclosed in this brochure. If this leaf is missing, please contact IDC Publishers and we will send it to you as soon as possible, free of charge.

External finding aids

- All titles in the microfiche collection are accessible online at IDC Publishers' web site (<http://www.idc.nl>).

- IDC Publishers supplies customers who buy the complete collection with the printed catalogue:

Martin Bircher, *Im Garten der Palme. Katalog einer Sammlung von Dokumenten zur Wirksamkeit der Fruchtbringenden Gesellschaft mit Beigabe eines Ausstellungskataloges* (1991) (Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung 32). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998. 2 v., 795 p., 410 ill. (ISBN 3-447-04017-3).

This catalogue is also available separately through IDC Publishers.



Illustration from: Matthäus Merian. *Die Palme der Fruchtbringenden Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main, 1646.

Cover illustration from: Friedrich Wilhelm Barthold. *Geschichte der Fruchtbringenden Gesellschaft*. Berlin, 1848.

Photographs by Peter Moerkerk.


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