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Crell, Johann. *De Deo et eius attributis*. Ed. Roberto Torzini

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the author adequately summarizes various contributions of this volume—although she was perhaps too modest to emphasize what this reviewer thinks is the most important contribution: putting Zwingli in his place and restoring Oecolampadius to his rightful position as the central (and most insightful) debater on the Sacramentarian side. (She could also have emphasized how the book uncovers the crucial role the church fathers played in the debate.)

One reason that Burnett can accomplish this sea change for viewing the Lord's Supper controversy comes from her remarkably succinct literary style. For example, she manages in four pages (223–26) to summarize the most important arguments of Luther's *That These Words* and then, in the pages that follow, to demonstrate how and on what grounds various Sacramentarians objected. To be sure, Köhler's work still offers more in-depth analysis of many of the works discussed here, but Burnett's book overcomes, among other things, what is surely the glaring blind spot in his research (doubtless influenced by his work on Zwingli's *opera omnia*), namely, his claim that the Zürich reformer was the central figure on the Swiss/South German side in the debate. In short, in the future no one should dare write anything on the role of Lord's Supper in the early Reformation without taking seriously this outstanding piece of research. It is remarkable scholarship and a fitting tribute to the other historian able to do this kind of work, her *Doktorvater*, the late Robert Kingdon.

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### **Crell, Johann.**

#### ***De Deo et eius attributis*. Ed. Roberto Torzini.**

Sociniana 186. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019. Pp. lxxxvi, 394. ISBN 978-8-8935-9363-2 (paperback) €57.80.

Roberto Torzini presents a new and insightful edition of Johann Crell's *De Deo et eius attributis*, one of the most important treatises on God's existence and nature published in the seventeenth century. Crell was a renowned member of the Minor Church of Poland, or Polish Brethren. Indeed, it might not be an exaggeration to state that Crell's influence on the Brethren equalled that of Fausto Socinus (or Sozzini), the Italian refugee in Poland who contributed so

much to the ideology of the Brethren that they were known as Socinians in all of Europe. The *De Deo et eius attributis* was first published in 1630, together with Johannes Völkel's *De vera religione*, the most comprehensive exposition of the Socinians' faith and theology yet written. Völkel died before publishing his treatise, however, and the Synod of the Brethren judged that his manuscript could not be published as it was. They appointed Crell to complete and revise Völkel's text. Crell's revisions eventually became a separate treatise that he titled *De Deo et eius attributis* and published as an introduction to the *De vera religione*. Crell's treatise was then republished two times, in 1642 and 1668. It was also included by the theologian Samuel Desmarets in his refutation of Socinianism; according to Torzini, this might very well be regarded as a fourth edition of the *De Deo et eius attributis* (the third in chronological order, as Desmarets published his refutation in three volumes between 1651 and 1662). The present edition is based on the 1630 version, but Torzini has added a large number of notes to the main text which not only clarify Crell's references to classical and contemporary sources, but also point out the dissimilarities between the four versions. Moreover, the volume includes an Introduction by Torzini that certainly enhances this new edition of Crell's treatise.

*De Deo et eius attributis* is divided into thirty-three chapters, which can be further subdivided into three groups. Chapters 1–6 aim to prove God's existence. This proof consists of three main arguments, the first based on the nature of all existing things, the second on the nature of human beings (but Crell includes arguments based on the common consensus among men and women, the testimony of human consciences, and the socio-political utility of religion), and the third on the nature of things "above nature" (*praeter naturam*). Chapters 7–14 focus on God's Hebrew and Greek names, but Crell includes discussions on Latin words such as *Deus* and *Dominus*. In the remaining chapters, Crell explores God's attributes, faculties, and all that follows from them. He discusses, for instance, God's unity (*De unitate Dei*) and eternity (*De aeternitate Dei*), God's intellect (*De intellectu Dei*) and will (*De voluntate Dei*). As Torzini highlights in his Introduction, such subjects were quite topical in seventeenth-century Europe. Indeed, while skilfully describing Crell's treatise step by step, Torzini's Introduction also examines its historical context. Torzini emphasizes, for instance, how Crell was distancing himself from Socinus when arguing that God's existence can be proved through natural—or better, non-revealed—arguments, as Socinus strongly believed that men and women could

know God only through his revelation. Torzini also emphasizes Aristotle's influence on Crell and how Crell then departed from the Greek philosopher and his contemporary interpreters, such as Andrea Cesalpino. When describing Crell's ideas on God's power (*potestas*) and benevolence (*benignitas*), Torzini explains that these discussions were related to the controversy between Crell and Grotius on the dogma of Christ's satisfaction, which preceded the writing of the *De Deo et eius attributis*. This same controversy is briefly but well reconstructed in the first sections of the Introduction, where Torzini carefully leads the reader through the background and reception of Crell's thinking. In these sections, Torzini explains that Crell became widely famous not only as a theologian and exegetist, whose treatises and commentaries of the Bible were discussed and attacked by other famous theologians such as Samuel Desmarts and John Owen, but also as a political pamphleteer, whose defence of freedom of religion (titled *Vindiciae pro religionis libertate*) had a long impact on intellectuals such as John Locke and Pierre Bayle. The many references to relevant literature on Crell, the Socinians, and the intellectual background of their ideas enrich Torzini's Introduction and make it a fundamental tool for both students and researchers interested in the history of early modern ideas.

Crell was undoubtedly one of the most important intellectuals among the Socinians in the seventeenth century, and according to contemporary sources he was a formidable opponent when treating philosophical and theological matters. This was, for instance, John Owen's opinion, who regarded Crell as "most learned" (*doctissimus*) and "most subtle" (*vaferrimus*). Among Crell's many works there are perhaps other theological and philosophical writings that were better known and had a long-lasting influence on the early Enlightenment period. Despite this, Crell's *De Deo et eius attributis* deserves special attention. Indeed, as Torzini states, this is the most comprehensive theological treatise written by Crell. Therefore, this new edition, which offers the main text with all the variants from the four different known versions, provides scholars of early modern intellectual history with a fundamental text that will certainly inspire further research. A careful study of the reception of the *De Deo et eius attributis* is still needed, as well as more studies on the historical and intellectual figure of Crell. This volume can very well be regarded as a step forward in our understanding of Johann Crell.

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