In April of 1549, Martin Bucer, dejected leader of the Reformation in Strasbourg, left that city for England. After more than 25 years of service as a teacher, theologian and preacher, Bucer was suspended from his duties by the city Senate because he refused to accept their decision to abide by the conditions of the peace interim imposed by the Holy Roman emperor Charles V on the city in 1547. The interim restored various privileges and properties to the Catholics of Strasbourg, including the right to celebrate the mass, and Bucer refused to compromise with a power that he considered to be siding with the anti-Christ in Rome.\footnote{Thomas A. Brady, Protestant Politics: Jacob Sturm (1489–1553) and the German Reformation (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), p. 333 and pp. 345–46.}

Indirectly driven into exile by an emperor whose religious decisions he found anything but holy, Bucer spent the last two years of his life writing a book that served, in part, to create a Protestant version of the Holy Roman Emperor. Formally the Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge during these years, Bucer was a client of the young king Edward VI.\footnote{The most recent bibliography of Bucer scholarship published in 2005 lists no fewer than 3314 entries for the period between 1523 and 2004. Martin Bucer-Bibliographie, edited by Holger Pils, Stephan Ruderer, and Petra Schaffrodt (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005). This list includes 194 titles of texts by Bucer and his correspondents up to his death in 1551. Among these many titles, a small fraction touch on Bucer’s time in England including most recently Basil Hall, “Martin Bucer in England,” in Martin Bucer, ed. David F. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 144–160; and David F. Wright, “Martin Bucer and England—and Scotland,” in Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe, edited by Christian Kriegger and Marc Leinhard (Leiden: Brill, 1993), vol. 2, pp. 523–533. While useful for establishing the historical detail and ecclesiastical connections and influences that Bucer had in England, none of these texts provide an analysis of De Regno Christi and its political implications or context.} His text was subsequently meant to serve, most immediately, as a primer for the young king. Dedicated to his protector and
patron, *Regno Christi* was first published in 1551, the year of Bucer’s death. It was a lengthy reflection on the proper relationship between the kingdom of God and the earthly kingdoms of men, and the necessary laws for creating a Christian society. It was also particularly concerned with the right relationship between kings and the Church, and as such it constituted one of the most extensive works of political theology that came out of the first generation of Protestant reformers.\(^3\)

Understood in the context of Bucer’s exile and bitter experience with Charles V, together with the still embryonic state of a distinctly Protestant English political theology, *De Regno Christi* represented a bold claim to still un-chartered territory in the English Reformation. A clear challenge to the prevailing Catholic understanding of the relationship between secular and ecclesiastical power, it was also a departure from earlier work of Bucer’s and continental Calvinism that had focused on the right of Protestant republics to rebel against Catholic monarchs and the emperor.\(^4\)

It is the role of Bucer as a champion of Protestant republicanism that has been emphasized in much of the historical literature.\(^5\) But the later political model fashioned by Bucer in the English context, the Protestant imperial model, was the longer-lasting and more influential of the two, eventually winning out over even the most violent challenges of the Puritan “republicans” under Oliver Cromwell a century later.

Writing for an established, if threatened, Protestant monarchy in 1551, Bucer stressed in his last work the power, rights, and duties of Christian monarchy. He turned first to biblical and patristic precedents for both the model and justification of views that represented a drastic


\(^4\) The most recent text that is concerned specifically with Bucer’s political theology is Andreas Gäumann, *Reich Christi und Obrigkeit* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 133 and 225. This text focuses primarily on Bucer’s work and political experience before he reaches England, and it does briefly note Bucer’s use of the Constantinian example for establishing the nature of Christian monarchy. It falls short, however, of providing an analysis of the shifts in Bucer’s political theology in the English context, and of charting the elaboration of the Byzantine model that I will be looking at in the pages that follow.