

February 28

Martin Bucero (1491-1551) witness

On February 28, 1551 Martin Bucero, a reformer of the church of Strasbourg, died in exile in Cambridge.

Born in Sélestat, Alsace, he showed strong intellectual abilities as a child. As his family was poor, the only way he could afford an education was by entering a convent, and so in 1506 he joined the Dominicans of his native city. Ten years later, his superiors sent him to study theology in Heidelberg. At the university Bucero met Martin Luther and was won over to the cause of the Reformation.

He left the Dominican order, but remained a lay priest. When he married Elisabeth Silbereisen, however, he was excommunicated. Persecuted because of his Lutheran ideas, he sought refuge in 1523 in Strasbourg, the Alsatian capital, and became the leader of the Reformation in that city.

In the twenty-five years of his life dedicated to the Reformation, Bucero called for a return to the Gospel in all aspects of the Church's life. He organized a local synod, with whose support he then worked to create a network of small believing "Christian communities." In his vision, these were to constitute the basic evangelical units of the Church, according to the model of the Acts of the Apostles.

Bucero was also a sincere seeker of peace. He worked vigorously to keep the various minds of the Reformation united, to reintegrate the Anabaptists, and to reach an agreement with Roman theologians.

Exiled in 1549 on the order of Charles V, Bucero spent his last days in Cambridge, where he contributed to the revision of the Anglican Prayer Book. After his death, the church of Strasbourg did not follow his ideas, but held to Lutheran orthodoxy.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (20 amsir/yakkatit):

Peter II (d. 380), 21st patriarch of Alexandria (Catholic Coptic Church)

Gabra Mar'cawi and *Kefla Maryam* (14th-15th cent.), monks (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:

Martin Bucer, reformer of the church in Strasbourg and England

MARONITES:

Cyra and Marana of Siria (d. ca. 450), virgins

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Basil the Confessor (d. ca. 750), companion of Procopius the Decapolite

OLD CATHOLICS:

Romanus and Lupicinus (5th cent.), abbots