

JOURNAL OF EARLY MODERN CHRISTIANITY

SPECIAL ISSUE

**INVENTION, TRANSFER, AND RECEPTION: THE
MAKING OF THE EUROPEAN REFORMATION**

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Luther's Hammers: German Academic Historiography and Popular Memory of the Reformation in the Context of its 2017 Anniversary

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Abstract: This essay analyses the relationship between scholarly and public treatments of the Lutheran Reformation surrounding its 500th anniversary in Germany in 2017. It aims at critically re-evaluating the celebrations and their media coverage from a historical and historiographical perspective. Taking into account important links between contemporary and earlier forms of German Reformation memory, the chapter first focuses on current views of Martin Luther and the posting of his theses, because both featured prominently during the official celebrations and were meant to link the Lutheran Reformation to modernity. The next part summarizes the historical origins of Luther's alleged hammering of his theses. The essay then assesses another contested issue; namely a diffusion of Lutheranism from the small town of Wittenberg into Europe and across the world. The final section addresses current historiographical and methodological trends in German Reformation research and how they connect to a public Reformation memory.

Keywords: Reformation, memory, Germany, historiography, Martin Luther

1 Introduction

In the early 1920s, the influential German Protestant theologian Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) stated that the “modern age began along with Luther's Reformation on 31 October 1517; it was inaugurated by the blows of the hammer on the door of the

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castle church at Wittenberg.”¹ Even though Harnack had contended some years earlier in a contribution to the Reformation anniversary of 1917 that the significance of the Reformation did not simply evolve from the hammering of the theses but related to the contents of the movement,² an enduring German obsession with the hammering scene can hardly be denied. It therefore did not come as a surprise that the powerful image of Luther hammering the theses onto the door of the Wittenberg castle church was chosen to be a central symbol of the Reformation anniversary during its 2017 celebrations in Germany.

The logo of the 2017 anniversary exhibitions contained three hammers, presented in different colours and alluding to the Wittenberg scene. The hammers were meant to symbolize the three national exhibitions celebrating the Reformation that took place in the cities of Wittenberg and Berlin as well as at Wartburg Castle near Eisenach. While the imagery might have been equally fitting as a hardware store advertisement, its design nevertheless won several awards.³

For the purpose of the present essay, the hammers may serve as a suitable starting point from which to analyse contemporary German views of the Lutheran Reformation, and in particular the divergence between scholarly and popular memories during the 2017 anniversary celebrations. The essay takes into account the links between earlier anniversaries of the Reformation and its most recent one. It first briefly addresses the Lutheran Reformation as publicly depicted in the course of its 500th anniversary, while the second part summarizes the cultural history of the hammer image. The third section turns to the relationship between the local and translocal or even global spheres in Reformation scholarship and memory. A concluding chapter finally hints at recent developments regarding the academic historiography of the Reformation in Germany and Central Europe and how they relate to the anniversary.

1 I take this translation from Heinz Schilling, *Martin Luther: Rebel in an Age of Upheaval* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 524. The original quote in Adolf von Harnack, “Die Reformation und ihre Voraussetzung,” in *Erforschtes und Erlebtes*, ed. Adolf von Harnack (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1923), 72–140 (110).

2 As stated by Harnack in his contribution to the Reformation anniversary of 1917 in Berlin: “ihr Inhalt war die Tat” in Adolf von Harnack, *Martin Luther und die Grundlegung der Reformation: Festschrift der Stadt Berlin zum 31. Oktober 1917* (Berlin: Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1917), 18. This has been quoted several times in different contributions relating to the Reformation anniversary such as by Stefan Rhein, “Vom Thesenanschlag zur Lutherdekade: Das Reformationsjahr 2017 als Einladung zum Diskurs,” in *Disputationen I: Reflexionen zum Reformationsjubiläum*, ed. Olaf Zimmermann and Theo Geißel (Berlin: Zeitung des Deutschen Kulturrates, 2013), 17–22 (18).

3 See “3x Hammer 3x ausgezeichnet,” <https://www.luther2017.de/de/neuigkeiten/3x-hammer-3x-ausgezeichnet/index.html>. Accessed 20 December, 2019.

2 Celebrating Luther's Hammer

Besides its historic and symbolic dimensions, the hammer image used during the German Reformation anniversary of 2017 was intended to be a pun. It alluded to a particular idiomatic meaning of the word "hammer" taken from contemporary, colloquial German. German Dictionaries explain the expression "das ist ein Hammer" (lit.: "this is a hammer") as signifying an extraordinary event, an occurrence with great implications and success.⁴ Thus, on posters and brochures, the headline "dreimal Hammer" and the respective image were followed by the explanatory sentence: "The full power of the Reformation" ("Die volle Wucht der Reformation").⁵

While the image and marketing strategy seem difficult to translate into other languages, the organizers of the anniversary contributions certainly aimed at attracting international visitors. In the end, fewer tourists than expected made their way to the exhibitions, and it seems that many events functioned at a loss.⁶ It would of course be wrong to simply blame the hammer image for this outcome. Still, it illustrates a particular *Germanness* of the celebrations.

Several political, ecclesiastical, and institutional actors (among them, most prominently, the Evangelical Church of Germany, EKD, and the German federal states) participated in the Reformation anniversary campaign(s). Regarding the exhibitions, their design obviously intended to cover both the iconic scene of Luther hammering his theses in 1517 as a German *lieu de mémoire*,⁷ as well as a presumed singularity of the Lutheran Reformation that may (or may not) have started with the reformer's hammer. In addition to the hammers however, the anniversary needed more than a historic event to draw from: it also needed a particular face to identify with. The obvious choice was the reformer Martin Luther. The symbolism of the Reformation anniversary thus reveals a typical German

4 "Hammer, der," <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Hammer>, no. 7c. Accessed 7 December, 2019.

5 "Der Hammer. Die visuelle Klammer der nationalen Sonderausstellungen 2017," <https://kleinerundbold.com/aktuelles/meldungen/der-hammer-die-visuelle-klammer-der-nationalen-sonderausstellungen-2017>. Accessed 20 December, 2019.

6 See the critical coverage in German media, e.g. Ralf Bollmann, "Luther – die Pleite des Jahres," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* 9 July, 2017: 21. However, the figures published at the end of the year 2017 showed a slightly different picture.

7 On this scene in the context of German Reformation memory see, for instance, Gérald Chaix, "Die Reformation," in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte. Eine Auswahl*, ed. Étienne François and Hagen Schulze (München: Beck, 2005), 31–49.

preoccupation with 1517 as being seen to usher in a new era, starting from the actions of Martin Luther as the key figure of change.⁸

The preparations for the anniversary were jointly undertaken by Church and state.⁹ The Church in particular held that the historic events of the Reformation should be connected to the Germany of today, with one important link being the idea of “freedom” (“Freiheit”). However, the concept of the Reformation as a path to individual freedom and collective liberties, a concept going back to at least the abovementioned theologian Adolf von Harnack,¹⁰ did not go undisputed. Prominent historians of the Reformation – some of them even acting as scholarly advisors of the Reformation anniversary – quite freely stated in newspapers and elsewhere how unhappy they were with the focus on Luther and 1517 as well as with a perceived over-simplified connection between the Reformation era and modernity.¹¹ At the same time, the years before and around 2017 brought about an immense number of Luther biographies (either written in German or translated from other languages); some conveying a traditional, even hagiographic image, others focussing on the structural contexts of Luther’s era or re-evaluating the writings of the reformer in new ways.¹² Willingly or not, some of these books served

8 Cf. *ibid.*, as well as the literature cited over the course of this essay.

9 Hartmut Lehmann, “Ein Sommermärchen namens Luther? Es ging sehr deutsch zu und sehr national. Ein Blick auf die Lutherdekade und das Jubiläumsjahr 2017,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 9 Jan. 2018, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/die-gegenwart/lutherdekade-und-jubilaeumsjahr-2017-15358972.html>. Accessed 20 December, 2019.

10 Harnack, “Reformation,” 137–39. See the contributions by Wolfgang Huber, “Die Ambivalenz des Reformators,” in *Disputationen I*, 65–66; Margot Käßmann, “Im Kontext unserer Zeit: Das Reformationsjubiläum und die politische Dimension,” in *ibid.*, 67–69. See also the critical remarks by Winfried Frey, “Immer noch ‘ein verworrener Quark, wie er uns noch täglich zur Last fällt’? Eine Nachlese zur ‘Lutherdekade’,” in *Reformation und Katholische Reform*, ed. Frank Kleinhagenbrock et al. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2019), 549–70 (559–60). A substantial scholarly contribution to the problem was the comparatively small, but highly acclaimed exhibition “Reformation und Freiheit” in Potsdam. See *Reformation und Freiheit: Luther und die Folgen für Preußen und Brandenburg*, ed. Ruth Slenczka (Petersberg: Michael Imhoff Verlag, 2017).

11 A good summary can be found in Ulrike Jureit, “Reformation als Konfliktgeschichte,” in *Weltwirkung der Reformation: Wie der Protestantismus unsere Welt verändert hat*, ed. Udo Di Fabio and Johannes Schilling (München: C.H. Beck, 2017), 195–206. See also Reinhard Bingener, “Theologie der Wut: Zwischen Professoren und Kirche eskaliert der Streit über das Reformationsjahr,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 March, 2017: 3.

12 For instance: Willi Winkler, *Luther: Ein deutscher Rebell* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2016); Heinz Schilling, *Luther: Rebell in einer Zeit des Umbruchs* (München: C.H. Beck, 2013); Lyndal Roper, *Der Mensch Martin Luther: Die Biographie* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2016); Volker Leppin, *Die fremde Reformation: Luthers mystische Wurzeln* (München: Beck, 2016). For a more comprehensive picture, see the literature review by Hartmut Lehmann, “500 Jahre Reformation. Neuerscheinungen aus Anlass des Jubiläums,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 307 (2018): 85–131 (88–99).

to refresh a still popular image of the Reformation being the work of a powerful man in charge.

A number of recent works in Reformation historiography however, often written by scholars of a younger age, have followed other trajectories. Their methodologies differ from a “lives of great men” approach. Instead, transnational or global connections of the Reformation feature: cultural history and historical anthropology have brought about new readings of well-known documents, and the histories of gender and the body, migration and mobility, among other approaches, shed new light upon hitherto forgotten or under-researched aspects of the Reformation era.¹³ Therefore a gap between current scholarly fieldwork and an “official,” i.e. marketable story of the official Reformation anniversary (that concentrated on the Reformation as a pathway to modernity and/or on Luther as a Reformer) has emerged more distinctly than in earlier years. While most Reformation scholars have contributed to the public Reformation anniversary in some way or another (by way of exhibitions and catalogues, lectures, conferences and respective publications), a certain fragmentation between academic scholarship and public memory, including the failure of an overarching dialogue, can hardly be overlooked.

3 Luther's Hammer through the Centuries

This essay cannot be the place to discuss in appropriate depth whether Luther did affix his theses onto the Wittenberg castle Church door, and if so, whether he did it himself, in printed or handwritten form, using hammer and nails, or rather wax and glue instead. All these details have already been the subject of considerable debate among historians over the last few decades.¹⁴ However, some important

¹³ Some examples include: Natalie Krentz, *Ritualwandel und Deutungshoheit: Die frühe Reformation in der Residenzstadt Wittenberg (1500–1533)*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation – Studies in the Late Middle Ages, Humanism and the Reformation (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Damaris Grimmismann, *Krieg mit dem Wort. Türkenpredigten des 16. Jahrhunderts im Alten Reich*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 131 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2016); Carsten Brall, *Konfessionelle Theologie und Migration: Die Antwerpener Gemeinde Augsburger Konfession*, Veröffentlichungen des Mainzer Instituts für Europäische Geschichte 249 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017). See also the contributions in *A Companion to the Reformation in Central Europe*, ed. Howard Louthan and Graeme Murdock, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

¹⁴ A recent re-evaluation of the discussions are the contributions in *Luthers Thesenanschlag – Faktum oder Fiktion*, ed. Joachim Ott and Martin Treu (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008).

facts may be summarized here in order to understand the undeniable preoccupation in German memory with this hammering scene.

Luther's alleged hammering of the theses has been an important but contested issue in German historiography and public memory for quite some time. In the 1960s, the Catholic historian Erwin Iserloh (1915–96) was the first to raise doubts about whether the hammering had actually taken place at all, because no contemporary evidence of it had survived.¹⁵ For a long time, a Melanchthon quote of 1547 had served as the earliest proof of the Reformer posting his theses to a Wittenberg church door. It was only in 2006 that a note from Luther's pupil Georg Rörer (1492–1557) rekindled the debate: it stated that Luther had affixed his theses attacking the practice of indulgences to the doors of the Wittenberg church(es) on the day before All Saints in 1517. Still, Rörer's marginal note on the back of a printed Bible only dates from 1540 or after.¹⁶ While this note had already been mentioned by scholars in the early 1970s,¹⁷ its rediscovery certainly added to the documentary value of the written heritage of Luther's second generation successors, as well as providing a glimpse into the hidden treasures of Thuringian libraries such as Jena or Gotha in regard to Reformation historiography. What is important, however, is that neither Melanchthon nor Rörer could have possibly been physically present in Wittenberg 1517, and neither of them explicitly mentioned that Luther had used a hammer.

While the image of Luther affixing the theses to a church in Wittenberg on 31 November 1517 had already become part of Reformation memory during its hundredth anniversary in 1617,¹⁸ perhaps the earliest reference to Luther's hammer may be an image originating from the 1717 anniversary celebrations in the Danish city of Aalborg. This image shows Luther hammering the theses onto a Church

¹⁵ Erwin Iserloh, *Luthers Thesenanschlag. Tatsache oder Legende* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1962). On the debate see the overview by Volker Leppin, "Nicht seine Person, sondern die Wahrheit zu verteidigen. Die Legende vom Thesenanschlag in lutherischer Historiographie und Memoria," in *Der Reformator Martin Luther 2017: Eine wissenschaftliche und gedenkpolitische Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. Heinz Schilling, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, Kolloquien 92 (Berlin and Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 85–108 (104–105); Konrad Repgen, "Ein profangeschichtlicher Rückblick auf die Iserloh-Debatte," in *Luthers Thesenanschlag*, 99–110.

¹⁶ Rörer's note is quoted in full, among others, by Leppin, "Die Legende vom Thesenanschlag," 86. The original passage can be found in facsimile at "Sammlung Rörer," <http://roerer.reformationsportal.de/index.php?id=485>. Accessed 13 December, 2019.

¹⁷ Namely in the revised vol. 48 of the *Weimar Edition/Weimarer Ausgabe* (WA) of Luther's works: WA 48, Revisionsnachtrag 1972, 116.

¹⁸ See Leppin, "Die Legende vom Thesenanschlag," 96–97; Joachim Ott, "Luther mit dem Hammer: Die Entstehung des Bildmotivs 1717 und die Öffnung der Heiligen Pforte von St. Peter in Rom," *Lutherjahrbuch: Organ der internationalen Lutherforschung* 84 (2017): 278–355 (286–87).

door, alluding to the Old Testament passage of Jer 23:29 where the word of God is equated with a hammer. However, the church on the image symbolizes not Wittenberg, but St. Peter's in Rome.¹⁹ Luther's hammer thus attempts to destroy the Papal Church. In Augsburg at the same time, another image together with anniversary medals depicted Luther with a hammer. These medals and images were reproduced in the monumental account of the Reformation anniversary of 1717, the *Hilaria evangelica* of the Lutheran theologian of Saxe-Gotha, Ernst Salomon Cyprian (1673–1745). Cyprian's voluminous work documented the anniversary celebrations among German and European Lutherans. Here and in his other books, the theologian set the standard for an advanced, document-based historiography of the Reformation.²⁰ In addition, it seems that this eminent scholar can also claim responsibility for the invention of a specific Protestant memory cult: Cyprian, equipped – so to speak – Luther with his hammer.

One rather ironic fact about the evolution of the hammer image is that it seems to have originated from the Roman Catholic side. As Joachim Ott has recently shown, a broad image campaign in the early eighteenth century had popularized the opening of the Holy Door in the Vatican at the beginning of the Holy Year in 1700. In Catholic tradition, it was the Pope (or, in the case of 1700, one of his cardinals) who opened the door with three blows of a hammer so that believers could pass through and receive their indulgences. Just before the Reformation anniversary of 1717, images of the event in Rome had spread across Europe with the help of different media. It therefore seems plausible that the concept of a Martin Luther hammering his theses onto a church door originated from a Protestant mockery of Popish practices and was thus, in the years around 1717, integrated into the imagery of the Reformation anniversary.²¹

If the idea of Luther using a hammer to affix the theses at the Wittenberg castle church goes back to anti-Catholic polemics, then this would certainly not be the only case when Protestants drew their ideas from their Catholic opponents. Several other cornerstones of early Protestantism have been traced back to their Roman

¹⁹ See Ott, "Luther," 311–14.

²⁰ Daniel Gehrt, "Gottfried Arnold und Ernst Salomon Cyprian im Ringen um die historische Deutung des Gelehrtentums seit der Reformation," in *Im Kampf um die Seelen: Glauben im Thüringen der Frühen Neuzeit; Katalog zur Ausstellung der Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt vom 30. April bis 9. Juli 2017*, ed. by Sascha Salatowsky (Gotha: Forschungsbibliothek, 2017), 51–62; Alexander Schunka, "Fighting or Fostering Plurality? Ernst Salomon Cyprian as a Historian of Lutheranism in the Early Eighteenth Century," in *Archeologies of Confession: Writing the German Reformation; 1517–2017*, ed. Carina L. Johnson et al. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017), 151–72.

²¹ Ott, "Luther," 341–46.

Catholic origins, such as, for instance, the printing of the Bible in the vernacular,²² or the right to emigrate from a territory for confessional reasons.²³ In the case of Luther and the Reformation, this corresponds nicely with recent scholarship that has portrayed the reformer himself as a person deeply rooted in the scholarship and culture of medieval Catholicism.²⁴

As Volker Leppin recently stated, the story of Luther nailing the theses onto the door of the Wittenberg castle church is the product of a particular “memorialization” of the Reformer and the events of the early Reformation.²⁵ For reasons of space, the present chapter cannot follow the story of the hammer image all the way through the centuries. It can only be mentioned here that since the nineteenth century, the symbolism of hammers alludes to such diverse fields as Freemasonry, Nordic mythology (Thor),²⁶ and, of course, workers’ – including Communist – propaganda. The German case in particular would make Luther’s hammer an excellent object of further study, situating it in different cultural contexts; from the nineteenth century *Kaiserreich* over the Weimar Republic, the Nazi regime and the GDR and finally all the way into the eastern states of post-1989 Germany (where most of the important Reformation anniversary celebrations of 2017 took place, but which nowadays, ironically, is one of the most heavily de-Christianized regions of Europe).

It needs to be stressed at this point that the question of Luther’s hammer has certainly not been the main preoccupation of Reformation scholars for quite some time. In a 2017 newspaper article, Church historian Thomas Kaufmann felt like emphasizing what had been common sense among specialists of the era: namely, that it did not matter whether Luther’s theses were hammered onto a church door or not.²⁷ Luther was, according to Kaufmann, “not the primitive thug (‘Schläger’) but a subtle writer who started a process that eventually became the

22 See, for instance, Heinz Schilling, *1517: Weltgeschichte eines Jahres* (München: C.H. Beck, 2017), 232–36.

23 Alexander Schunka, *Gäste, die bleiben: Zuwanderer in Kursachsen und der Oberlausitz im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Pluralisierung und Autorität 6 (Münster and Hamburg: LIT, 2006), 48.

24 Leppin, *Die fremde Reformation*. On Luther’s relations to the Catholic Church of his time see also Volker Reinhardt, *Luther der Ketzer: Rom und die Reformation* (München: C.H. Beck, 2016).

25 See Leppin, “Die Legende vom Thesenanschlag,” 105 and *passim*.

26 See, for instance, Norbert Mecklenburg, *Der Prophet der Deutschen: Martin Luther im Spiegel der Literatur* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2016), 149ff.

27 Still, see his fascinating reconstruction of the Wittenberg events in Thomas Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Reformation* (Frankfurt a.M. and Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2009), 182–206.

Reformation.”²⁸ It was therefore much more important to know that Luther immediately prepared his theses for printing in order to reach his desired audience. In fact, during the anniversary year, one early copy of the theses was discovered that might have been the very first printed version.²⁹ In any case, Kaufmann says, Luther acted as a “printing native,” which guaranteed his success and importance in a much more substantial way than knowing how to use a hammer.

The hammer issue nevertheless illustrates that during the 2017 anniversary, and its preparations, a focus on seemingly well-trodden paths such as the indulgence problem and the theses, including aspects of communication and media usage, could still reveal new scholarly insights.³⁰ The same is certainly true for Luther as a person, especially regarding his “dark side,” as historian Hartmut Lehmann puts it.³¹ Luther’s views on Judaism and Islam, on peasants, Anabaptists, as well as on Erasmus and Humanism, all seemed to contradict the idea that the reformer and his movement could be appropriated for the historic foundations of freedom and modernity in an easy and overtly simplistic manner. Luther’s relationship to the Jews has particularly aroused broad discussions in the German public sphere which, in turn, stimulated scholarly contributions.³² Before and during the 2017 celebrations, serious doubts were raised over whether a focus on Luther (and the Wittenberg scene) was the right choice, and if the anniversary could be used to connect the Lutheran Reformation with a liberal modern age at all. At the same time, such debates often serve to reconnect public memory with academic scholarship: this was explicitly the case regarding a broader impact of Luther’s Reformation on Europe and the world.

28 Thomas Kaufmann, “Druckerpresse statt Hammer,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: 16 November, 2016, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/die-gegenwart/reformationstag-druckerpresse-statt-hammer-14504788.html>. Accessed 20 December, 2019: “nicht der brachiale Schläger, sondern der subtile Publizist Luther stehen am Anfang jenes Prozesses, aus dem die Reformation wurde.”

29 Kaufmann, “Druckerpresse.”

30 Most apparently in Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation* (New York: Penguin, 2015). The German translation appeared in 2016.

31 Lehmann, “Sommermärchen.”

32 See, for instance, Christian Röther, “Wie umgehen mit Luthers Judenhass?” https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/reformationsjubilaem-wie-umgehen-mit-luthers-judenhass.886.de.html?dram:article_id=379671. Accessed 13 December, 2019. From a scholarly perspective, see Thomas Kaufmann, *Luthers Juden* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014). On a number of problematic statements by the organizers of the anniversary, see Frey, “Nachlese,” 567–68 (including the footnotes). See also several chapters in the fascinating exhibition catalogue “Überall Luthers Worte.” *Martin Luther im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Ulrich Prehn (Berlin: Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, 2017).

4 Beyond Wittenberg: Trans-regional Impacts of the Reformation

In the course of a “mnemonic turn” in historical studies since the late 1990s, the memory of the Reformation during the past centuries has evolved as an important research topic. In order to understand the persistence of certain images and the recent struggle on how to remember Luther and the Reformation, it is illuminating to turn to the historic tradition of Reformation anniversaries in Germany. Here, the conflicting concepts of the Reformation as a supposedly German event and its European, even global, impacts need to be addressed in particular.

As Hartmut Lehmann and others have mentioned, the 2017 anniversary stands in a line of continuity with earlier celebrations. Likewise, the focus on Luther as an alleged German hero has a long tradition.³³ Almost all previous anniversaries, beginning in 1617 and ending perhaps in 1983 in the German Democratic Republic, have – in some way or another – presented Luther as their central protagonist within a presumably German Reformation. Another important yet, in part, conflicting tradition is that the Reformation started in Wittenberg from where it spread out across large parts of Europe and the world.³⁴ When the journal *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* added the term “Weltwirkungen” to its title in 1938, this happened for several reasons. According to the editors, “Weltwirkungen” implied a comparative look at neighbouring states, in order to re-evaluate the German specifics of the phenomenon (interestingly, Calvinism was omitted on purpose). The editors, on the other hand, made clear that they were interested in how the *German* Reformation resonated in other European countries, because they considered the Reformation a “feat of the German spirit” (“eine Großtat des deutschen Geistes”).³⁵ This explains why unlike some of their Anglo-American counterparts, German scholarly works in particular have often considered the Reformation primarily as a German matter which took its course from Wittenberg into the world. Some origins of this conviction go far beyond the *Archiv für*

33 See the contributions in *Martin Luther: Monument, Ketzer, Mensch. Lutherbilder, Lutherprojektionen und ein ökumenischer Luther*, ed. Andreas Holzem and Volker Leppin (Freiburg, Basel, and Wien: Herder, 2016).

34 See, for instance, the 2017 volume *Weltwirkung der Reformation*. On the origins of the term, see Hartmut Lehmann, “Die Weltwirkung der Reformation: Anmerkungen zu einem von Gerhard Ritter geprägten historiographischen Begriff,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 108 (2018): 42–51.

35 See Gerhard Ritter, Otto Scheel, and Heinrich Bornkamm, “Zur Neugestaltung des Archivs für Reformationsgeschichte [1938],” in *125 Jahre Verein für Reformationsgeschichte*, ed. Luise Schorn-Schütte, *Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte* 200 (Heidelberg: Gütersloher Verlags-haus, 2008), 212–16 (216).

Reformationsgeschichte. Just like the hammer scene, they point to an earlier Reformation anniversary.

As has been mentioned above, the lavish documentation of the 1717 celebrations by the Gotha theologian Ernst Salomon Cyprian has been crucial in shaping an image of the hammering Luther as a man of action. The *Hilaria evangelica* were also perhaps the earliest attempt to present the Reformation in its *Weltwirkung* – albeit not in a truly “global” fashion. The book contains numerous reports on the 1717 anniversary celebrations, submitted by pastors from Protestant Germany and Europe.³⁶ While the communication network of an eighteenth-century theologian from Saxe-Gotha restricted his “world” primarily to the European continent, the *Hilaria* presented the celebrations as a Lutheran orthodox event that was not limited to the Holy Roman Empire but included, for instance, Lutherans in the Netherlands, Denmark, as well as several Lutheran expatriate communities, from Geneva to Ireland. Cyprian’s intention was obviously to depict Lutheranism as a dynamic, pan-European phenomenon that had already reached out far beyond the Saxon territories and was still expanding. The Gotha theologian therefore included a report from the Lutheran Church in Geneva whose apparently decent and solemn celebration was even supported by local Reformed theologians.³⁷ Another example came from the Danish embassy chapel in Catholic Vienna where the celebrations were reportedly splendid enough to attract a number of “curious Catholics.”³⁸ In London, according to the *Hilaria*, the three German Lutheran congregations did not seem to be unanimous in their celebrations of the anniversary. While the Lutheran churches in the Savoy and Trinity Lane had indeed celebrated appropriately, the Lutheran Pietist chapel at St James’ Palace kept conspicuously quiet. Between the lines, a contemporary reader could easily trace the animosities among the Lutheran congregations in the British capital – quite typical for foreign churches –, as well as Cyprian’s own

36 Harm Cordes, *Hilaria evangelica academica: Das Reformationsjubiläum von 1717 an den deutschen lutherischen Universitäten, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte* 90 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

37 Ernst Salomon Cyprian, *Hilaria evangelica, Oder Theologisch-Historischer Bericht Vom Andern Evangelischen Jubel-Fest* (Gotha: Weidmann, 1719), 907. The Lutheran Church in Geneva was sponsored by the Duke of Saxe-Gotha, and Cyprian was in close communication with the pastor there, see Ernst Koch, “Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Genf und der Gothaer Hof,” in *Kommunikationsstrukturen im europäischen Luthertum der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Wolfgang Sommer, *Die lutherische Kirche. Geschichten und Gestalten* 23 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005), 51–69.

38 Cyprian, *Hilaria evangelica*, 849.

opposition to Lutheran Pietists, some of whom considered the Reformation only as a first, perhaps even insufficient, step towards a purity of belief.³⁹

Again, it is impossible to trace in detail the memorialization of the Reformation throughout the 19th and 20th centuries in this essay. This topic has been well documented over the last 20 years, from an international perspective too, and has gained new prominence in the wake of the 2017 anniversary.⁴⁰ The celebrations of 2017 were in many ways connected to older traditions of Reformation memory that had already featured at preceding celebrations. Broadly speaking, the memorialization centred around Luther as a German hero and an alleged *Weltwirkung* of the Reformation movement – often in the sense of a dependency on its German origins.

The reasons why the 2017 anniversary in Germany turned out to be a largely national event, can be found in the particular traditions of historiography and public memory as well as in contemporary politics and culture. Still, at least one of the three national exhibitions had a decidedly international outlook. This was the one in Berlin. Unlike Wittenberg or the Wartburg hosting the other two exhibitions, Berlin as a popular tourist destination had to face the fact that it had never been a historical centre of the Reformation. The exhibition *The Luther Effect (Der Luther-Effekt)* was not completely free from what could perhaps be called a dependency theory of the German Reformation. However, it addressed the Reformation and its consequences as processes of exchange between Germany and the world, focusing on Lutheranism in four geographic regions of the world (Sweden, North America,

39 Cyprian, *Hilaria evangelica*, 897–98. His treatment of the anniversary in the Pietist chapel of London was not fully accurate, see the sermon by Anthony William Boehm, *The Duty of Reformation* (London: J. Downing, 1718). On Protestants in early eighteenth-century London, see Alexander Schunka, *Ein neuer Blick nach Westen: Deutsche Protestanten und Großbritannien (1688–1740)*, Jabloniana 10 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019) 403–05 and *passim*. On the conflicts among German Protestant expatriate churches in the early eighteenth century, especially with regard to Pietists, see Alexander Schunka, “Pflanzgarten: Thüringische Akteure in der europäischen Reich-Gottes-Arbeit des Halleschen Pietismus seit 1700,” in *Pietismus in Thüringen – Pietismus aus Thüringen. Religiöse Reform im Mitteldeutschland des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Veronika Albrecht-Birkner and Alexander Schunka, Gothaer Forschungen zur Frühen Neuzeit 13 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2018), 243–63.

40 Some of the recent publications include Hartmut Lehmann, *Luthergedächtnis 1817 bis 2017*, Refo500 Academic Studies 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012); Dorothea Wendebourg, *So viele Luthers: Die Reformationsjubiläen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017); Wolfgang Flügel, “1817 in Amerika: Das Reformationsjubiläum als Minderheitenphänomen,” in *Jubiläum. Literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Annäherungen*, ed. Franz M. Eybl, Stephan Müller, and Annegret Pelz, Schriften der Wiener Germanistik 6 (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2018), 139–77. A seminal contribution is Wolfgang Flügel, *Konfession und Jubiläum: Zur Institutionalisierung der lutherischen Gedenkkultur in Sachsen 1617–1830*, Schriften zur sächsischen Geschichte und Volkskunde 14 (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitäts-Verlag, 2005).

Korea, and Tanzania), but leaving room for local histories of the Lutheran faith. The reviews of this exhibition were largely positive. Nevertheless, the question of how to approach the Lutheran Reformation from a transnational or even global perspective is still a matter of debate. This connects the 2017 anniversary to current scholarly research.

5 Scholarly Outcomes from the Anniversary (or despite it?)

Only a few German publications surrounding the 2017 anniversary have attempted to put the Lutheran Reformation into a wider European context or even to provincialize the German Reformation from a global perspective.⁴¹ In order to situate the events of Wittenberg in the early sixteenth century globally, historian Heinz Schilling followed an interesting – and even commercially successful – trajectory. His major contribution to the anniversary was a history of the world in the year 1517.⁴² Schilling aimed at contextualizing the Lutheran Reformation while he never concealed his European point of view. His book belongs to an increasingly popular genre of works that deal with one year in world history, aiming at a broader reading audience.⁴³ The book became a bestseller on the German book market, while it bridged some gaps between academia and popular interest in the Reformation.

Other repercussions of the anniversary on academia can be found in German university curricula where courses on the Reformation seem to have abounded, even in places without a strong Reformation tradition,⁴⁴ and at numerous conferences, workshops, and respective volumes. Some of these events benefited from a broad funding initiative related to the so-called *Lutherdekade*. The funds originated jointly from Church and state and were intended to be used in preparation

41 As an example of a wider European view, see *Der Luthereffekt im östlichen Europa: Geschichte – Kultur – Erinnerung*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, Beate Störkuhl, and Matthias Weber (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017). See also Hartmut Lehmann's remarks on the lack of similar volumes in: Lehmann, "500 Jahre Reformation," 109. For a global perspective, starting out from Max Weber's sociology of religion, see *The Protestant Reformation in a Context of Global History*, ed. Heinz Schilling and Silvana Seidel Menchi, Annali dell'Istituto italo-germanico in Trento, Contributi 33 (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot and Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2017).

42 Schilling, 1517.

43 Famous examples include Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, 1926: *Ein Jahr am Rand der Zeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2001); John E. Wills, 1688: *A Global History* (New York: Norton, 2002); Frank Bösch, *Zeitenwende 1979: Als die Welt von heute begann* (München: C.H. Beck, 2019).

44 See the recent volume deriving from a Reformation-related lecture series at the University of Würzburg: *Reformation und Katholische Reform*.

for the events of 2017.⁴⁵ Topics included migration and mobility, toleration, or Protestant education from a historical perspective.⁴⁶ Often the volumes resulting from the respective conferences addressed Protestant phenomena from a much wider perspective than restricting themselves to a Lutheran Reformation. In this respect, the Reformation anniversary and its preparations in Germany have contributed to scholarly progress not only in regard to Luther and the early Reformation but on early modern Protestantism more broadly. European or global approaches were nevertheless hard to find.

In order to grasp the links between Reformation scholarship and Reformation memory in Germany in 2017, it may be revealing to investigate how one of the most prominent scholarly periodicals of the Reformation dealt with the 500th anniversary of the event, namely the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*. This journal is jointly published by the German-based “Verein für Reformationsgeschichte” and its North American counterpart, the “Society for Reformation Research.” In its 2017 issue, it assembled more than 25 articles in German and English in which leading specialists discussed the relationship between the Reformation and its “Weltwirkungen.” Unlike 70 years earlier where the word “Weltwirkungen” had been translated into English as “significance in world affairs,”⁴⁷ now the new English translation of “Weltwirkungen” read as “global impact.” It was Philip Benedict, a specialist on Reformed Protestantism, who quite provocatively asked in his contribution whether one could talk about a global Reformation at all when the agenda of Reformation research had not even become transnational yet. For Benedict, the visible fragmentation of Reformation research originates from national traditions, from language issues, and from a particular “German problem” with the Reformation. Nowhere else, says Benedict, is an institutional and

45 On thematic and financial aspects of the “Lutherdekade” see the numerous publications and statements available online at the website of the Deutscher Kulturrat: <https://www.kulturrat.de/thema/reformationsjubilaeum/>. Accessed 20 December, 2019.

46 See, for instance, *Religiös motivierte Migrationen zwischen dem östlichen Europa und dem deutschen Südwesten vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christine Absmeier et al., Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Geschichtliche Landeskunde in Baden-Württemberg B: Forschungen 219 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2018); *Duldung religiöser Vielfalt – Sorge um die wahre Religion: Toleranzdebatten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Sascha Salatowsky and Winfried Schröder, Friedenstien-Forschungen 10 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016); *Frühneuzeitliche Bildungssysteme im interkonfessionellen Vergleich: Inhalte – Infrastrukturen – Praktiken*, ed. Christine Freytag and Sascha Salatowsky, Gothaer Forschungen zur Frühen Neuzeit 14 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2019).

47 See Lehmann, “Weltwirkung der Reformation,” 43.

emotional attachment to the Reformation (including its focus on Luther) as strong as in Germany.⁴⁸ This statement certainly has some truth in it.

On the other hand, recent volumes of the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* also illustrate the increasing attempts to globalize Reformation history as well as historiography. Current literature reviews in other history journals, for instance by Matthias Pohlig (*Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*) and Hartmut Lehmann (*Historische Zeitschrift*) mirror the impressive number of new studies addressing the history of Christian missions, cross-cultural exchanges and cultural transfers, and a widening horizon in regard to the Confessionalization paradigm.⁴⁹ Works from the fields of historical anthropology and cultural history have addressed the microstructures of communication, the history of the senses and emotions, the history of gender and the body, the history of social spaces, the particularities of confessional cultures, and many other aspects that combine traditional Reformation research with current scholarly trends and methodologies.⁵⁰ At the same time, Matthias Pohlig observes that Anglo-American influences trickle into German research, albeit at a slow pace. According to him, some German scholars in the wake of the Reformation anniversary have rather made a virtue out of necessity by sticking to their traditional themes (such as: Luther and his contemporaries, the early Reformation) while quite reluctantly applying more recent methodological approaches to their work.⁵¹

Taking into account the increasing plurality in Reformation studies, Pohlig still criticizes an overall scarcity of connections between Reformation historiography and current historiographical trends from other fields. In this respect, he sees particular lacunae in studies dealing with economic issues and material culture.⁵² Likely the coming years, and their upcoming anniversaries (such as the German Peasants' War in 2025), will change the picture again. It may, however, still be too early to reach a final conclusion on how the 2017 anniversary has influenced academic research in the long run.

48 Philip Benedict, "Global? Has Reformation History Even Gotten Transnational Yet?," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 103 (2017): 52–62.

49 Matthias Pohlig, "Jubiläumsliteratur? Zum Stand der Reformationsforschung im Jahr 2017," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 44 (2017): 213–74; Lehmann, "500 Jahre Reformation." See also, for instance, Cornel Zwieler, "Konfessionalisierung europäisch, global, als epistemischer Prozess: Zu den Folgen der Reformation und zur Methodendiskussion," in *Reformation und Recht: Ein Beitrag zur Kontroverse um die Kulturwirkungen der Reformation*, ed. Christoph Strohm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 1–51.

50 Instead of mentioning all the relevant works here, I rather refer to the literature reviews by Pohlig, "Jubiläumsliteratur" and Lehmann, "500 Jahre Reformation."

51 Cf. Pohlig, "Jubiläumsliteratur," 215.

52 *Ibid.*, 262.

6 Conclusion

In sum, the public celebrations of the 2017 anniversary in Germany can in some ways be seen as a step backwards from the academic state of the art. In this respect, it is not a trivial question to ask counterfactually what would have happened if there had been a Reformation without Martin Luther.⁵³ Possible answers convey a sense of how Luther has been shaped and exploited over the centuries, but also what he cannot be held accountable for today. At the same time, the 2017 anniversary makes an interesting case for research in its own right, as far as collective memories and identity construction, political appropriations of the past, and mutual expectations between academia and the public are concerned. The longevity of certain stereotypes in Reformation memory is indeed fascinating. It would be interesting to further investigate if, or how, the 2017 anniversary is linked to the ongoing German search for a national identity – vis-a-vis the challenges of a globalizing world whose features, among others, are an increasing mobility of people, goods, and knowledge, as well as a new awareness of environmental dangers. Perhaps we will be surprised about evolving connections between the Reformation anniversary of 2017 and topics such as climate change and migration.

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⁵³ See Matthias Pohlig, “Eine Neuzeit ohne Reformation?,” in *Eine andere deutsche Geschichte 1517–2017: Was wäre wenn...*, ed. Tobias Winnerling and Christoph Nonn (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2017), 20–36.

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The End of the Age of Reformation? 2017 as an Ecumenical Approach to the Reformation

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Abstract: What was the message of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 in Germany? In preparation for the jubilee, there was an intensive debate on how to commemorate this anniversary. Critical examinations by historians warned about personalizing this anniversary too much by showing that the anniversaries in the past were usually politically “exploited.” In the end, it became clear for several reasons that an adequate commemoration of the Reformation jubilee today could be justifiable only in an ecumenical celebration serving both commemoration and reconciliation. In this regard, the 2017 jubilee was the first Reformation anniversary to be commemorated ecumenically. And in this respect, the year 2017 marks the end of the controversial age of Reformation.

Keywords: ecumenism, Luther-memoria, Reformation anniversary

1 Introduction

What remained of the Reformation jubilee year in 2017? What message did the jubilee convey? How and what was commemorated and represented at this 500th anniversary of the Reformation? These questions can be dealt with here only to a limited extent, as I have a German perspective and because of my personal and professional interests. Whoever studies Melanchthon and the other reformers elsewhere in Europe, or knows what an important part Melanchthon played in Luther’s translation of the Bible, and recognizes how significant his contribution is to the development of the educational system and the political debate among the nascent reformers (*Confessio Augustana*), will immediately understand that the Reformation was a pluralistic occurrence, having its antecedents in the late medieval period and carrying consequences for every Church. One thus has to conclude that the Reformation was shaped by many actors and places, and can only be fully appreciated from a pluralist perspective.

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2 Searching for a New Understanding of the Reformation

Indeed, the question about what the Reformation year was supposed to celebrate was a hot topic 10 years ago. The considerations of these thematic discussions were influenced by the 2006 essay “Kirche der Freiheit” (“Church of Freedom”). Its aim was to initiate a new dynamic in the Protestant Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland = EKD). The paper’s author, Thies Gundlach, today vice president of the aforementioned EKD, described his hopes as follows: “We all had the feeling of a new beginning and that the return of the religions meant that we had a new wind under the wings of our congregational work, that we could surf on this wave.”¹

Thies Gundlach had to reconsider his remark in 2016: “That was certainly a rather euphoric formulation, which I think was also discouraging. Insofar as this was true, I would not use this formulation again.”²

There were voices that wanted to celebrate 2017 as a Luther jubilee, as had been customary in the past. This intention was then soon symbolized by using the figure of Martin Luther as the official jubilee logo. Early on, however, many, especially historians, raised their voices in criticism of these considerations.³ On the one hand, this criticism revealed that the Luther jubilees of the past two centuries had often been politically exploited, and therefore revealed more about the political condition of the respective time than of the anniversary of the Reformation itself. Upon the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the 95 Theses on Indulgences, in 1817, Luther was celebrated as a German national hero fighting against the ideas of the French Revolution.⁴ Similarly, on the 400th anniversary of Luther’s birthday in 1883, the Reformer was regarded and celebrated as the actual founding father of the German Empire of 1870–71. Moreover, in 1917, during the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Theses, Luther was proclaimed, alongside Field Marshal

1 “Wir hatten alle das Gefühl, es ist eine Aufbruchszeit, die Wiederkehr der Religionen führt dazu, dass unsere Gemeindeangebote neuen Wind unter die Flügel kriegen, dass wir auf dieser Welle surfen können” (https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/zehn-jahre-impulspapier-kirche-der-freiheit-mit-viel-pathos.1278.de.html?dram:article_id=358310; last accessed 22.05.2020).

2 “Das war sicherlich eine zu euphorische Formel, die auch entmutigt hat, das glaube ich auch. Insofern würde ich diese Formel auch nicht noch mal nehmen” (Ibid.).

3 One prominent voice was the former Director of the Max-Planck-Institut für History in Göttingen, Hartmut Lehmann, *Luthergedächtnis 1817 bis 2017*, Refo500 Academic Studies 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

4 Lutz Winckler, *Martin Luther als Bürger und Patriot. Das Reformationsjubiläum von 1817 und der politische Patriotismus des Wartburgfestes* (Lübeck: Matthiesen, 1969).

Paul von Hindenburg, as the savior of the German fatherland in a time of great need. Finally, in 1933, in an intoxicated atmosphere of National Socialist instrumentalization, Luther was praised as a man who paved Germany's path to national greatness.⁵ This alleged proximity of Luther to Hitler left the Protestant Churches at a significant loss for words after the war.⁶

Along with these historical criticisms of past Luther anniversaries, historians, including those with a specialization in the Reformation period, played a considerable part in deconstructing the alleged grand narratives of the Reformation.⁷ I will deal here with three examples.

The incident of the striking of a bolt of lightning at Stotternheim, a village near Erfurt, in the year 1505, which induced Luther to enter the monastery of the Augustinian Hermits in Erfurt, had been interpreted as a parallel to Paul's conversion on his way to Damascus. In fact, Luther understood the thunderstorm that surprised and startled him in 1505 as a work of the devil.⁸ Gripped by the fear of death, he called upon a fashionable saint of his time, the holy Saint Anne, the patron saint of miners.

As striking as a lightning bolt was, however, the thesis put forth by the Catholic Church historian Erwin Iserloh in 1961, who suspected that Luther never manually nailed his theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.⁹ His argument seems convincing, since the first written account of the incident stems from Melancthon as late as 1546. He was not an eyewitness to the process, for he was appointed at Wittenberg only in 1518.¹⁰ In addition, the event of Luther nailing his theses to the door was first attested to after his death, and not a single comment on this matter was ever made by Luther himself. He probably sent his theses to his

5 Günter Brakelmann, *Hitler und Luther 1933* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2008).

6 For this, see the contributions by Hartmut Lehmann, "Hans Preuß 1933 über ‚Luther und Hitler‘"; "Luther als Kronzeuge für Hitler. Anmerkungen zu Otto Scheels Lutherverständnis in den 1930er Jahren"; "„Muss Luther nach Nürnberg?“ Deutsche Schuld im Lichte der Lutherliteratur 1946/47," in Lehmann, *Luthergedächtnis*, 151–188.

7 This historical deconstruction is to be found in Lehmann, "Anmerkungen zur Entmythologisierung der Luthermythen 1883–1983," in Lehmann, *Luthergedächtnis*, 281–296.

8 This legend probably goes back to Rubeanus Crotus, humanist and temporary supporter of Luther, who spoke in a letter of the year 1519 Luther went as divine sign like a second Paul to the monastery (WA Br 1, Nr. 213, 543, 105–110). The legend lasted centuries. On Crotus see Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, "Crotus Rubeanus," in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, vol. 1 (Nordhausen: Bautz, 1975), 1168f. For a general outline on this discussion see Lehmann, *Luthergedächtnis*, 281–283.

9 Erwin Iserloh, *Luthers Thesenanschlag – Tatsache oder Legende?* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1962).

10 *Philippi Melanthonis Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider, vol. 6 (Halis: C.A. Schwetschke and son, 1839), 162: "Et has publice Templo, quod arci Witebergensi contiguum est affixit pridie festi omnium Sanctorum anno 1517."

ecclesiastical superiors and to theologians in Nuremberg and elsewhere. This version of the history of Luther's theses is confirmed by the first history of the Reformation, written in 1541 by the superintendent of Gotha, Friedrich Myconius. He stated that Luther had sent "propositiones" to the bishops of Meissen, Brandenburg, Zeitz and Merseburg calling for the end of the abuses connected with indulgences. When they answered negatively, the Reformer had these "propositiones" printed, so that he could debate on them with the scholars of the university in Wittenberg.¹¹ Nonetheless, the academic debate on the nailing of the theses lasts until today, though the explanatory burden seems to have shifted to those defending such an event.¹²

It was already proven some 80 years ago that Luther probably never uttered the sentence "Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders. Gott helfe mir. Amen," which translates to "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen." On the contrary, as far as we know, he seems to have used the old formulaic oath: "Revocare non volo. Deus adiuvet me" ("I do not want to revoke. God help me").¹³ Furthermore, recent research is much clearer about the fact that Luther slipped into the role of a plaything between the political forces (imperial estates, Emperor and Pope) and that he ultimately became dependent on the Saxon Elector Friedrich the Wise. The narrative of a steadfast Luther, who defied the political and ecclesiastical powers at the Diet of Worms, has been proven more and more to be a legend.

11 Friedrich Myconius, *Geschichte der Reformation*, ed. D. Dr. Otto Clemen (Leipzig: Voigtländer, 1914); see also: Günter Frank, "Friedrich Myconius als Historiograph der Reformation," in *500 Jahre Reformation*, ed. Günter Frank, *Fragmenta Melanchthoniana* 7 (Ubstadt-Weiher u.a.: Regionalkultur, 2019), 92–101, esp. 96f.

12 In 2006, an annotation was found in a New Testament dating from 1540 or 1544 and written by Georg Rörer, Luther's secretary to his biblical work, in which Rörer refers to the "Thesenanschlag": "On the eve of All Saints in the year 1517 theses on the Indulgences have been posted by Doctor Martin Luther on the doors of the Wittenberger churches" ("Anno Do[m]ini 1517 in profesto o[mn]i[u]m Sanctoru[m] p[er] (...) Wite[m]berge in valuis templorum propositae sunt pro[positiones] de Indulgentiis a D[octore] Mart[in]o Luth[ero]"). Interestingly, mention is made about the doors of several – two? – churches in Wittenberg (not only the Castle Church) and that no clear reference is included to the act of nailing the theses, just to their being "posted" or "propositae." Among scholars discussion is about the reliability of this annotation, as well as about Rörer's authority as an eye-witness. See also the essay by Alexander Schunka in this special issue, as well as Volker Leppin, "Geburtswehen und Geburt einer Legende. Zu Rörsers Notiz vom Thesenanschlag," in *Luther* 78 (2007): 145–150, but also the recent booklet by Benjamin Hasselhorn and Mirko Gutjahr, *Tatsache! Die Wahrheit über Luthers Thesenanschlag* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018), among other works.

13 *Der Reichstag zu Worms 1521. Reichspolitik und Luthersache*, ed. Fritz Reuter (Worms: Norberg, 1971); *1521 – Luther in Worms – 1971. Ansprachen, Vorträge, Predigten und Berichte zum 450-Jahrgedenken*, ed. Fritz Reuter (Worms: Stadtarchiv, 1973).

3 An Ecumenical Approach to the Reformation?

The ecumenical discussion surrounding the year 2017 was no less intense, as became apparent in the differing emphases placed on different conceptual semantics. When Protestants spoke about a jubilee of the Reformation, they above all had Luther's rediscovery of the Gospel in mind. When Catholics spoke about the commemoration of the Reformation, they, in turn, had more of an eye for the consequences of the Reformation; that is, the division of Latin Christianity with all its repercussions of religious wars, which would turn Europe into a desert in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Bishop Dr. Gerhard Feige, of the Diocese of Magdeburg, ecumenical commissioner of the German Bishops Conference, nevertheless ensured a "constructive and creative" participation of the Catholic Church in the anniversary of 2017. Catholics can and would "engage constructively and creatively with the Reformation and its consequences, but consider the related division of the Western Church as tragic," stated Bishop Feige in his summary of the attitude of the Catholic Church on the day of the Reformation anniversary in October 2012.¹⁴

One has to grasp this view while keeping in mind that it constitutes a shift of epochal dimensions, a shift that spans from a negative evaluation of the Reformation for over 400 years to a positive outlook in the twentieth century.¹⁵ The breakthrough to a more balanced perception of the Reformation was achieved in Germany by the Catholic founding director of the Institute for European History in Mainz, Joseph Lortz, with his two-volume work *Die Reformation in Deutschland*, which appeared in 1939–40 in Freiburg im Breisgau. The revolutionary novelty of Lortz's image consisted in regarding Luther as a religious figure who deserved respect and admiration. The Catholic priest Max Josef Metzger, who had been sentenced to death by the National Socialists on October 14 1943, established the Christkönigsinstitut, the Institute of Christ the King, just a few years earlier. This was to become an important preparation for the so-called Una-Sancta Movement, a movement based on the conviction that a reunion in the faith is only possible through a "visible unity" of the Church, a unity which is effective beyond one's own Church.

A result of this new ecumenical consciousness was the reorientation of the Catholic Church and Catholic theology, clearly expressed in the ecumenism decree *Unitatis redintegratio* ("UR") of the Second Vatican Council of November 21 1964, a

¹⁴ https://www.volksstimme.de/nachrichten/sachsen_anhalt/1171807_Bischof-Feiges-zehn-Thesen-Heilsame-Herausforderung.html (last accessed 15.07.2020).

¹⁵ For this and the following, see, with numerous references, Günter Frank, "Luther in der katholischen Historiographie und Theologie: 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in *Martin Luther. Ein Christ zwischen Reformen und Moderne (1517–2017)*, ed. Alberto Melloni, vol. 2 (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2017), 1035–1051.

decree which is unequivocal and irreversible. Chapter 1 illuminates the Catholic principles of ecumenism and, as the Council emphasized, “The Sacred Council exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism” (UR 1, 4).

One fact is little known: just a few years before the Council, another stimulus was given to advance the controversial theological debate with regard to ecumenism. The intuition of the former fundamental theologian Josef Ratzinger was to advance the process of ecumenism by studying the authoritative doctrinal texts.¹⁶ Philipp Melanchthon, from whom most of the confessional writings of the Wittenberg movement originated, and whose students drafted many confessional works throughout Europe, again entered the field of research. In the course of two seminars, Josef Ratzinger dealt systematically with the theology of the Reformation. First, he commenced with the *Confessio Augustana* of 1530 during the winter semester of 1958–59 and then, two years later, he dedicated a seminar to the treatise titled *De potestate et primatu papae* from 1537, also written by Melanchthon. One of his students, Vinzenz Pfnür, presented a ground-breaking study on the doctrine of justification in the *Confessio Augustana*, which later significantly contributed to the recognition of this confession by the Catholic Church.¹⁷

All of these different impulses: the revised Catholic interpretation of Luther and Melanchthon; the new approach to the theology of the Protestant confessions; the spirit of the ecumenical movement; and the ecumenical reorientation of Catholic theology and Church in association with the doctrines of the Second Vatican Council – all of which are referred to as the “Golden Age” of Catholic Luther research – bore far-reaching fruits in the last three decades of the twentieth century.

Two of the most important fruits were the 450th anniversary of the *Confessio Augustana* in 1980, during which an intense discussion about the recognition of the catholicity of this document commenced.¹⁸ “The Catholic statements (on this recognition of the catholicity of the CA) are consistent with the conclusion that the recognition of the CA has to be understood as Catholic in the sense of a basic

16 Siegfried Wiedenhofer, “Zum katholischen Melanchthonbild im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,” *ZKTh* 102 (1980): 425–454; Siegfried Wiedenhofer “Der römische Katholizismus und Melanchthon,” in *Philipp Melanchthon – ein Wegbereiter für die Ökumene*, ed. Jörg Haustein, Bensheimer Hefte 82 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 62–76.

17 Vinzenz Pfnür, *Einig in der Rechtfertigungslehre? Die Rechtfertigungslehre der Confessio Augustana (1530) und die Stellungnahme der katholischen Kontroverstheologie zwischen 1530 und 1535*, VIEG 60 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1970).

18 For the relevant history, see *Katholische Anerkennung des Augsburgischen Bekenntnisses? Ein Vorstoß zur Einheit zwischen katholischer und lutherischer Kirche*, ed. Harding Meyer et al. (Frankfurt: Lembeck, 1977); Vinzenz Pfnür, “Anerkennung der Confessio Augustana?,” in *IKZ* 4 (1975): 298–307; 5 (1976): 374–381.

consensus” – as stated by Erwin Iserloh in conclusion later.¹⁹ The second fruit of this recent and new ecumenical perspective undoubtedly is the signing of the so-called “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” as an appendix to the “Joint Official Declaration.”²⁰ It was signed in unmistakably symbolic circumstances on October 31 1999, in Augsburg, by Ishmael Noko, the former President of the Lutheran World Federation, and by Cardinal Edward Cassidy, former President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. While the World Council of Methodist Churches joined in 2006, the World Council of Reformed Churches and the Anglican Church followed suit in 2017. A group of 250 mostly German speaking Protestant theologians expressed vehement opposition to this “Joint Declaration”²¹ because they feared a betrayal of the virtues of the Reformation to the advantage of an ecumenism by consensus. It is important to bear in mind that the declaration is not only a paper of theological consensus but is also an official teaching document of those Churches that have signed it.

4 2017 as an Ecumenical Jubilee

Against the background of these movements, the historical criticism of the political exploitation of previous Luther commemorations; the deconstruction of the allegedly grand narratives of the Reformation; and the ecumenical realignment – along with the historic change in the perception of the Reformation by the Catholic Church – it appeared impossible to commemorate the anniversary of 2017 as a Luther year. Indeed, such an outlook seemed to have already prevailed at the time of the inaugural visit of the former council president of the EKD, Nikolaus Schneider, to the then recently elected new Pope Francis in April 2013. Nikolaus Schneider invited Pope Francis at this meeting to “actively” participate in the Reformation anniversary

19 “Die katholischen Stellungnahmen (zu dieser Anerkennung der Katholizität der CA) kommen damit übereinstimmend zu dem Ergebnis, dass Anerkennung der CA als katholisch im Sinne eines Grundkonsenses verstanden werden muss.” See: Erwin Iserloh, “450 Jahre Confessio Augustana. Eine Bilanz,” in *Cath* 35 (1981): 1–16 (16).

20 Lutherischer Weltbund/Päpstlicher Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen, *Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre. Gemeinsame offizielle Feststellung. Anhang (Annex) zur Gemeinsamen offiziellen Feststellung* (Frankfurt a.M. and Paderborn, 1999). For the history and reception of this document, see *Die Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre. Dokumentation des Entstehungs- und Rezeptionsprozesses*, ed. Friedrich Hauschild (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

21 For this criticism, see *Wider den Augsburger Rechtfertigungsvertrag. Voten evangelischer Hochschullehre*, ed. Albrecht Beutel, Thomas Kaufmann, and Hermann Timm, *Epd-Dokumentation* 43/99 (Frankfurt a.M.: Gemeinschaftswerk d. Evangelische Publizistik, 1999); general reservations are also to be found in Eilert Herms, “Der Dialog zwischen dem Päpstlichen Einheitsrat und LWB 1965–1998. Ausgangsperspektiven, Verlauf, Ergebnis,” *ThLZ* 123 (1998): 658–712.

in 2017. This conversation with the Pope was accompanied by the assurance that Martin Luther would not be commemorated at a “German jubilee” in Wittenberg 2017. He did not want to forget the bloody wars after the Reformation, nor “should Luther as a hero be paramount, although we are grateful, that he gave the impetus for a return to Christ.” He hoped, rather, that “Christians of both denominations could rejoice together over this return to Christ and could honor Luther’s new appreciation of the Gospel.”²²

It seemed apparent that the Churches would be working together in 2017. Allegedly, they seemed to want to approach this Reformation event ecumenically. The Ecumenical Commission of the German Bishops Conference published a guide for cooperation in municipalities under the title *Reformation in ökumenischer Perspektive (Reformation in an Ecumenical Perspective)* in 2016.²³ In its introduction, the document emphasizes that:

Looking ahead to the year 2017, there is an opportunity today for a common reflection on the conditions, the core, and the effects of the Reformation, which was centred on Martin Luther. His agenda on reform presents a spiritual and theological challenge to Catholics and Lutherans even today. An engagement with Luther’s reform demands a new assessment of the past, that is, past events that influence and determine our present actions have to be remembered and made appropriate again.²⁴

Furthermore, contained in the “final report of the Joint Ecumenical Commission for the review of the disruptions of the sixteenth century” from the year 1986, the practical working guide states: “Luther’s understanding of the Gospel and his spiritual concern for reform as such were not the cause of separation, but rather the ecclesial and political implications of his basic concerns in understanding the Church, ministry and magisterium.”²⁵ Thereafter, the most important ecumenical texts by the Catholic Church on the Reformation and the theology of Martin Luther are presented: a statement of the joint Roman-Catholic and Protestant-Lutheran commission on the Augsburg Confession in 1980; a statement by the joint Roman-Catholic and Protestant-Lutheran commission on the occasion of the 500th birthday of Martin Luther in 1983; a declaration on the 450th year of Martin Luther’s death by the Protestant and Catholic Church in Thuringia in 1996; the aforementioned Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification from 1999 – very important documentation of the path from conflict towards community; the

22 <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/die-wahl-des-papstes/ekd-vorsitzender-bei-franziskus-schneider-papst-will-fenster-und-tueren-oeffnen-12141762.html> (last accessed 28.05.2020).

23 *Reformation in ökumenischer Perspektive*, ed. Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Arbeitshilfen 284 (Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2016).

24 *Ibid.*, 7.

25 *Ibid.*, 8.

common Lutheran-Catholic Reformation memory in 2017; the publication *Reformation 1517–2017*, studies by the Ecumenical Work Group of Protestant and Catholic Theologians on the Reformation, published in 2014; and, finally, texts from the Catholic Church (I am referring to the 1964 decree *Unitatis redintegratio* about ecumenism and the 1995 encyclical *Ut unum sint* on the commitment to ecumenism, among other speeches by Church representatives).

In the same year, 2016, the German Bishops' Conference and the Protestant Church published a "common statement on the year 2017" entitled *Healing of Memories – Testifying to Jesus Christ*.²⁶ By means of this joint statement, the two major Churches forged a thoroughly ecumenical perspective for the Reformation jubilee of 2017. To summarize the changed conditions to some extent, the Church administration formulated: "2017 is the first commemoration that simultaneously stands in the age of ecumenism as well as in the age of growing secularization. Also, it is no longer perceived only in a German or European, but in a global perspective."²⁷ Such an approach introduces the ecumenical access to the event of the Reformation in a similar light as a "Healing of Memories," borrowed from South Africa, when the country had to deal with the past of the "Apartheid," with the goal of celebrating 2017 as a celebration of Christ.²⁸ In other words, in 2017, Jesus Christ should be the center of attention. During a reconciliation service, the Churches likewise should be made aware of each other's common history of guilt in the aftermath of the Reformation by confessing before God and asking for forgiveness.

In this regard, ecumenists refer to 2017 as the year of ecumenism, as demonstrated in several ways. Several official commemorative events at the national and international levels were organized ecumenically. Likewise, regional initiatives by local Church congregations were shaped ecumenically. The keyword "Reformation" has received a positive connotation among at least a part of the Catholics.

When opening the 2017 Reformation jubilee on September 30 2016, Bishop Prof. Dr. Cornelis-Bundschuh of the *Landeskirche* of Baden emphasized how important it was to commemorate the Reformation "in an international and ecumenical horizon." Furthermore, trips in the "Reformation truck," which conducted pilgrimages throughout 68 cities in Europe, where the Reformation became influential, and was in Bretten on December 14–15 2016, embraced an ecumenical

26 *Erinnerung heilen – Jesus Christus bezeugen. Ein gemeinsames Wort zum Jahr 2017*, ed. Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland and Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, *Gemeinsame Texte* 24 (Hannover: Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland and Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2016).

27 *Reformation in ökumenischer Perspektive*, ed. Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 8.

28 For the concept of the "Christusfest," see Barbara Rudolph, "Christusfest – Ökumenische Feiern im Jahr des Reformationsjubiläums 2017," *Una Sancta* 72 (2017): 169–173; see, in addition, Mareile Lasogga, "Reformationsjubiläum 2017 als Christusfest," *Materialdienst* 67 (2016): 89.

stance. This was also emphasized by the fact that the former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Olav Fykse Tveit, also joined these trips. The director of the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Tübingen, Prof. Dr. Johanna Rahner, stressed the importance of Melanchthon's "testing one's own conviction by approaching others." Other regional Churches have also tried creating new impulses for ecumenism through common services, pilgrimages and ecumenical agreements.²⁹ The German Bishops Conference and the German Protestant Church (EKD) joined in a common pilgrimage to the Holy Land in October 2016. Furthermore, they jointly presented their new Bible translation in Stuttgart in February 2017. The already mentioned reconciliation service took place in Hildesheim in March 2017 and became an outstanding symbol of ecumenism, even in other provincial Churches and dioceses. Specifically, it appealed cooperatively to those who opened the anniversary of 2017 in an ecumenical service in Lund on October 31 2016, viz. the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican, represented by Martin Junge and Pope Francis, respectively. The message was that, after 500 years there no longer could be a place for demarcation and confrontation, but that the focus should rather lie on cooperation and reconciliation. In this respect, the claim could be made that the year 2017 marks the end of the Reformation era. The theological controversies expressed in the debates of the era have been overcome. For the first time in the history of Latin Christianity, it became possible to commemorate the Reformation in a communal, ecumenical way. Therefore, the "joint statement" of the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, issued at the closing of the joint Reformation commemoration year on October 31 2017, begins with the statement: "On October 31 2017, the last day of the joint ecumenical Reformation commemoration year, we feel deep gratitude for the spiritual and theological gifts the Reformation has bestowed upon us and that we have commemorated together, as well as with our ecumenical partners worldwide."³⁰

5 Conclusion

Quite a few contemporaries may ask: How will relations develop from here onwards. Presently, one can observe a general fatigue after 2017. But a new test for the growing ecumenical trust is already approaching: in the year 2030, the reading of

²⁹ A detailed ecumenical appraisal is to be found in Johannes Oeldemann, *Ökumene nach 2017[...]* auf dem Weg zur Einheit? (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018).

³⁰ https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/bildmaterial/Kirche/2017-10-31_Gem-Stellungnahme-Lutherischer-Weltbund-Paepstl-Rat-Einheit-der-Christen.pdf (last accessed 23.09.2020).

the *Confessio Augustana* for the 500th time will take place at the Reichstag in Augsburg. Luther and Melanchthon were convinced that the theological foundations of the Wittenberg movement, as set forth in this confession, were an expression of the true catholicity of the Church. If this would be ecumenically recognized in 2030, we would take a significant step forward.

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Problems and Challenges of the Modern Historiography of the Zwinglian Reformation

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Abstract: Critical research into the Zwinglian Reformation arose in the period of historicism and liberalism in the 19th century. The pioneers of this research accomplished important achievements, especially by publishing critical editions of Zwingli's works. At the same time, they interpreted Zwingli as a liberator and educator of the people rather than as a theologian. In the twentieth century, research perspectives multiplied. Zwingli has been taken more seriously as a theologian, and the tight alliance between the Reformation and politics has been emphasized. The intricate political structure and the Republican mentality of the Confederation deeply shaped the character of the Swiss Reformation. Zwingli was its central figure, but the Swiss Reformation should be called a Communal Reformation (*Gemeindereformation*). Having many similarities to the Wittenberg Reformation, it is nevertheless an independent variety within the pan-European Reformation movements. We must, therefore, study the Swiss Reformation with its own distinct development and dynamics, as well as within its interconnected European-wide network.

Keywords: modern historiography, Zwinglian Reformation, Swiss Reformation, communal Reformation, early modern Switzerland

1 Introduction

The factual roots of the Swiss Reformation historiography arise from the time of their historical events. Immediately after the death of Ulrich Zwingli in October 1531, his colleague and friend Oswald Myconius wrote the first biography of the

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Zürich Reformer.¹ Though it was for an apologetic purpose and not free from hagiographical traces, it is still an important source for Zwinglian studies. After Myconius, Zwingli's successor Heinrich Bullinger composed an extensive historical work in 1564 on the Swiss Reformation.² Bullinger's work was based on both collected materials and personal eyewitness accounts. There were also a couple of monographs about the Swiss Reformation published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This article, however, commences with the nineteenth century when "modern" critical and source-based historiography was gradually developed.³

Two major factors shape the problems and challenges of this modern historiography of the Swiss Reformation. On the one hand, nineteenth century liberal philosophical and theological thinking does not only inform modern historiographical methods and contributed to a closer reading of the sources, but also points to a certain interpretation of the Reformation that is the mirror image of its liberal interpreters. On the other hand, the specific character of the Zwinglian Reformation in the sixteenth century gives rise to the complexity of Zwinglian research up to the present.

2 Modern Research into the Zwinglian Reformation since the Nineteenth Century

Society, with its ever-changing values, informs the work of its historians, whether they consciously apply the values of their age in historical studies or not. This was also true for the nineteenth century. It was an age of liberalism, when the idea of historical development of the human spirit, culture, and religion – combined with the conviction of an educational function of history (Johann

1 Oswald Myconius, *Vom Leben und Sterben Huldrych Zwinglis*, ed. Ernst Gerhard Rüsch (St. Gallen: Tschudy, 1979). The titles mentioned in the footnotes are a selection that is related to the article. They do not cover all important works on the subject.

2 Heinrich Bullinger, *Heinrich Bullingers Reformationgeschichte*, ed. Johann Jakob Hottinger and Hans Heinrich Vögeli (Frauenfeld: Beyel, 1838). For a full list of early sources see Gottfried W. Locher, *Die Zwinglische Reformation im Rahmen der europäischen Kirchengeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 7–16.

3 A complete and detailed research report is therefore not the intention of this article. The current state of research is represented in: Ariane Albisser and Peter Opitz, eds., *Die Zürcher Reformation in Europa. Beiträge der Tagung des Instituts für Schweizerische Reformationgeschichte 6–8. Februar 2019 in Zürich* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2020) – forthcoming.

Gustav Droysen⁴) – stimulated the increasing interests in historical studies and the documents of the past.

In the political realm, after the defeat of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna in 1815 only restored the so called “Ancient Regime” in the Swiss states on a superficial level. The idea of a liberal political order with equal political and social rights and religious freedom manifested itself in Switzerland during Regeneration (1830–48). A new political order was created, which resulted in the birth of Switzerland as a well-balanced and unified Swiss Confederation with a central government.

Political liberalism and theological liberalism often go hand in hand. In the theological realm, the growing interest in the historical documents of the Swiss Reformation that had been preserved in the archives and libraries paired with a spirit of liberal interpretation that was applied to the Reformed tradition. The centre of interest was no longer doctrinal truth or ecclesiastical confessions, but religion in the dimension of human life and culture. The Reformers were no longer quoted to back up one’s orthodox doctrines; instead, they became forerunners of freedom in the cultural, political, and historical process.⁵

As a consequence, the emerging modern Zwingli research in the nineteenth century did not focus on Zwingli as a theologian, whose major concerns were the doctrines of God, man, sin, grace, election, and predestination, etc. Instead, Zwingli was interpreted as someone who shared the modernistic understanding of religion – the “enlightened” Protestantism of the nineteenth century Christianity. He was read as a Reformer who supported the republican democratic institutions, promoted religious freedom that opposes the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authorities and embraced a rationally reasonable religion criticizing superstition, dogmatism, and religious suppression.⁶

Johann Melchior Schuler (1779–1859) can serve as an example of this approach in Zwinglian studies. Schuler was a Swiss Reformed pastor and a liberal politician

4 See Johann Gustav Droysen, *Grundriss der Historik* (Leipzig: Veit, 1868); Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, ed. Rudolf Hübner, 8th ed. (München und Wien: R. Oldenbourg, 1977), 369–415.

5 Peter Opitz, “Jubelfest der Befreiung? Ein Streifzug durch die Geschichte der Reformationssfeiern,” in *500 Jahre Reformation: Rückblicke und Ausblicke aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive*, ed. Peter Opitz (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018), 1–25.

6 Kurt Guggisberg, *Das Zwinglibild des Protestantismus im Wandel der Zeiten* (Leipzig: Verlag von M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1934). As Guggisberg shows, there are other interpretations of the Reformation. This article focuses on the dominant interpretations that contributed to the critical research of Zwinglian studies.

who primarily engaged in public education.⁷ As a patriotic historian, he wrote eight volumes on the history of Switzerland.⁸ On the Reformation Jubilee 1819 (300th anniversary of the Reformation),⁹ Schuler published a biography of Zwingli. With an almost poetic tone, Schuler praised the Zurich Reformation as an outstanding moment in the formation of the history of humankind through God's Spirit that passes down and surpasses the glorious ancient Greeks. For him, the centre of the Reformation was freedom of conscience and religion, which is in accordance with what human reason and the Gospel demand.¹⁰ Zurich was viewed as the new Athens and Zwingli as its "apostle, not only for his own time, but also for ours!"¹¹ Therefore, the spirit of the sixteenth century Reformation is the spirit of renewal, regeneration, and progress, which enables us – according to Schuler – to understand the Reformation properly. The hermeneutical presupposition is clear: the Enlightenment of the 18 century, the theological Reformation of the sixteenth century, and the political Reformation that leads to truth and justice are essentially the same. The basis of this interpretation of the Zurich Reformer was Zwingli's repetitive quotations of James 1:17 ("Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights"), whereas his emphasis on Christ as the key to all true knowledge about God and the human condition was eclipsed.¹² An edition of Zwingli's texts on the 300th anniversary of the Reformation in 1819 also illustrates the pedagogical intention of these liberal editors. Instead of editing Zwingli's complete writings, the book was a compilation of

7 Thomas K. Kuhn, "Johann Melchior Schuler," *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz HLS*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/010835/2011-08-19/> (last accessed on September 4, 2019). Schuler was Erziehungsrat (a member of the commission for education of the government of the Canton Aargau) during 1828–35.

8 Johann Melchior Schuler, *Die Thaten und Sitten der Eidgenossen* (Zürich: Schulthess, 1842–57).

9 Cf. Helen Wild, "Das Zürcher Reformationsjubiläum 1819," *Zwingliana* 3/12–13 (1918): 441–60.

10 Johann Melchior Schuler, *Huldreich Zwingli. Geschichte seiner Bildung zum Reformator des Vaterlandes* (Zürich: Näsische Buchdruckerey, 1818), 357–8.

11 Schuler, *Huldreich Zwingli*, 358–60: "Unsere Zeit feiert das Andenken Zwinglis und seiner Reformation am würdigsten und versteht sie am besten, weil auch sie in seinem Geiste reformiert! Fürsten und Völker rufen im Einklang: Nur in bürgerlicher und geistiger Freiheit liege Menschen- und Völkerwürde und Heil. [...] Heil Fürsten und Völker, wenn die grosse Weltgeschichte unserer Zeit sie das für immer gelehrt hat! Aber nur der Geist freier Religiosität und religiöser Freiheit heiligt und segnet und erhält jede andere Freiheit. In ihrem Geleite sind Wahrheit und Recht [...], ihre Früchte sind jede Art von Wohlfahrt, ihr Ziel ewig vorschreitende Verbesserung und Veredlung, also nimmer aufhörende Reformation. Sie ist das Wesen und Leben der Christusreligion; [...] Zwingli ist der Apostel der Glaubensfreiheit, nicht nur für seine, auch für unsere Zeit."

12 Schuler, *Huldreich Zwingli*, VII: "Je mehr man Wahrheit ehrt und liebt, je näher und ähnlicher ist man Gott [...] Wo Gott leuchtet, wie kann da Finsternis sein? Mit der Wahrheit kommt auch die Gerechtigkeit wieder [...] Alle Wahrheit ist von Gott, durch wen sie auch geoffenbart worden." Cf. e.g. Z III, 675–701; 834.

sections from different works organized in three chapters: religion, church, and state.¹³ After the end of the “Ancient Regime,” a period when the state church was used by the government as a means to discipline people, in the age of “liberty of conscience,” the relationship of these spheres became a controversial political issue. Zwingli was used to support the permanent necessity of “religion” (and therefore the church) in a state with a liberal political agenda.

A hundred years later, on the 400th anniversary of the Reformation in 1919, another huge volume of Zwingli’s life and work was published in Zurich, edited by a committee of major institutions. Compared to 1819, which was a period of political optimism, the editors of the 1919 volume, one year after World War I, were far less enthusiastic about their time. The preface of the volume still puts the emphasis on the cultural and political impact of the Zwinglian Reformation: he supplied Zurich with a new spirit, new ways, and new goals, which were realized three centuries later in 1830. It also claims that the political movement of the “Regeneration,” which started in 1830, led Zurich to a democratic and liberal state within a liberal Switzerland in 1848. Zwingli was seen as a “leader” (*Führer*) and “companion” (*Geleiter*) “until today.”¹⁴

Walter Köhler, the professor of Church History at the University of Zurich during 1909 and 1929, knew very well the differences between the interpretations of Zwingli’s works in 1819 and 1919. Although the 1819 enthusiasm about the future was gone, Köhler shared the liberal conviction that Protestant Christianity can and must shape the culture. Against this background, he concluded that the particular contribution of Zwingli to the Reformation is the confluence of Christianity and the ancient philosophies, which is the “foundation of all education and culture.”¹⁵ According to Köhler, Zwingli and the Zwinglian Reformation in the sixteenth century had already tried to give an answer to Schleiermacher’s famously formulated dilemma of Christianity after the Enlightenment: “Must the knot of history unravel in such a way that Christianity goes with barbarism and science with unbelief?”¹⁶ In Köhler’s eyes, it was Zwingli’s attempt

13 Leonhard Usteri and Salomon Vögelin, *M. Huldreich Zwingli’s sämtliche Schriften im Auszuge: ein Denkanal der Evangelisch-reformirten Kirche beim Eintritt in ihr viertes Jahrhundert* (Zürich: Gessner, 1819).

14 G. Meyer von Knonau and Hermann Escher, *Ulrich Zwingli: zum Gedächtnis der Zürcher Reformation 1519–1919* (Zürich: Berichthaus, 1919), V: “Möge der Rückblick auf jene Zeit tiefgreifender Wandlungen unser Geschlecht lehren, dass Zürichs grösster Sohn, der darüber hinaus zu den grossen Gestalten der Weltgeschichte gehört, auch heute noch Führer und Geleiter sein kann.”

15 Walter Köhler, “Zwingli als Theologe,” in *Ulrich Zwingli. Zum Gedächtnis der Zürcher Reformation 1519–1919* (Zürich: Berichthaus, 1919), 70.

16 Köhler, “Zwingli als Theologe,” 70: “Soll der Knoten der Geschichte so auseinander gehn? das Christentum mit der Barbarei, und die Wissenschaft mit dem Unglauben?” The quotation is from Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, “Zweites Sendschreiben an Lücke,” in *Theologisch-dogmatische Abhandlungen und Gelegenheitsschriften*, ed. Hans-Friedrich Traulsen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 347.

to hold together faith and knowledge, theology and philosophy, Christianity and the insights of the Ancient, that makes Zwingli still important and relevant today.¹⁷

There are a couple of reasons why Zwingli could be used to support liberal views. Firstly, Zwingli was a Reformer who was trained as a humanist. His understanding and communication of the biblical truth were deeply embedded in the context of humanistic learning. He was familiar with the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans and quoted them regularly in his writings. He could value human wisdom and knowledge and extended God's work and grace beyond the borders of the church.¹⁸ Secondly, Zwingli could emphasize God's providence and the Spirit's presence in creation, although he strongly insisted on the Creator-creature distinction. This could be interpreted by some in a Hegelian way and used to support the liberal assertions of cultural and social progress in human society. Thirdly, as a Reformed humanist, Zwingli put emphasis on a humanistic education for the service of the Christian church. He may also seem to be more rational than Luther. He never fought with the devil like Luther did, nor did he teach a condemning or a hidden will of God. He constantly polemicized against superstition instead. This made him much more attractive to an "enlightened" modernist of the nineteenth century than the monk and polemicist from Wittenberg.

Köhler underscored the liberal aspects of Zwingli, such as the emphasis on the spirit, ethics, and the denial of the sacraments as a means of grace. As for Christology, it is more difficult for the modernists to put Zwingli in the neighbourhood of nineteenth-century theology. According to Köhler, Zwingli preached "faith in the Gospel, like Jesus had presented it [emphasis mine]."¹⁹ Whereas for Zwingli, faith in the Gospel is faith in Jesus Christ, because Jesus is God.

The emergence of the "Dialectical Theology" also included a fresh approach to the Reformation as a *theological* movement. The famous second "Römerbrief" commentary of Karl Barth appeared in 1922. After a lecture about the Theology of John Calvin, Barth began his lecture on the theology of Ulrich Zwingli in Göttingen in the winter of 1922.²⁰ Although he tried to meet distorted perceptions of the Zurich reformer as a result both of traditional Lutheran polemics and of a one-sided interpretation of Zwingli by Swiss Liberalism, he could not completely free his perspective on Zwingli from the influence of these traditions. However, he

17 Walter Köhler, *Huldrych Zwingli* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1943), ed. Ernst Koch (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1983), 254–5 and 259–60.

18 See e.g. Ulrich Zwingli, *Huldreich Zwingli sämtliche Werke*, ed. Emil Egli et al., Corpus Reformatorum 88–108 (Berlin, Leipzig, and Zürich: Heinsius/TVZ, 1905–2013) (abbreviation: Z), vol 6/5, 131; Rudolf Pfister, *Die Seligkeit erwählter Heiden bei Zwingli* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1952).

19 Köhler, "Zwingli als Theologe," 66.

20 Karl Barth, *Die Theologie Zwinglis 1922/1923*, ed. Matthias Freudenberg (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2004), 444–5 and 492–3.

resolutely pointed to the fact that Zwingli was primarily concerned with God, in particular, God's "honor" and his will towards humans. Overall, Barth's favourite Reformer was John Calvin, the second-generation Reformer in Geneva, who owed a lot to Zwingli in Zurich as the predecessor of his Reformed theology.²¹

The new emphasis on God's self-revelation instead of human religion, instigated by the representatives of the movement of the "Dialectical Theology," shaped the European theological climate in the second half of the twentieth century. Researchers started to read Zwingli as a theologian again.²² Among others, Gottfried W. Locher pointed out that for Zwingli, Christ is the centre of preaching and theological reasoning.²³ Although the theological tradition of the Reformed Protestantism is still deeply connected with Calvin's name, a certain awareness of Zwingli as a theologian can also be seen from the twentieth century onward.²⁴

This theological interest enriched the research but did not replace the historical approach. For the second half of the twentieth century, a broadening of the research perspective can be observed. Beyond the three most famous reformers: Luther, Calvin and Zwingli; other important but often neglected figures of the sixteenth century attracted the interest of the research community. On the field of the "Zwinglian" Reformation, a growing interest in Heinrich Bullinger is noticable. Known as Zwingli's successor, Bullinger was the dominant figure of Reformed Protestantism in the sixteenth century European Reformation for decades. His immense influence in shaping the Reformed theological tradition and piety of the 16 and 17 century Reformation has long been underestimated.²⁵ A growing interest in the close connection

21 Peter Opitz, "Calvin in the Context of the Swiss Reformation," in *Calvinus Pastor Ecclesiae*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis and Arnold Huijgen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 13–28.

22 Peter Barth, *Zwinglis Beitrag zum Verständnis der biblischen Botschaft*, Reformierte Kirchenzeitung (RKZ), 81 (1931), 220–21, 260–61, 267–8, and 298–300; Jaques Courvoisier, *Zwingli, a Reformed Theologian* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963); J. V. Pollet, *Huldrych Zwingli et le Zwinglianisme. Essai de synthèse historique et théologique mis à jour d'après les recherches récentes* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, 1988); Ulrich Gäbler, *Huldrych Zwingli im 20. Jahrhundert. Forschungsbericht u. annotierte Bibliographie 1897–1972* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1975).

23 Gottfried W. Locher, *Huldrych Zwingli in neuer Sicht. Zehn Beiträge zur Theologie der Zürcher Reformation* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1969).

24 For example: Matthias Freudenberg, *Reformierte Theologie. Eine Einführung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 2011); William Peter Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Paul T. Nimmo and David A. S. Fergusson, *Reformed Theology* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Marco Hofheinz, *Ethik—Reformiert!* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017).

25 *Heinrich Bullinger: Life – Thought – Influence. Zurich, Aug. 25–29, 2004, International Congress Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575)*, ed. Emidio Campi and Peter Opitz, *Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte* 24, 2 vol. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2007).

between the Middle Ages and the Reformation, and an awareness of the importance of the church fathers for the Swiss Reformers, were other aspects of research.²⁶

In the field of politics and society, in line with the continuous process of secularization and the rise of religious plurality, Zwingli faded as a figure of cultural identification even for the Protestant side of Switzerland. Scholarly research on the Zwinglian Reformation and popular images about Zwingli increasingly took different routes. However, on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2019, following the footsteps of Johann Melchior Schuler, the Reformation continued to be praised by politicians as an important milestone in Swiss history with regards to “freedom.” The scholarly researchers on the Zwinglian Reformation in the 21st century, on the other hand, focus more on Zwingli’s contribution to and interconnectedness within the complex movement of “pan-European Reformations.”²⁷ In the framework of a growing interest in transnational research on Reformation history, comparative methods in historical studies were applied. Following the growing importance of “social history,” instead of studying the Reformers as outstanding individuals, the Reformation as a series of social movements and communication networks has attracted a growing interest since the late twentieth century.

From a scholarly point of view, the source texts are much more important than the secondary literatures produced for the Reformers’ centenaries and their biographies. The crucial first step towards a modern historical approach of the Swiss Reformation is the first complete edition of Zwingli’s works during 1828 through to 1842. The editors are the previously mentioned Johann Melchior Schuler and Johannes Schulthess.²⁸ This first edition (abbreviation: S) simply presented the text and did not include either notes concerning text criticism or any information on the original documents. The second edition is the critical edition (abbreviation: Z) and still the standard edition today. It is equal to the Weimar Edition of Luther’s works. It is a part of the *Corpus Reformatorum*, initiated by the German theologian Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider in 1834, which includes the works

²⁶ See for example: Fritz Schmidt-Clausing, *Zwingli als Liturgiker* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlags-Anstalt, 1952); Alfred Schindler, *Zwingli und die Kirchenväter* (Zürich: Neujahrsblatt, zum Besten des Waisenhauses Zürich, 1984); Alfred Ehrensperger, *Geschichte des Gottesdienstes in Zürich Stadt und Land im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Reformation bis 1531* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2019).

²⁷ Peter Opitz, “The Swiss Contribution to the Reformation Movement,” in *Reformation: Legacy and Future*, ed. Petra Bosse-Huber et al. (Geneva: World Council of Reformed Churches, 2015), 67–76.

²⁸ *Huldreich Zwingli’s Werke*, ed. Johann Melchior Schuler and Johannes Schulthess (Zürich: Friedrich Schulthess, 1828–42).

of Melanchthon, Calvin, and Zwingli.²⁹ Zurich theologian and historian Emil Egli (1848–1908) was an important figure in the publication of this edition and the modern source-based historical research of the Zwinglian Reformation. He was also the editor of the *Actensammlung zur Zürcher Reformation*,³⁰ the most important edition of the recorded meeting minutes of the City Council between 1519 and 1531. The first volume of *Z* appeared in 1904, and it took scholars a century to bring it to completion in 2013.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, historical portraits of the important figures of the Reformation tended to exceed far more what the scant sources were able to prove. The interests in detailed descriptions, based on diligently assembled sources, grew considerably during the second half of the nineteenth century. The journal *Zwingliana*, devoted to specific research on the Zwinglian Reformation and its impact, is still in production.³¹ Today, political and theological interests no longer dominate Zwinglian research; instead, there are many different approaches and multiple perspectives on the Swiss Reformation due to the contemporary historical methods. However, different backgrounds and views of the researchers still inevitably influence the presentation and results. The plurality of approaches also has its origin in the source texts, which present the “Zwinglian” Reformation movement from multiple perspectives. Some important characteristics of the Zwinglian Reformation that contribute to its complexity are listed in the following.

3 The Zwinglian Reformation and the Political Complexity of Early Modern Switzerland

The Zwinglian Reformation in Switzerland did not lead the country to a unified confessional culture³²; the historical outcome of the Reformation was complex.

²⁹ *Huldreich Zwingli sämtliche Werke*, ed. Emil Egli et al., Corpus Reformatorum 88–108 (Berlin, Leipzig, and Zürich: Heinsius/TVZ, 1905–2013).

³⁰ Emil Egli, *Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Zürcher Reformation in den Jahren 1519–1533* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1973).

³¹ <https://www.irg.uzh.ch/de/zwingliana-online.html> (last accessed on September 28, 2020).

³² Some publications on Zwingli and the beginning of the Zurich Reformation since the twentieth century: Walter Köhler, *Huldrych Zwingli* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1943), ed. Ernst Koch (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1983); G. R. Potter, *Huldrych Zwingli* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Ulrich Gäbler, *Huldrych Zwingli. Eine Einführung in sein Leben und sein Werk* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2004); Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Jim West, “Christ Our Captain”, *An Introduction to Huldrych Zwingli* (Quartz Hill, CA: Quartz Hill Publishing House, 2011); Peter Opitz, *Ulrich Zwingli. Prophet, Ketzer, Pionier des Protestantismus* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2015).

Switzerland as a country ruled by one central government did not exist before 1848, although the nomenclature “Swiss” was already used occasionally in the sixteenth century (derived from the name of one of the founding states “Schwyz”). The political structure of the Swiss Confederation remained intact during the Reformation. Different states had much in common in terms of cultural identity, the republican political tradition, and a strong will for political independence despite close economical and personal connections. Politically, the 13 states of the Swiss Confederation as an alliance network had to affirm the oath with each other regularly. The states did not mandatorily follow the decisions of the Diets of the Swiss Confederation. Therefore, the decisions of the Diets, the meetings of the representatives of each state, only bound together those who agreed on a particular issue. These Diets dealt mainly with the mercenary contracts and the ruling of commonly owned land and did not usually touch upon internal matters of individual states. This Confederate political structure and dynamics, that even outlasted the Kappel War and the ultimate religious split in 1531, determined the relationship between religion and politics in Switzerland. Religious matters could not overrule the tradition of each state, and the common political and national mentality of being a “Confederate” (*Eidgenosse*) and belonging to the Swiss Confederation reigned, despite religious differences and polemics.

In the religious realm, the split caused by the Reformation was obvious and far-reaching. In the mid and late sixteenth century, about half of the Swiss states were Protestant; the other half remained Catholic. Because each state and – in some rural areas like the Three Leagues, even each village – decided independently whether to introduce the Reformation or remain Catholic, the challenge of living very close to the people of the other religion was more imminent than in many other parts of Europe in the sixteenth century. Catholics and Protestants had to learn to come to terms with this situation.

The political independence of the states in the Swiss Confederation contributes to the complexity of the Swiss Reformation on several levels. Shortly after Zurich introduced the Reformation in 1525, other states followed Zwingli’s trajectory and became Reformed. For example: St. Gallen in 1526, Bern in 1528, and Basel in 1529. Each state had embraced the Reformation according to its own agenda.³³ In several cities and areas, the introduction was a turbulent process. Although Zwingli was the intellectual leader of the Swiss Reformation, some other local Reformers were also very influential in their own regions, such as Johannes Oecolampadius in Basel, Berchtold Haller in Bern, Joachim Vadian in St. Gallen,

33 A *Companion to the Swiss Reformation*, ed. Amy Nelson Burnett and Emidio Campi (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2016); Locher, *Die Zwinglische Reformation im Rahmen der europäischen Kirchengeschichte* (see footnote 2).

Johannes Comander in the Grisons, etc. Therefore, compared to Luther who is regarded as “the” German Reformer, Zwingli has never had the same clear connotation as “the” Swiss Reformer.

Consequently, there is no tradition of one “Swiss” celebration of the Reformation. Different Protestant states (now “cantons”) within the Swiss Confederation celebrate their own Reformation and particular important theological figures. In Zurich, for example, January 1, 1519, the day when Zwingli began his office as a pastor, is celebrated as the day of the beginning of the Reformation. The decisive year for Geneva was 17 years later in 1536. In the sixteenth century, Geneva was not a part of the Swiss Confederation in a legal sense. It was allied with the mighty state of Bern, which protected Geneva from the Catholic Prince of Savoy. Therefore, Geneva was in a unique political and religious position during the Reformation. Although William Farel, a pupil of Ulrich Zwingli and his missionary in the western Swiss Confederation, was the Reformer who first brought the Reformation to Geneva, John Calvin, the second-generation French Reformer, made Geneva a cradle of European Reformed Protestantism.

This leads us to the “history of the impact” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of the Zwinglian Reformation. Since the last third of the sixteenth century, the Zurich Reformers Zwingli and Bullinger were overshadowed by the better-known John Calvin. Swiss Reformed Protestantism was now increasingly labelled “Calvinism.” As a result, the 500th birthday of John Calvin as a Reformer of the second generation was celebrated in many places all over Europe in 2009, but very few remembered the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformed Protestantism which is marked by Zwingli’s first preaching in 1519. The Reformation monument in Geneva depicts Zwingli as one of the predecessors of John Calvin. However, only the theological ideas of Zwingli and the success of his Reformation in Zurich and Bern made it possible for Calvin to settle in Geneva and becoming the origin of “Calvinism.” This is a good example showing how a subsequent *Wirkungsgeschichte* can suppress what the original sources tell us about the beginnings.

Apart from the political and historical complexity of Early Modern Switzerland, a historian’s confessional background and his or her attitude towards Christianity also have a great impact on the result of historical studies on the Zwinglian Reformation. This is particularly the case when it comes to a broad interpretation of the Reformation as a whole. Beyond doubt, the Reformation was a social and political movement. However, without a thorough knowledge of the basics of the Christian faith and the Bible in particular, it is impossible to understand the motivation of the Reformers who risked their lives for their beliefs.

Turning to the political and social context of the Zwinglian Reformation, three characteristics are to be highlighted in particular.

3.1 The Zwinglian Reformation as a Communal Reformation (*Gemeindereformation*)

It is certainly correct to call the Reformation in the Swiss Confederation the "Zwinglian" Reformation, but it was also a Reformation supported by large part of the population. Zwingli was doubtless the most important Reformer of the Swiss Reformation. His preaching, his early writings, and particularly the 67 *Theses* in the first Zurich Disputation in 1523, led the direction of the early Reformation and became the decisive impulses for the entire Swiss Reformation.³⁴ Nevertheless, the Reformation was not the result and the work of any particular individual. Even within the Swiss and south German Protestant territories, Zwingli's writings were not blindly accepted as the only authoritative interpretation of true Christianity. As Zwingli and his colleagues wanted a Reformation "according to the Word of God," they all agreed that Scripture had to be the source and the authoritative standard against which to examine their ideas. Zwingli always pointed to the Scripture as the judge of his own teaching. But in his eyes, the Scriptures were not a collection of divine, eternal laws that simply can and must be applied; instead, they were the definitive collection of the witnesses of God, through which the living voice of Christ can be heard today.³⁵ It is the task of the local Christian congregation to "listen" to the Scriptures and learn God's will for the present day, by discussing current issues in the light of the Scriptures and with prayer and seeking consensus for concrete decisions, according to 1 Cor 14. This is what the magistrates had in mind, when they declared in the Zurich Disputations (1523) and in the Disputation of Bern (1528), that the Holy Scriptures are the only and ultimate criteria for truth.³⁶ The communal Reformation was legitimized by God's own Word.

In addition to this theological conviction, the political structure of the Swiss Confederation since 1291 determined the Zwinglian Reformation in the sixteenth century to be a diverse Communal Reformation. In the Swiss Confederation, the political authorities took charge of the common benefit. After breaking from the Roman church, they made decisions on every single religious issue in the public realm. The Reformers as pastors were only to give suggestions to the councils. Different from most European countries in the sixteenth century, the political authorities in the Swiss Confederation were deeply rooted in both the political and social communities and did not have any arbitrary authority. Although some families had great political influence and politics often worked in favour of the aristocracy, the states in the Swiss Confederation were not ruled by a dynasty of

³⁴ Z I, 442–569.

³⁵ Z II, 457.

³⁶ Z I, 452 and 466–8.

princes. All the mayors and the members of the great and small city councils in Zurich came to office by election. The great council, in particular, consisted mainly of the representatives of the guilds. According to the communal and political tradition, in order to come to a decision on matters of great importance, the city councils often first consulted the people to find out their opinions before making further decisions. In some villages, the decision about whether to introduce the Reformation or not was made by public votes. Therefore, many concrete decisions related to how to execute the Reformation in Christian societies according to "God's Word" differed from region to region.³⁷ From a political perspective, the Reformation was a step toward more political and financial autonomy. In the twentieth century, historians introduced the concept of "Communal Reformation" (*Gemeindereformation*) to acknowledge this aspect of the Zwinglian Reformation.³⁸

3.2 The Zwinglian Reformation as a Religious and Political Reformation

The second characteristic is connected to the first and has already been mentioned: the Zwinglian Reformation cannot simply be reduced to the realm of religion alone. Against the background of a non-secularized sixteenth century society, in which the common public religion permeated every aspect of life, the Reformation in the Swiss Confederation had always been a religious, political, social, and economical movement. Zwingli and his followers were motivated by their genuine Christian belief and a total commitment to the "Word of God." On such a foundation, they strived to apply the truth of Scripture to all spheres of society in the presence of God. Similar to the prophets of the Old Testament, Zwingli felt responsible to preach not only the Gospel of God's grace and mercy to individuals, but also God's will for his people, which includes the unpleasant truth that the Swiss as a "Christian nation" is full of hypocrisy and idolatry.³⁹

The very first Zwingli's writings demonstrate that his concern for his home country, when he was still a catholic priest, was never limited to the individual

37 See Fabrice Flückiger, *Dire le vrai. Une histoire de la dispute religieuse au début du XVI^e siècle. Ancienne Confédération helvétique, 1523–1536* (Neuchâtel: Editions Alphil Presses universitaires suisses, 2018).

38 Peter Blickle, *Communal Reformation: The Quest for Salvation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ and London: Humanities Press, 1992); Heinrich Richard Schmidt, *Reichsstädte, Reich und Reformation. Korporative Religionspolitik 1521–1529/30* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1986).

39 For example, Zwingli, *Eine göttliche Ermahnung an die Eidgenossen zu Schwyz (1522)*, Z I, 155–88.

souls of its inhabitants. It was not a religious, but a political poem, a warning in the form of a fable:⁴⁰ Surrounding political powers, such as France, the Pope, the Habsburg monarch, and Venice, were trying to deceive the Swiss Confederation into a friendship. Ambassadors from the neighbouring countries in the Swiss Diets were trying to recruit mercenary soldiers. Zwingli was convinced that these contracts with foreign states would result in the Swiss Confederation's political dependency. In his fable, Zwingli, an adherent of the Pope at that time, was strongly advocating against the political influence of the French King. A decade later, Zwingli, as a Reformer, still saw the entire "Christian community" of the Swiss Confederation as a political, historical, social, cultural, and religious entity before God. For Zwingli and his Reformed contemporaries, every social and political aspect of Christian society was religious, and it was impossible to separate God's will from any aspects of Christian life and society, such as marriage and personal conduct, caring for the sick and poor, and even questions of tithe and interest on loan.

Therefore, to pose the modern question about the relationship between "church" and "state" on the sixteenth century is misleading.⁴¹ It is to impose a nineteenth century modernistic lens onto a sixteenth century context. For modern researchers, it is always a challenge to take into account the differences in culture between now and then and fittingly apply modern concepts, such as "society," "politics," and "religion" to a particular historical context, in which these terms do not exist at all or bear different meanings. This general problem has unavoidably affected the interpretation of the Zwinglian Reformation up until today. Was the Reformation mainly a political movement to achieve political independence and autonomy?⁴² Was the Reformation mainly a rural revolution, seeing as 90% of the population lived in the countryside?⁴³ Was religion only the historical background because everybody was religious and religion legitimized political leadership and cultural values? Alternatively, was the Reformation essentially a religious movement, which majorly deals with the question about eternal salvation and the political and social dimensions are only unavoidable consequences? The sources of the sixteenth century cannot provide clear answers, and different interpretations are not the result of the historical data but of perspectives. An instructive example for this

40 Zwingli, *Fabelgedicht vom Ochsen* (1510), Z I, 1–22.

41 However, the relationship between ecclesiastical and political power has always been a matter of dispute.

42 An example of a dominant political perspective of the Zwinglian Reformation: Martin Haas, *Huldrych Zwingli und seine Zeit* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1976).

43 Peter Kamber, *Reformation als bäuerliche Revolution. Bildersturm, Klosterbesetzungen und Kampf gegen die Leibeigenschaft in Zürich zur Zeit der Reformation (1522–1525)* (Zürich: Chronos, 2010).

dilemma is the research on the first Zurich Anabaptist movement. Whereas some researchers tend to emphasize the religious character of the first Zurich Anabaptists; other researchers interpret it as mainly political uprising.⁴⁴ Of course, the truth lies somewhere in the middle, but where exactly?

The Zurich Reformation is sometimes called a “Theocracy,”⁴⁵ because of the joint identity of the civil magistrate in both political and religious spheres. However, it is more precise to call it “the Theocracy of the Word of God.” Because for Zwingli and the Zurich council, it was not the civil magistrate, nor the church as an institution, nor a single Reformer, who had the ultimate authority, but the “Word of God” as the critical and independent power over and against every human office and authority. Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli’s successor, uses the relationship between Kings and Prophets in the Old Testament to depict the relationship between the civil magistrate and the Reformers. While the King rules according to the will of God, the Prophet reminds the King regularly of the true will of God, including via criticism if necessary. This biblical notion is what shaped the political structure of the Swiss Confederation during the Reformation, certainly not always in reality, but as the shared ideal. Without profound knowledge and understanding of these biblical motifs, which kindled the Reformation of the sixteenth century, it is impossible for us to understand it properly today.

3.3 The Zwinglian Reformation and its Complex Relationship with the Wittenberg Reformation

The third characteristic of the Zwinglian Reformation is its complex relationship with the Wittenberg Reformation. Luther was convinced that Zwingli had learnt the Gospel from him, but identified Zwingli as a “spiritualist.” Together with Karlstadt and Muntzer, Luther condemned Zwingli as a heretic.⁴⁶ Luther’s criterion of judgement was his doctrine of the incomprehensible presence of Christ’s real body

⁴⁴ See e.g. Andrea Strübind, *Eifriger als Zwingli. Die frühe Täuferbewegung in der Schweiz* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003); Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *The Anabaptists* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁴⁵ Robert C. Walton, *Zwingli’s Theocracy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967).

⁴⁶ For a glance at the relationship from Zwingli’s perspective, see: Peter Opitz, “Zwinglis Wahrnehmung Luthers,” in *Luther: Zankapfel zwischen den Konfessionen und “Vater im Glauben”?*, ed. Mariano Delgado and Volker Leppin (Freiburg and Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 94–108. Due to Luther’s polemics, after 1525, German Princes feared the Zwinglian Reformation as a root for political revolution and banned Swiss theologians from their principalities; Heinrich R. Schmidt, “Die Häretisierung des Zwinglianismus im Reich seit 1525,” in *Zugänge zur bäuerlichen Reformation*, ed. Peter Blickle (Zürich: Chronos, 1987), 219–36.

and blood in the consecrated elements of the Lord's Supper. Through this pre-defined angle and presupposition, Luther's judgement on Zwingli and the Zwinglian Reformation has, to a certain extent, remained in Germany to the present day. Since then, Zwingli has been known as a "spiritualist" who neglects the Bible in favour of his "platonic" ideas and mingles the Holy Spirit with his own intellect.⁴⁷ However, whether Luther is the norm of the Reformation or the normative Reformer is a theological question which historical research is not able to answer.⁴⁸

Though Zwingli studied Luther's early writings, it was not the beginning of his Reformed thoughts.⁴⁹ Even before hearing the name Luther, Zwingli had already come to his basic convictions of Reformation theology, such as "Christ alone" (*solus Christus*) and "Scripture alone" (*sola Scriptura*), which led him to preach

47 Examples in the literature are innumerable. However, they do not take account of the research of the last decades. An emphasis on the Holy Spirit (as "person" of the Trinity and as the mode of God's active presence in the world) is indeed a characteristic of Zwingli's thought, however with the emphasis on the sharp distinction between God's spirit and human ideas. See e.g. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, 135–8; and contrary to Luther, Zwingli's exegesis was on the highest level of the humanist philology of the time, see, Peter Opitz, "The Exegetical and Hermeneutical Work of John Oecolampadius, Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of its Interpretation (HBOT)*, vol. 2: *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, B Reformation*, ed. by Magne Saebø, Michael A. Fishbane, and Jean Louis Ska (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 407–51.

48 The Zwinglian Reformation was not the only "deviation" from the Wittenberg Reformation. To apply the standards of Luther's theology to the English Reformation for example is much more difficult than the case of the Swiss Confederation, see e.g. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490–1700* (Edinburgh: Folio Society, 2013).

49 Euan Cameron, for example, has formulated what at first glance seems convincing: if Luther and Zwingli had come independently to the same theological convictions, this would have been an extremely surprising coincidence in history (Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991], 181–2). However, when we look at how ideas in history appear, it is mostly the other way around. "Biblical humanism," a lecture of the letters of Paul, with a critical stance towards the teaching of the official church was present in intellectual circles before Luther and Zwingli. The humanist, Faber Stapulensis, for example, and Erasmus in his *Novum Instrumentum*, had already pointed to "scripture alone" and "justification by faith alone" (See Christine Christ von-Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity* [Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2013]). In addition, the writings of Augustin and Jan Hus about predestination were well known. Educated humanist scholars like Zwingli read all these authors and many more. Luther's thesis from 1517 and his early writings would never have had such an impact if his criticism of the church's doctrine of salvation had been completely new and unknown. On the contrary, Luther formulated what many of his contemporaries also had thought or at least felt. It was the genius of the young Luther to formulate a broad unease in public. This does not exclude that Luther was at the same time an original theologian. The same is true of Zwingli.

against the veneration of the saints and the Roman doctrine of purgatory.⁵⁰ He came across the texts of Luther in 1518 and saw him as a like-minded Reformer. He probably also learnt from Luther, using his vocabularies, as far as he was convinced that the Wittenberg Reformer was in the right biblical direction in interpreting Paul. Since 1516, Zwingli had been reading the New Testament and particularly Pauline epistles in Greek, which had shaped his way of thinking. In a similar manner to Luther, Zwingli also acknowledged the sinfulness of man before God. However, unlike Luther, Zwingli had never been a monk. As a "people's priest," in Zurich as "Leutpriester," he served within the political, cultural, and social structure of the Swiss Confederation. He was also trained as a humanist, accustomed to think differently and independently from the teachings of the Roman church. The humanist movement was in large parts a critical movement against the interpretation of Christianity by the Roman church and its interpretation of the Bible in particular.⁵¹ This background may have allowed him to read the biblical notion of the Lord's Supper with more emotional distance from the Roman teaching and piety of the "sacrament of the altar" than it was for Luther.⁵²

Consequently, Zwingli generally agreed with Luther as long as he could be convinced by biblical arguments. As a humanist and philologist, he always preferred exegetical "reasoning" to a private or individual "conscience" (on which Luther would insist as well). For Zwingli, Luther puts too much emphasis on individual salvation instead of worshipping the one true God and teaching Christians the will of God.⁵³ Among historians of the Zwinglian Reformation, there is a consensus about the fundamentally discrete character of Zwingli's Reformation ideas from Luther.⁵⁴ For Zwingli, to think and act independently, however,

50 See e.g. Z II, 145 and 217–8; V, 717–20. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, 21–28.

51 Kurt Mäder, *Die Via Media in der Schweizer Reformation* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1970), 19–36.

52 To this see: Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, vol. 1: *Sein Weg zum Reformator 1483–1521* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1981), 77–82.

53 Johannes Voigtländer, "Gott ehren im theologischen Verständnis Zwinglis," in *Die Zürcher Reformation in Europa*, ed. Albisser and Opitz – forthcoming.

54 Two examples from different centuries: August Baur, *Zwinglis Theologie: Ihr Werden und ihr System* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1885), 1: "So nahe sich auch sein Streben und seine Auffassung des Christentums in den Grundsätzen berührt mit der Eigentümlichkeit Luthers und der durch ihn bestimmten Bewegung, so haben Zwingli und seine Reformation, wie sie von Anfang selbständig waren, bis ans Ende ihre Selbständigkeit behauptet"; see also Ulrich Gäßler, *Huldrych Zwingli. Eine Einführung in sein Leben und Werk* (München: C.H. Beck, 1983), 47. Ulrich Gäßler describes the situation on the field of scholarly research: "Weder herrscht Einigkeit darüber, was präzise erasmisches Christentum heisst, noch wie 'reformatorisches' Christentum zu bestimmen sei. [...] Der Begriff 'reformatorisch' kann angesichts der Vielfalt von theologischen Positionen unter den Protestanten des 16. Jahrhunderts historisch nicht fest umrissen werden. Hat man ihn früher allgemein – und heute noch die konfessionell-lutherische Forschung – mit der Theologie des

does not mean thinking in intellectual isolation, as his vast communication network and his impressive private library can demonstrate.⁵⁵

With a view to the future, the most imminent challenges in the field of the research on the Zwinglian Reformation may be considered profane and probably identical to those applying to every research activity in the field of history: the new opportunities of the “digital age” have to be embraced and applied; whilst however being aware of their lasting limits. In addition, the growing tendency of modern societies to neglect or even scorn the past makes it increasingly difficult to finance historical research at all. Switzerland is more of a forerunner than an exception to this trend. The culture of memory, the knowledge and the image we have about our past, including the Reformation history, have always been influenced by the availability and distribution of the necessary financial means.

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Wittenberger Reformators ineingesetzt, so verschwindet die präzise inhaltliche Füllung zusehends aus der Literatur. Wenn der Begriff trotzdem benützt wird, so geht es darum anzuzeigen, dass es zur Loslösung von der traditionellen Kirche und ihrer Lehre gekommen ist. Inhaltlich lassen sich verschiedene Spielarten des neugewonnenen Standpunktes denken.”

⁵⁵ See Z VII–XI; Urs Leu, “Zwinglis Privatbibliothek,” in *Die Zürcher Reformation in Europa*, ed. Albisser and Opitz – forthcoming.

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Deconstructing the Protestant Liberation of the Bible: The Case of the Low Countries

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Abstract: The Grand Narrative of the liberation of Scripture has long taken for granted that the late medieval Catholic Church took a negative, if not repressive, attitude towards vernacular Bible reading; that the Scriptures were only opened up for the masses with the advent of Luther and the Reformers; and that the Catholic authorities reacted by intensifying their repressive policy. Though explicitly criticized in scholarly literature over the last decade, this Grand Narrative, or Protestant Paradigm, continues to pop up in confessionally-colored scholarly publications, as well as in accounts of the Reformation that are destined for a general audience. The present essay examines three incarnations of the Grand Narrative in Dutch Protestant Bible culture. Firstly, it has been argued that the Bibles published by William Vorsterman (not only the edition of 1528, but all subsequent editions) betray sympathies with the upcoming Reformation; secondly, that the printer-publisher Jacob van Liesvelt was beheaded on account of the protestantizing marginal glosses in his Bibles, especially the 1542 edition; and thirdly, that his widow Maria Ancxt continued to print Protestant Bibles from the late 1540s until the early 1560s, in obvious violation of the anti-heresy edicts, yet without being harassed by the Antwerp authorities. The aim of this article is to debunk these incarnations of the Grand Narrative.

Keywords: historiography of the Reformation, 16th-century Dutch Bibles, Jacob van Liesvelt, Willem Vorsterman, Maria Ancxt

1 Introduction: The Liberation of the Bible as a Grand Narrative of the Protestant Reformation

In a series of articles that began in 2005, the Canadian scholar Andrew Colin Gow – a practicing Jew – has challenged what he and others have called the Protestant Paradigm. This paradigm denotes the conviction, still prevalent in Protestant

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milieus – both scholarly and otherwise – that the Bible remained a closed book for large periods of the Middle Ages, due to the strictures of the Catholic Church, and was only made accessible to the masses with the arrival of Martin Luther and the Reformation. This view, at least in part, can be traced back to the Reformer of Wittenberg himself. Gow made great efforts to remind the scholarly community that this view was, and is, erroneous, and that the Bibles that circulated in great quantities in late medieval Germany and the Low Countries, both in manuscript and in print, were avidly read by the public.¹

Andrew Gow's scholarly jeremiad was the point of departure for a Groningen group of scholars, led by Sabrina Corbellini, who concentrated on comparable prejudices regarding Bible reading (or the absence thereof) in regions such as France and Counter-Reformation Italy. The results of the group's critical work, which uncovered multiple paradigms regarding Bible reading in early modern Europe, were collected in a thematic volume of the journal *Church History and Religious Culture* in 2013.²

Notwithstanding such a multiplication of paradigms, I preferred to use Gow's initial expression "Protestant Paradigm" in a broader and more general sense when I published an article in the *Catholic Historical Review* (2018) entitled "Vernacular Bible Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Catholic Position Revisited."³ In that article the expression "Protestant Paradigm" refers to the aforementioned outmoded idea that the medieval Catholic Church authorities forbade the reading of vernacular Bibles by the laity, and that the Bible was only opened to the masses following the Protestant Reformers' arrival on the

1 See Andrew C. Gow, "Challenging the Protestant Paradigm: Bible Reading in Lay and Urban Contexts of the Later Middle Ages," in *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan and Thomas Burman, *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions* 123 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 161–91; Gow, "The Contested History of a Book: The German Bible of the Later Middle Ages and Reformation in Legend, Ideology, and Scholarship," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 9 (2009): 2–37; Id., "Une histoire de *Geschichtsklitterungen* protestantes: Les Bibles médiévales," in *Vernacular Bible and Religious Reform in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era*, ed. Wim François and A.A. [August] den Hollander, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 287 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 29–52.

2 Sabrina Corbellini et al., "Challenging the Paradigms: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Late Medieval Europe," *Church History and Religious Culture* 93 (2013): 171–88. See also Corbellini, "Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit and Awakening the Passion: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Medieval Europe," in *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation: Books, Scholars and Their Readers in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Matthew McLean, *Library of the Written Word* 20 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2012), 15–39.

3 Wim François, "Vernacular Bible Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The 'Catholic' Position Revisited," *The Catholic Historical Review* 104/1 (2018): 23–56.

scene; in the present article, the expression “Protestant Paradigm” encompasses the related prejudice that, after the advent of the Reformation, the Catholic authorities, both ecclesiastical and civil, intensified their efforts to keep the vernacular Bible out of the hands of the laity.

Meanwhile, the same line of thought can be found in the third volume of *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, from 2016, in an article by Kenneth G. Appold, who can hardly be suspected of anti-Protestant sentiments: “Statements such as ‘Luther rescued the Bible from papal tyranny’, ‘the Reformation gave the Bible back to the people’ or ‘the Catholic church banned Bible-reading’ are among the more popular of the (typically Protestant) generalizations which, at the very least, need heavy qualification.”⁴ And in a French overview article on German and English Bible translations – the latter tradition indeed being far more restrictive than any other Continental practices – Gergely Juhász complains that “the majority of representations of the Reformation depict a late medieval Church which not only neglects the Scriptures, but even hides them from the people,” while adding that “it is clear for everybody that this position cannot be maintained anymore.” Juhász also points to the Reformers themselves as the source of these mistaken allegations, but, even more significantly, that their claims have been isolated from the polemical context in which they were expressed in the sixteenth century and taken literally by “modern readers.”⁵

It should be emphasized that the paradigm, as it was incarnated in many narratives, myths or legends, contributed hugely to the construction of confessional – especially Protestant – identities at the beginning of the Early Modern Era. These identities were subsequently reinforced in the second confessional era, between the 1850s and the 1970s, and have long been dominant in historiography. Peter Marshall, author of the book *1517: Martin Luther and the Invention of the Reformation*, contributed to an Oxford University Press blog to mark the publication of his book and the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The blog discusses 9.5 myths about the Reformation, the third myth being that “Luther was the first person to translate the Bible into German.” In his comments, Marshall observes that “Protestants themselves started the myth that the Bible was completely neglected in the Middle Ages. But if there hadn’t been a huge interest in the Bible

4 Kenneth G. Appold, “The importance of the Bible for early Lutheran theology,” in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3: *From 1450 to 1750*, ed. Euan Cameron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 439–61, here 439.

5 Gergely Juhász, “La Bible imprimée et sa Réforme,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 106/1 (2018): 73–89, here 88: “... la plupart des présentations de la Réforme décrivent une Église médiévale tardive qui, non seulement ignore les Écritures, mais les cache délibérément au peuple. Il est désormais clair pour chacun que cette position n’est plus défendable” [English translation from the French is ours].

among medieval Catholics, Reformation ideas would have struggled to get traction.” To wind up this overview and avoid the impression of an anti-Protestant bias, I fully approve of another statement of Kenneth Appold’s: “Catholic polemicists circulate their own distortions of the Reformation, of course, but those are less pertinent to this particular issue.”⁶

Whether Gow’s concept of the “Protestant Paradigm” is preferable to the more traditional approach of “Myths of the Reformation” may be left as the subject of further debate. For my part, I refer in the title of the present section to the liberation of the Bible as one of the Protestant Reformation’s Grand Narratives, which is of course yet another concept. Whatever the preference here may be, in this essay, I illustrate how that Grand Narrative is incarnated in smaller particular narratives related to Dutch Bible culture, three of which I elaborate on and deconstruct below: firstly, the Bibles published by Willem Vorsterman (not only the 1528 edition, but all subsequent editions too) exhibit sympathies with the upcoming Reformation; secondly, the printer-publisher Jacob van Liesvelt was beheaded because the Bibles he published, especially his 1542 Bible, contain marginal glosses that articulate Protestant ideas; and thirdly, Van Liesvelt’s widow Maria Ancxt continued to print Protestant Bibles from the late 1540s until the early 1560s, in obvious violation of the anti-heresy edicts, yet without being harassed by the Antwerp authorities. Although the printer-publishers under consideration also published French Bibles, as well as Bibles in other languages, I will concentrate here on their Dutch Bible production.⁷

2 Willem Vorsterman

In 1528, the Antwerp printer-publisher Willem Vorsterman (†1543) brought his famous illustrated folio Bible onto the market.⁸ It was devised as a Catholic alternative to the Bible that his Antwerp colleague and competitor Jacob van

⁶ Appold, “The importance of the Bible,” 439.

⁷ More information on the editions of the Bible that are discussed here can be retrieved from the online bibliography of Bibles printed in Belgium and the Netherlands: www.bibliasacra.nl (last accessed 29 June 2020).

⁸ For Vorsterman’s 1528 edition, see Wim François, “De Vorstermanbijbel van 1528 en later: naar een katholieke bijbel,” in *De Bijbel in de Lage Landen. Elf eeuwen van vertalen*, ed. Paul Gillaerts et al. (Heerenveen: Jongbloed, 2015), 237–65, here 238–52; François, “The Compositors’ Neglect or the True Story Behind the Prohibition of Vorsterman’s Dutch Bibles,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 91/2 (2015): 239–56, here 240–47; A.A. [August] den Hollander, *De Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen. Dutch Translations of the Bible 1522–1545*, Bibliotheca Bibliographica Neerlandica 33 (Nieuwkoop: de Graaf Publishers, 1997), 90–92, 189–93, 226, and 350–57.

Liesvelt had published two years earlier in 1526, but which had been viewed with suspicion because its text and canon, among other characteristics, were inspired by Luther's. However, Vorsterman's 1528 Bible can hardly be characterized as a Catholic version, as can be seen from its text, its biblical canon, and its prologue.

Vorsterman's 1528 Bible has a very eclectic prologue, which even includes elements taken from Luther's preface to his 1523 Pentateuch edition (although the harshest polemical elements of this preface were attenuated).⁹ The text of Vorsterman's Old Testament has long been the subject of scholarly debate, but on the basis of thorough text-critical research, Louis Vermeulen has arrived at new conclusions. The text is now believed to have been compiled on the basis of late medieval Dutch and Low-German Bibles, especially the Delft Bible (1477). In a second movement, these Dutch and Low-German Bibles were thoroughly compared with Latin Vulgate editions. In order to have a modern, readable text, this Vulgate translation was further adapted on the basis of Van Liesvelt's 1526 Bible; in the course of this adaptation, Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros' Complutensian Polyglot, including the Hebrew original, was consulted, with a view to a critical assessment of Vorsterman's composite. Variants according to the Hebrew have been included in the margins of Vorsterman's Old Testament, which gives it a somewhat more humanist appearance than Van Liesvelt's version.¹⁰ Curiously, the New Testament of Vorsterman's 1528 Bible was not based on Van Liesvelt's text, but on Christoffel van Ruremund's translation of 1526, which was in turn based on Luther's New Testament, albeit in various passages corrected according to Erasmus' *Novum Testamentum* (and its *Annotationes*).¹¹ In contrast to the translation of the Old Testament, which was seldom, if ever, liable to complaints regarding confessionally suspect texts, several of these Lutheran-Erasmian renderings of New Testament passages would be contested by the Catholic authorities. To mention only a few standard examples: Matt 3:2 and Matt 4:17 read "Repent!" ("Hebt berou") as a translation of the Erasmian "Resipiscite," and not of the Vulgate's "Poenitentiam agite." The "ecclesia" of Matt 16:18 is translated as "congregation" ("ghemeynte"), and not as "Church," and the "presbyteroi ecclesiae" of James 5:14 is translated as "the elders of the congregation" ("dye oudtste

9 For a more extensive discussion of the prologue, see François, "De Vorstermanbijbel van 1528 en later," 238–43.

10 Louis Vermeulen, "die alder beste maniere van ouer te setten: Een andere visie op het gebruik van bronnen in het Oude Testament van de Vorstermanbijbel," *Trajecta* (27) 2018: 57–126. Vermeulen's painstaking text-critical work replaces earlier studies on the text of Vorsterman's Old Testament, including the hypothesis of the Philadelphia Psalter ca. 1485, which Youri Desplenter saw as the basis for the Psalter in the Vorsterman Bible.

11 I am very grateful to Louis Vermeulen for having sent me an account of his recent research regarding the text of Vorsterman's New Testament.

vander ghemeynten”), instead of “the priests of the Church.” On the other hand, in Rom 3:28 we read: “For we account a man to be justified by faith, without the works of the law,” omitting the word “alone,” in apposition to “faith,” which we find in Luther’s German translation and the Dutch versions in its wake, but which is absent from the Greek. The choice to leave out the word “alone” had already been made in Van Ruremund’s 1526 New Testament and betrays a humanist mindset. As regards the canon, Vorsterman’s 1528 Bible followed the example of the Liesvelt Bible, which was in turn inspired by Luther’s New Testament, in relegating the books of Hebrews, Jude, James, and Revelation to the back of the New Testament, where they formed a kind of deuterocanonical appendix.

The correctors who had been assigned to emend the Liesvelt Bible saw before them an edition that, retrospectively, may be characterized by scholars as a humanist version, but equally displays undeniable influences from the upcoming Reformation. In the prologue as well as in an “after-correction” (*na-correctie*) that follows the Song of Songs, the correctors showed great embarrassment with the final result. And if, with regard to the biblical canon, they were able to offer some sophisticated explanations that provided them with an acceptable escape, they were on far more delicate ground when addressing the humanist and Reformation-oriented readings that remained in the New Testament. They complained about the craftsmen in the printing office – “the compositors” according to the prologue, the “printers” according to the “after-correction,” – whom they blamed for having consciously neglected to include the emendations the correctors had recommended.

The late Cornelis Augustijn, a Church historian who belonged to a Northern Dutch Protestant tradition, did not take the embarrassment expressed by the correctors of the Bible very seriously, even suggesting that they shared the Erasmian-Lutheran ideas that were characteristic of dissident circles in the Low Countries in that period.¹² Nevertheless, the discomfiture of the correctors may have been more sincere than Augustijn allowed, since immediate steps were taken to eliminate the most outspokenly Reformation-oriented passages of Vorsterman’s 1528 Bible. In 1529, only a few months after the first edition, a revised version of the New Testament was published with the contested passages brought into conformity with the Vulgate; this revised version made use of Michiel Hillen van Hoochstraten’s 1527 Dutch New Testament.¹³ Matt 3:2 and Matt 4:17 have the

¹² Cornelis Augustijn, “De Vorstermanbijbel van 1528,” *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis/Dutch Review of Church History* 56 (1975–76): 78–94, here 88–90 and 94.

¹³ For the basic information on Vorsterman’s Catholic Bibles of the years 1529–1531, see also François, “De Vorstermanbijbel van 1528 en later,” 253–58; “The Compositors’ Neglect,” 247–49; den Hollander, *De Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen*, 93–94, 226–28, 358–60, 369–74, and 382–86.

“vulgarized” version “Do penance!” (“Doet penitencie”). The “ecclesia” of Matt 16:18 is translated as “Church,” and the “presbyteroi ecclesiae” of James 5:14 is actually translated as “the priests of the congregation of the Church” (“de priestere vander ghemeeynten der kercken”). The variant readings from the Greek, which had been located in the main text of the 1528 edition, were massively relegated to the margins. Since this was not an octavo, let alone a sextodecimo – the usual format for separate editions of the New Testament – but was rather a folio edition, it is manifest that the intention was for the 1529 New Testament to be bound together with the 1528 Old Testament. The books of Hebrews, James, and Jude were returned to their canonical, Catholic order. This process of catholicizing the Vorsterman Bible continued with the publication of two separate editions of the New Testament in 1530, one in octavo and another in sextodecimo format. This New Testament has all the remaining paratextual elements removed – including the marginal references to the Greek – and is preceded by an outspokenly Catholic prologue entitled *Den kersten leser saluyt* (*Greetings to the Christian Reader*). Both 1530 editions also include translations of the Epistle readings for the Mass that were taken from the Old Testament, a characteristic feature of Catholic editions since the Middle Ages, meant to help the faithful follow the liturgical lessons that were read or sung in Latin in the church. This process of catholicization of the Vorsterman Bible came to a climax with the publication of a new complete Bible in 1531, with a general prologue stripped of its borrowings from the Luther Bible and of other elements that were considered to be too sympathetic to the Reformation. The 1531 Bible also contains the Dutch translation of the Vulgate New Testament without marginal glosses or other paratextual elements, but is prefaced by the Catholic *Greetings to the Christian Reader*.

In 1532 a new edition of the Bible was issued, but now without the preface *Greetings to the Christian Reader*; this edition marked a cautious distancing from an all-too-outspokenly-Catholic Bible.¹⁴ More importantly, however, was the series of editions that Vorsterman began publishing in 1533–1534; these Bibles were again a reaction to the edition of the Bible that his colleague and competitor Van Liesvelt had first brought to the market in 1532.¹⁵ While preserving a Catholic Vulgate translation, Vorsterman followed Van Liesvelt by significantly increasing the paratextual apparatus of the 1533–1534 edition (and the editions in its wake).

14 François, “De Vorstermanbijbel van 1528 en later,” 258–59; “The Compositors’ Neglect,” 249–50; den Hollander, *De Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen*, 94, 228, and 397–401.

15 On the 1533–1534 Bible and its subsequent editions, see Wim François and Sabrina Corbellini, “Shaping Religious Reading Cultures in the Early Modern Netherlands: The ‘Glossed Bibles’ of Jacob van Liesvelt and Willem Vorsterman (1532–1534ff.),” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 6/2 (2019): 147–84; further François, “De Vorstermanbijbel van 1528 en later,” 259–64; “The Compositors’ Neglect,” 250–51; den Hollander, *De Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen*, 94, 228, and 423–27.

Vorsterman was the first among the Antwerp printers to include, in the front of the Bible, a register or table, which contains key phrases or topics, followed by a reference to the relevant Bible passages. Some of these topics may be liable to a Protestant interpretation, which is, however, balanced by other, outspokenly Catholic statements. This topical register, which offered the reader a new tool to navigate the Bible, was an alternative to the traditional liturgical reading schedule, which remained self-evidently in place in the 1533–1534 edition, more specifically between the Old and the New Testaments.

The margins of the 1533–1534 Bible – especially those of the Old Testament – were further filled with printed glosses, in addition to the references to the original Hebrew and cross-references to other biblical texts that were already in place. Some of these glosses are chronological or historicizing notes which situate the biblical events within the history of humanity since creation, connecting those events with antique empires and their kings or, even more importantly, relating them to the birth of Christ and other episodes in salvation history. Vorsterman borrowed these marginal notes to a large degree from Liesvelt's 1532 Bible, as well as from the Latin Vulgate Bibles that Jacob Sacon published in Lyons in numerous editions from 1506 onwards and to which were added, beginning in 1512, several annotations *in marginibus*; these and other sources drew extensively from the very popular, late-medieval world chronicles, a genre represented by Werner Rolevinck's *Fasciculus temporum*. New in Vorsterman's 1533–1534 Bible are the typological glosses next to the text and images; these glosses interpret Old Testament motifs as a prefiguration of the mysteries of the faith, and of the salutary events in the life of Christ, his Mother, or the Church. The glosses appeal to late medieval spiritual and theological interests, as they were canonized in books such as the *Biblia Pauperum* and *Speculum humanae salvationis*.¹⁶ New editions of what may be described as a catholicizing glossed Bible were published by Vorsterman in 1542, with reprints in 1543, 1544, and 1545, after the printer had died.

Apart from the aforementioned editions of the complete Bible and the New Testament, Vorsterman continued the publication of the Epistle and Gospel lessons for the Mass, a kind of book that was very popular from the late Middle Ages onwards and which enabled the faithful to follow the lessons that were read or sung in Latin during Mass.¹⁷ To these publications some editions containing

¹⁶ See also Wim François, "Typology—Back with a Vengeance! Text, Images, and Marginal Glosses in Vorsterman's 1534 Dutch Bible," in *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700*, ed. Walter S. Melion, James Clifton, and Michel Weemaes, *Intersections* 33 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 89–136, esp. 108–34.

¹⁷ Suzan Folkerts, "Middle Dutch Epistles and Gospels: The Transfer of a Medieval Bestseller into Printed Editions during the Early Reformation," in *Vernacular Bible and Religious Reform in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era*, ed. François and Den Hollander, 53–73.

separate biblical sections should be added, meaning that about 26 editions of the Bible are known to have been published by Vorsterman.¹⁸

Whereas Vorsterman as a person never had problems with the judicial authorities in the Low Countries, several of his Bibles were included on the Index of Forbidden Books that was issued in 1546 by the Louvain theologians.¹⁹ The theologians, however, managed to make a distinction between Vorsterman's biblical editions: in addition to the protestantizing New Testament and the Bible of 1528, they forbade the Bibles from 1533 to 1534 and later – mentioning only the reprints of 1544 and 1545 and obviously forgetting those of 1542 and 1543 – and they explicitly faulted the presence of indices, thus pointing the finger at the topical registers. The clearly Catholic editions of the years 1529–1532, as well as the editions containing the Epistle and Gospel readings for Mass, however, continued to be allowed. When the Louvain Bible – a Dutch translation of the Vulgate that was devised as the new, official Dutch translation for Catholics – was published in 1548, its translator Nicolaus van Winghe narrated in his elaborate prologue the story of the negligent compositors in Vorsterman's printing office, casting an aspersion of unreliability on Vorsterman's Bible production in general, despite the fact that strictly speaking only the first edition displayed a humanist and Lutheran character. Van Winghe's aim was obviously to put Vorsterman's Bible out of the market, to the greater benefit of the Louvain Bible. It is bothersome to observe that the famous Catholic Bible translator contributed to the narrative that Vorsterman was among the printers who had deliberately ventured into the market of Reformation-oriented Bibles.

The narrative was eagerly continued in the Northern Dutch Protestant historiography. Earlier we noted Cornelis Augustijn's assumption that the correctors' embarrassment over the compositors' neglect was largely feigned and that both groups shared the common goal of bringing a Bible onto the market that showed the influences of humanism and the upcoming Reformation – with Augustijn even

¹⁸ Vorsterman brought 20 Dutch editions onto the market (eight full Bibles, four New Testaments, six editions with the Epistles and Gospel readings for Mass, one Gospel edition, and one edition with the Passion of the Lord). He published three Danish editions (two New Testaments and a Psalter), two French New Testaments, and one Latin New Testament.

¹⁹ François, "The Compositors' Neglect," 251–53; regarding editions of the Bible and the Louvain Index of 1546, see also François, "De Leuvense Bijbel (1548) en de katholieke bijbelvertalingen van de tweede helft van de zestiende eeuw," in *De Bijbel in de Lage Landen*, ed. Gillaerts et al., 266–303, esp. 270–73; A.A. [August] den Hollander, *Verboden bijbels. Bijbelcensuur in de Nederlanden in de eerste helft van de zestiende eeuw*, Oratiereeks (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers UvA, 2003), 11–21; Jesús Martínez de Bujanda et al., *Index de l'Université de Louvain, 1546, 1550, 1558*, Index des livres interdits 2 (Sherbrooke: Centre d'Études de la Renaissance / Éditions de l'Université de Sherbrooke and Geneva: Droz, 1986), 46, 65–68, 106–30, and 408–12.

denying that Cardinal Jiménez' Complutensian Polyglot was ever used. Even the printer-publisher Vorsterman himself acquired the reputation of having provided, under the guise of editing a semi-official Bible, the market with crypto-Protestant editions.²⁰ Within this tradition, attention has gone predominantly, if not exclusively, to Vorsterman's 1528 protestantizing version, giving the impression that all its features were also present in the subsequent editions. This characterization is evident in the standard work *De Statenbijbel en zijn voorgangers* [*The Dutch Standard Version and its Predecessors*] first written by Cebus C. de Bruin in 1937 and revised by Frits G.M. Broeyer in 1993, which devotes about six pages to Vorsterman's 1528 Bible and concludes by simply mentioning the subsequent "reprints," without taking into account the distinctive character of the later editions. De Bruin and Broeyer, moreover, erroneously claimed that all of Vorsterman's editions of the Bible were included on the Louvain Index from 1546 onwards.²¹

Our point is that the label "protestantizing," strictly speaking, only applies to the edition of 1528. In the eyes of the printer-publisher Willem Vorsterman himself, this edition was an abortive attempt, an anomaly, and moreover one which was very quickly superseded, first by a more outspokenly Catholic edition and later by catholicizing glossed Bibles. This was a distinction that 19th and 20th-century Protestant historians in the second period of confessionalization were either unable or unwilling to make.

To all this should be added the results of the research conducted by Bert Tops on the extant copies of the aforementioned editions of the Vorsterman Bible (ca. 245 copies). Tops focusses on the owners' marks, users' traces, and readers' annotations. This ongoing research shows that these copies were largely used and preserved in Catholic households and religious institutes.²² This is the case for all editions indiscriminately, which enables us to conclude first of all that the prescriptions of the Louvain Index (and subsequent Indices) with regard to these editions of the Bible had limited influence. Secondly, the research into the historical readers of the Vorsterman Bible confirms that it should not be primarily situated within a Protestant tradition.

²⁰ See the aforementioned passage in Augustijn, *De Vorstermanbijbel van 1528*, 88–90 and 94.

²¹ Cebus Cornelis de Bruin, *De Statenbijbel en zijn voorgangers. Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen vanaf de Reformatie tot 1637*, rev. Frits Gerrit Murk Broeyer (Haarlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap and Brussels: Belgisch Bijbelgenootschap, 1993), 111–20, here 118–20.

²² See the first of these studies by Bert Tops, "The Quest for the Early Modern Bible Reader: The Dutch Vorsterman Bible (1533–1534), its Readers and Users," *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 6 (2019): 185–222.

3 Jacob van Liesvelt

We now turn to the Antwerp printer-publisher Jacob van Liesvelt (1489–1544), colleague and competitor of Vorsterman in printing and selling vernacular Bibles.²³ In contrast to Vorsterman, however, Van Liesvelt did not shy away from publishing versions of the Bible exhibiting sympathies with the upcoming Reformation, although his very first editions still had a late medieval text.²⁴ In a maximalist count, 22 editions of the Bible or parts of it are known to have left the printing office of Van Liesvelt.²⁵ His 1526 Bible, which became famous as the first complete, illustrated Bible in Dutch, was based upon Luther's text, as much as had already been published, and used Luther's canon. In most subsequent editions, Van Liesvelt's text was further adapted to Luther's, as this gradually became available, though the text of the Bibles beginning in 1538 and published under the name of Hansken (i) van Liesvelt (but not the text of the separate editions of the New Testament) followed the Vulgate in translating certain confessionally sensitive biblical passages – something that is usually overlooked in the older historiography. Hence we read in Matt 3:2: "Mend thy ways! ("Betert U"), but in Matt 4:17: "Do penance" (vulgarized)²⁶; in Matt 16:18: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" ("kercke"; vulgarized); James 5,14: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the elders of the assembly" ("vergaderingen").²⁷ On the other hand, Liesvelt was quite consistent in adding staunchly Reformation-oriented

23 Recent publications on Van Liesvelt and his Bible production include: A.A. [August] den Hollander, "De Liesveltbijbel van 1526 en later: naar een protestantse bijbel," in *De Bijbel in de Lage Landen*, ed. Gillaerts et al., 226–36; den Hollander, *De Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen*, passim.

24 Suzan Folkerts and Arend Elias Oostindiër, "New Bibles and Old Reading Habits Around 1522: The Position of the New Testament Translation of the Devotio Moderna among Dutch Printed Bibles," *Quaerendo* 47 (2017): 175–98.

25 We have copies left of 18 Dutch editions and one French edition published under the name of Jacob, and one Dutch edition under the name of Hansken van Liesvelt (1538). Two further editions of the Dutch New Testament by Jacob van Liesvelt (1542 and 1543) are included on the Louvain Index of 1546; no copies of these editions have been preserved.

26 In sixteenth century Dutch Bibles, we find Matt 3:2 and Matt 4:17 translated in three different ways: "Doet boete" is a literal translation of the Vulgate "Poenitentiam agite," which may be translated into English as "Do penance." Furthermore, we find "Hebt berou," which, as a translation of the Erasmus "Resipiscite," emphasizes the inner aspect of remorse and regret over past mistakes, and which can be translated into English as "Repent." Finally, we read "Betert u," which may also be considered a translation of "Resipiscite," but nevertheless stresses the call to become a better person (in the future) and to act accordingly; the most appropriate English translation here is "Mend thy ways."

27 In Dutch there are three different translations: apart from "kercke" ("Church"), there is "vergaderinge," translated as "assembly" and "gemeynste," translated as "congregation."

paratextual materials from 1532 onwards,²⁸ an evolution that culminated in another famous edition of the Bible, that of 1542, which contained marginal glosses arguing in favor of justification by faith through grace alone and against the Catholic theological and sacramental system.²⁹

Van Liesvelt had run into trouble on various occasions for allegedly publishing forbidden books. As early as 1533, an anonymous citizen had denounced Van Liesvelt for having adopted a biblical canon that deviated from the official one of the Church; we do not know whether this denunciation precipitated the public burning of several books, including Bibles, from Van Liesvelt's workshop some years later in 1535–1536; in any case this act is one of the rare instances of actual Bible burning in the Low Countries. Van Liesvelt was summoned on two other occasions to appear before the judicial authorities, once in 1536 and another time in 1542, for having printed materials without obtaining the required permissions, but he seems to have been acquitted on both occasions.³⁰

In May 1545, Jacob van Liesvelt was arrested once more and brought before the local tribunal in his native town of Antwerp. The sheriff of Antwerp had initiated a new prosecution of Van Liesvelt who was again accused of having printed several books without obtaining the required permission. These renewed juridical actions were probably taken in the wake of the anti-heresy edict of 1544, which summed up the increasingly stringent censorship measures that had been imposed in the preceding years.³¹ In light of later accounts of these events,³² it is important to stress that the accusation, as it is recorded in the archival materials, preserves no

²⁸ See Renske Annelize Hoff, "Framing Biblical Reading Practices: The Impact of the Paratext of Jacob van Liesvelt's Bibles (1522–1545)," *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 6 (2019): 223–50.

²⁹ On Van Liesvelt's 1542 Bible, see Den Hollander, "De Liesveltbijbel van 1526 en later," 231–33; *De Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen*, 36, 194–98, 229–30, and 480–86.

³⁰ Wim François, "Jacob van Liesvelt as a Martyr for the Evangelical Belief?," in *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, ed. Johan Leemans and Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia* 51 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 341–69, here 351–54.

³¹ Regarding censorship measures, see Wim François, "Vernacular Bible Reading and Censorship in Early Sixteenth Century: The Position of the Louvain Theologians," in *Lay Bibles in Europe, 1450–1800*, ed. A.A. [August] den Hollander and Mathijs Lamberigts, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 198 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 69–96, here 79–95.

³² On Van Liesvelt's beheading, the facts, and the genesis of the narrative, see Wim François, "The Antwerpian Printer Jacob van Liesvelt, his Widow and their Bibles. Myths and Facts from a Confessional Era," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 89 (2020) – forthcoming. References are to *Antwerpsch Archievenblad*, ed. Pieter Génard, vol. 8 (Antwerp: stadsbestuur, s.d. [1872]), 346–53, esp. 347: "declaravit reus dat de boecken byden aenleggere gespecificeert, langhen tydt voer de placaten Ons Genadichs Heeren des Keysers ende vele jaeren te voren, by diverse boeckprinters, gedruckt hebben geweest ende mids datse by gheen en mandaten en syn verboden geweest, ende dat meer is, dat eenighe van dien syn gedruckt *cum gratia et privilegio*, dat hy vuyt

specific reference to any of Van Liesvelt's contested books, let alone to any of his editions of the Bible (although it remains possible that a list was added to the original accusation). Neither in his defense, which the Antwerp printer undertook with the assistance of two lawyers, did Van Liesvelt ever refer to the publication of prohibited Bibles, which may lead us to doubt whether an accusation of this kind can have played a major role in the trial. Considering the delaying tactics of the local Antwerp tribunal and its apparent unwillingness to condemn Van Liesvelt, the case was apparently taken over by the prosecutor general in Brussels with the result that Van Liesvelt was sentenced to death on 27 November 1545 and beheaded the next day.

The mid 1540s were years of intensified repression. Books and Bibles were included on the Louvain Index of 1546, but strikingly only Van Liesvelt's later editions were formally prohibited: inevitably the 1542 Bible, in addition to the New Testaments of 1542 and 1543 – no copies of which have been preserved – and that of 1544. In this atmosphere of increasing repression, religious dissidents from the Low Countries started an exodus to London, to territories in Germany, and eventually to Emden in East-Frisia, taking with them copies of the Liesvelt Bible, which reminded them of the heroic beginnings of their movement. New editions of the Liesvelt Bible were published in Emden, especially in the second half of the 1550s and in the early 1560s, until the *Deux Aes Bible* (1562) became the semi-official Bible of the Dutch Reformed.

The first to make an explicit connection between Van Liesvelt's execution and his Reformation-oriented Bible production was Jacob van Wesenbeke. He was not just anybody. In 1546, about half a year after Van Liesvelt had been sentenced to death, Van Wesenbeke became Antwerp's town secretary, succeeding his father, and in this sense, he belonged to the circles that were most informed about Antwerp affairs. Ten years later, in 1556, he was appointed town pensionary, the most important legal officer in the town's service. In this capacity, he became the right-hand man of William of Orange, when the latter was appointed governor of Antwerp in 1566. A year later, when the authority of the King of Spain was restored in the town, Van Wesenbeke was sent ahead of William of Orange to Dillenburg. When he left Antwerp, Van Wesenbeke is said to have taken with him the seals of the town, in addition to a large number of official records and letters. These documents may have served him well in editing his writings. In Dillenburg, Van Wesenbeke became the ghost-writer and the first propagandist for William of Orange and his movement. In this capacity he published, in 1569, a book that may have been written three years earlier and that was entitled *De Beschriivinge*

dien (nyet meynende ydt daerane te misdoene) deselve alleenlick naegedruckt heeft voer date vanden lesten mandemente."

Van den Gheschiedenissen in der Religien saken toeghedragen in den Nederlanden [Description of Events That Took Place in the Netherlands in the Matter of Religion]. It is in this book that Van Wesenbeke, more than two decades after Van Liesvelt's execution, included a short note, according to which the printer-publisher was accused before the tribunal as a result of a marginal note in "a Bible" which read "that man's salvation was brought about by Christ alone" – without an explicit reference to any particular edition.³³ It is very difficult to find a gloss with that specific wording in any of Van Liesvelt's editions of the Bible, not even in that of 1542, which in a later tradition has been identified as the one meant by Van Wesenbeke. The content of the gloss is of course reflected in various parts of the paratextual material added to the 1542 edition, such as the gloss on Col 1:2³⁴ and that on Matt 4:22,³⁵ amongst other passages. Given that the records of Van Liesvelt's trial do not refer to a Bible, let alone to its explicit Reformation-oriented marginal glosses, the crucial question is whether Van Wesenbeke's note gives us additional first-hand information about the trial, or whether it belongs to the beginnings of the narrative, legend, or myth that would surround the Antwerp printer and his Bible(s) in the decades and even centuries after his execution. It is not absurd to maintain that the answer to this question may be inspired by the confessional sympathies of the scholar doing the research.

Whatever the case may be, Van Wesenbeke's note was picked up from the beginning by Dutch Protestants and included in the narrative about Van Liesvelt that they handed down.³⁶ The following elements resound as a refrain when dealing with Van Liesvelt and his Bible, starting with *Boek-Zaal der Nederduytsche*

33 [Jacques de Wesenbeke,] *De Beschriivinge Van den Gheschiedenissen in der Religien saken toeghedragen in den Nederlanden*... ([Cologne: Gottfried Hirtshorn], 1559 [=1569]), 22: "Jacop van Liesvelt tAntwerpen om eenen Bijbel in Nederduytsch na ghedruct te hebben met een Marginale Annotatie dat des Menschen salicheyt alleen doer Christum quam"; Jacques van Wesenbeeck, *La description de l'estat succes et occurences, advenues au Pais bas au fait de la Religion* ([Cologne: Gottfried Cervicornus d.J.], 1569), 20: "Jacques Van Liesvelt en Anvers, pour avoir après ung autre exemplaire imprimé une Bible avec une marginale annotation, que la salvation de l'homme procédoit seulement par Jesu-Christ" (the text has been published in Jacques de Wesenbeke, *Mémoires de Jacques de Wesenbeke*, intr. and notes Charles Rahlenbeck, Collection de mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de Belgique 5 [Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1859], 47–392, here 68).

34 Col 1:2: "genade dats vergevinge der sonden door Cristum, vrede dat is dat in ons te weten is dat wi seker gheloven door Cristum salich te zijn."

35 Matt 4:23: "Euangelie, dat is de vercondinghe der gratien ende verlossinge gecregen ende gegeuen door cristum ende lange verwacht."

36 On the spread of the narrative regarding Van Liesvelt, his 1542 Bible, and his beheading, see François, "The Antwerpian Printer Jacob van Liesvelt, his Widow and their Bibles," – forthcoming.

Bybels [*The Library of Dutch Bibles*], published by Isaac Lelong (1712).³⁷ First, the Liesvelt Bible was at the heroic beginnings of Protestant Bible production and Bible reading in the Low Countries, and as such it was held in honor and it was used, especially the 1542 edition, as a basis for further editions and revisions of the Bible used by Protestants (of all denominations); second, Van Liesvelt was beheaded precisely because of the Protestant marginal notes in one of his Bibles; third, the Catholics who executed Van Liesvelt were opponents of the pure Word of God, having prohibited Van Liesvelt's Bible as well as other vernacular versions; the Dutch Louvain Bible based upon the Vulgate and published in 1548 was presented as a forgery.

In the period of the so-called second confessionalization, running from about 1850 to 1970, the gap between Catholics and Protestants was reaffirmed, and their respective identities were reinvigorated. In the Netherlands, this evolution crystallized around the reestablishment of the Catholic hierarchy in 1853, which led to a vehement reaction among the Protestants and a revisiting of national confessional history. This was precisely the context in which Albert van Toorenenbergen, with his *Schetsen uit de lijdensgeschiedenis der Protestantsche Apostolisch-Katholieke Kerk* [*Historical Sketches from the Persecution of the Protestant Apostolic-Catholic Church*], produced a work that was part polemical history and part Protestant martyrology.³⁸ Recalling the Catholic violence against the nascent Protestant movement, Van Toorenenbergen praises Van Liesvelt as a martyr who spread the true Word of God, as someone who deserved to be included in the official martyrologies of ancient times. Thus, Van Toorenenbergen added a fourth component to the aforementioned elements of the narrative.

During this period of the second confessionalization, explicitly non-confessional ideologies with their own secular identities entered the debate. In the southern part of the Low Countries, which became in the nineteenth century the current state of Belgium, Catholics and anti-clerical liberals came to loggerheads. The liberal Antwerp historians Frans Hendrik Mertens and Karel Lodewijk Torfs, in their eight-volume *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen* [*History of Antwerp*], argued that Van Liesvelt's condemnation may have been provoked by, in addition to the famous annotation already recorded by Van Wesenbeke, what they considered an anti-clerical image inserted into the Gospel story about the

37 Isaac Le Long, *Boek-Zaal der Nederduytsche Bybels...* (Amsterdam: Hendrik Vieroot, 1732), 567–69.

38 Albert van Toorenenbergen, *Schetsen uit de lijdensgeschiedenis der Protestantsche Apostolisch-Katholieke Kerk*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: C.L. Brinkman, 1854), 84–89, here 89: "Nauwelijks was de laatste uitgave in 1542 voltooid, waar Liesveldt onderscheidene kanteekeningen had bijgevoegd ... maar vooral, nauwelijks had de geestelijkheid gelezen, dat 'de saelicheyd der menschen alleen compt door Jesum Christum' of het lot des uitgevers was bestist."

temptation of Jesus in the desert (Matt 4:3). The image in question shows the devil in a monk's frock, his horns sticking out from the cap and his goat's paws from below the habit; a rosary dangles from the cord around his belly. This image must have ignited the ire of the Catholic authorities, according to the conjecture of Mertens and Torfs, who were unhindered by the complete absence of such a motif in the sources or by the very same depiction of the motif of the devil in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15) in irreproachably Catholic publications, such as *De Woestijne des Heeren* [*The Desert of The Lord*], which was compiled by the Franciscan friars Peter Godefridi and Frans Vervoort and published in 1551 by Hans (II) van Liesvelt. In defiance of the obscurantism and repression of the Catholic authorities, Van Liesvelt behaved as an early herald of the (liberal) freedom of the printing press, according to Mertens and Torfs.³⁹ The reference to the image accompanying the Gospel story about the temptation of Jesus in the desert was picked up in Protestant historiography in the North, where it was included by Hendrik van Druten in his valuable *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Bijbelvertaling* [*History of Dutch Bible Translation*], published in several parts between 1895 and 1905. However, the author was careful enough not to state explicitly that the illustration played a role in the condemnation of Van Liesvelt. Van Druten also stressed that it was not because of his text but because of his notes that Van Liesvelt's 1542 edition had been outlawed and the printer himself found guilty and sentenced to death – the specific reference to the unfindable gloss quoted by Van Wesenbeke was altogether omitted by the Church historian.⁴⁰

The five elements that collectively make up the narrative of Van Liesvelt during an important part of the second confessionalization were gradually, but inevitably, deconstructed by scholars. The first professional historian to engage in the deconstruction process was, not by coincidence, the Antwerp town archivist and Catholic priest Floris Prims, who in his elaborate history of the town of Antwerp, in the seventh of 29 volumes, observed that the alleged reason for Van Liesvelt's death sentence, namely, the inclusion of the above-discussed marginal gloss in his 1542 edition, is not to be found in the archival records. Prims argued that no further conclusion could be drawn than that Van Liesvelt was sentenced to death because he had dared to publish books without the prior consent of the

39 Frans Hendrik Mertens and Karel Lodewijk Torfs, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen sedert de stichting der stad tot onze tyden*, vol. 4 (Antwerp: Drukkery van J.-E. Buschmann, 1848), 275–76: "... zy verdedigden de vryheid der drukpers, welke men toen al bedacht was aen banden te leggen."

40 Hendrik van Druten, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Bijbelvertaling, tweede deel. Eerste stuk* (Rotterdam: D.A. Daamen, 1897), 428–30, here 428: "Niet om zijn tekst maar vooral om de aan-teekeningen was deze editie vogelvrij verklaard en de drukker zelf des doods schuldig bevonden."

competent authorities.⁴¹ By discussing the less critical works that were published in the decades before Van Liesvelt's execution, the aforementioned Dutch Church historian C.C. de Bruin also made a valuable attempt at offering a more objective view of Van Liesvelt and his Bible production. Nevertheless De Bruin still accepts without question the view that the sheriff of Antwerp prosecuted Van Liesvelt because of the marginal note in the Bible of 1542.⁴² The Dutch historian of the religious book, A.A. [August] den Hollander, was reluctant to mention this very element in his already referenced 1997 bibliographical work *De Nederlandse Bijbelvertalingen 1522–1545. Dutch Translations of the Bible 1522–1545*.⁴³ The same author critiques the traditional view in the chapter he wrote on the Antwerp printer for the 2015 book *De Bijbel in de Lage Landen: Elf eeuwen van vertalen [The Bible in the Low Countries: Eleven Centuries of Translating]*,⁴⁴ which includes the main lines of an article written in 2005 by the author of the present essay. Nevertheless, the tenacious narrative about Jacob van Liesvelt and his beheading on account of his (1542) Bible(s) and its Protestant gloss(es), still resurfaces in popular and semi-scientific publications, without nuance or regard for recent scholarly insights into the dossier. The case of Jacob van Liesvelt illustrates how difficult it is to debunk the narratives, legends, and myths of past historiography.

4 Maria Ancxt

This section of the essay focuses on a passage from the book *Pragmatic Toleration* published by the American scholar Victoria Christman in 2015, which repeats a position she defended in an article that appeared in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* in 2011.⁴⁵ Christman adds a new element to the Van Liesvelt narrative by arguing that his widow, Maria Ancxt (†1566), analogous to four other widows discussed in the text, continued to print heterodox Bibles after the execution of her husband, during a period in which imperial and papal legislation was growing increasingly stringent with regard to such

41 Floris Prims, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen*, vol. 7: *Onder de eerste Habsburgers (1477–1555)*, 1: *De politieke orde* (Antwerp: Standaard Boekhandel, 1938), 128–29; but also vol. 7/3: *Geestelijke orde* (Antwerp: Standaard Boekhandel, 1940), 291 and 294–96.

42 De Bruin, *De Statenbijbel en zijn voorgangers*, rev. Broeyer, 94–103 and 151–52, here 102.

43 Den Hollander, *Nederlandse Bijbelvertalingen 1522–1545*, 28–36.

44 Den Hollander, “De Liesveltbijbel van 1526 en later,” 233–34.

45 Victoria Christman, *Pragmatic Toleration: The Politics of Religious Heterodoxy in Early Reformation Antwerp, 1515–1555*, *Changing Perspectives on Early Modern Europe* 17 (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015), here 80–82; Id., “The Coverture of Widowhood: Heterodox Female publishers in Antwerp, 1530–1580,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 42/1 (2011): 77–97, here 77–78, 84–85, and esp. 86–89.

activity, though she herself escaped any form of judicial censure. In reply to Christman's position,⁴⁶ it should first be acknowledged that in the wake of the imperial edict of 1540, and especially the recapitulative edict of 1544, control of the printing industry did increase and repression hardened; indeed it was precisely this decree that led to the death sentence being imposed on Maria Ancxt's husband, Jacob van Liesvelt. It should be emphasized, however, that vernacular Bibles as such were never forbidden by imperial decree. What continued to be forbidden, and had been since the early 1520s, was publishing editions of the Bible that were provided with registers, marginal glosses, summaries above the chapters, and other paratextual elements that could steer a reader's interpretation in a heterodox direction. Moreover, Dutch Bibles based upon the German Luther Bible were increasingly regarded with a skeptical eye. Bibles displaying these characteristics were eventually included on the Louvain Index of 1546. A few weeks after the publication of the Index, the imperial authorities, the Louvain theologians, and the printer-publisher Bartholomew van Grave undertook to publish a "trustworthy" Dutch and French translation of the Vulgate, one devoid of all marginal glosses and intended to replace all former editions.⁴⁷ In the period that followed, there were simply no printers left in the Habsburg Low Countries who continued to, or dared to, publish heterodox Bibles. It is even more surprising that Christman also argues that Maria Ancxt continued to bring such Bibles onto the market in open defiance not only of the imperial decrees but also of the first papal Index of 1559. In the Index, we read, amongst other stipulations, that no edition of the Bible in the vernacular, nor any edition of the New Testament, should be printed, purchased, read, or held in possession without the written permission of the Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition. In reply to Christman's argument, I would point to the historical fact that this first Roman Index was so excessively restrictive that it received no application at all in the Catholic regions of Europe (let alone being in force in the Low Countries).⁴⁸

46 For a fuller treatment of this topic, see François, "The Antwerpian Printer Jacob van Liesvelt, his Widow and their Bibles," – forthcoming. On Maria Ancxt see also Heleen Wyffels, "Weduwen-drukkers in 16de eeuwse Antwerpen. Samengebracht in een biobibliografisch repertorium," *De Gulden Passer* 95/2 (2017): 231–60, esp. 239–40, and <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/nieuwetijd/english/odis/impressae-women-printers-in-early-modern-antwerp-leuven-and-douai> (last accessed 29 June 2020).

47 Regarding censorship measures culminating in the Louvain Index of 1546, see François, "Vernacular Bible Reading and Censorship," 79–95.

48 Jesús Martínez De Bujanda et al., *Index de Rome 1557, 1559, 1564: Les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente*, Index des livres interdits 8 (Sherbrooke: Université de Sherbrooke / Centre d'études de la Renaissance and Geneva: Droz, 1990), 37–39, 128–31, 137, and 307–31, here 325 and 331. Also Giorgio Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer: Church Censorship and Devotional Literature in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Peter Dawson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 71–73 and Wim François, "The Catholic Church and the Vernacular Bible in the Low Countries: A Paradigm Shift in the 1550s?," in *Discovering the Riches of the Word: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed.

It is true that Maria Ancxt was not subjected to judicial censure, but the reason for this is that the majority, if not all, of Ancxt's editions of the Bible were Catholic, or at least catholicized translations. Although some of her editions explored the limits of what was permissible, all bore an official approbation on either the title page or as part of the colophon. In other words, the evidence that Christman adduces in support of her thesis, uncritically published in her book and in *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, needs serious reappraisal based on accurate evaluation of the editions themselves. My own observations are based on an appraisal of nearly 20 vernacular editions of the Bible that I have been able to identify as having been published by Maria Ancxt.

Ancxt's publication activity started with two vernacular editions, in 1547 and 1548, respectively, of a quite traditional biblical genre, namely, the Epistle and Gospel readings for Mass. Even the most convinced adversaries of vernacular Bible reading were prepared to allow the laity to read such books, and their publication was seldom, if ever, contested. Surprisingly, Maria Ancxt used as a basis for her publications the text of the editions her husband had published and that are said to have caused him so much trouble. But as we remarked above, in the editions of the Bible published by the Van Liesvelt house since 1538, some of the confessionally delicate passages were catholicized, in the sense of being adapted to the Vulgate (and the passages with which this was not the case, such as James 5:14, were not used as readings at Mass). An example of this vulgatization can be found in Matt 16:13–19, the pericope that was read on the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter (*sinte Peeters verheffinge dach*, 22 February) as well as the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June). There we find the sentence: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church," instead of the Protestant "my congregation." Moreover, the Epistle and Gospel readings are preceded by a saints' calendar, traditionally printed in red and black ink. At the back of the book, a schedule is included which lists all the Sundays and feast days, and for each day indicates the page where the readings are to be found. In short, on the basis of a heterodox Bible, a thoroughly Catholic edition, containing the Epistle and Gospel readings for Mass, was composed. It comes as no surprise that both editions refer on their title page, and even more extensively in the colophon, to the approval of the competent book censor.

In addition to the Epistles and Gospels that were read at Mass, the Psalms were the Church's liturgical texts par excellence; consequently, from the Middle Ages onwards, the Psalms were frequently translated, copied, and

printed. Quite evidently, Maria Ancxt also ventured into this market. What is very peculiar, however, is that she used the text by Joannes Campensis, professor of Hebrew at the Louvain College of the Three Tongues (1519–1531). On the basis of the Hebrew text, Campensis had made a Latin paraphrase of the Psalms that was published for the first time in 1532 and went through several reprints in subsequent years. In 1533, the Louvain theologians, replying to a request for advice from the governess of the Low Countries, had pronounced a negative judgment on the publication of a Dutch and French translation of Campensis' Psalter. Notwithstanding the negative advice, several editions containing a Dutch, French, or other vernacular version had been published in the course of the 1530s. Strangely enough, not a single such edition was later put on the Louvain Index of 1546. This is obviously the reason that in 1548 Maria Ancxt reprinted the Dutch text of the Psalter according to Campensis' version, with three print runs known to have been undertaken in the same year. Moreover, in this case too, she received explicit permission from the competent book censor. The text of the Psalms in this edition is followed by the Dutch translation of the Letter of Saint Athanasius to Marcellinus; this version was based upon the Latin translation that Johann Reuchlin had made from the Greek original. The material regarding the Psalms is followed by a Dutch paraphrase of the book Ecclesiastes, likewise made by Campensis, as well as a meditation on praying the Our Father. The booklet as such is introduced by a letter from Campensis to Joannes Dantiscus, bishop of Culm since 1530, as well as by an address of Campensis to the reader.⁴⁹ From the second edition onwards, a saints' calendar was added immediately after the title page. Moreover, in 1549 or 1550, Maria Ancxt did publish a Dutch translation of the Wisdom books of Solomon – again with explicit ecclesiastical approbation – followed in 1551 by a second edition.

After having published editions of the Epistles and Gospels as well as of the Psalter, Maria Ancxt ventured into the market for New Testaments, both in Dutch and in French. Seven editions of the Dutch New Testament are known to have left her printing office between 1553 and 1565, and she may have published even more editions. All editions were provided with a *cum gratia et privilegio* as a guarantee that they had been officially approved. They are part of the more than 40 editions of

⁴⁹ Henry de Vocht, *History of the Foundation and the Rise of the Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense 1517–1550*, 4 vols. (Leuven: Librairie universitaire, 1951–1955), vol. 2: 120–22 and vol. 3: 154–208, esp. 190–95; Id., “Campensis' Psalterium,” in Id., *John Dantiscus and His Netherlandish Friends, As Revealed by Their Correspondence 1522–1546*, *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 16 (Leuven: Librairie universitaire, 1961), 136–48; Jamie H. Ferguson, “Miles Coverdale and the Claims of Paraphrase,” in *Psalms in the Early Modern World*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austin et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 137–54.

the (Catholic) New Testament that are known to have been published before the 1570s, all having the text of the Dutch Catholic Louvain Bible of 1548,⁵⁰ including its rendering of the aforementioned confessionally delicate passages (as well as others) in complete conformity with the Vulgate. All these New Testaments have, typically, a similar composition: the text is preceded by a calendar of saints and followed by those passages from the Old Testament that were read as a lesson during Mass, as well as by a schedule indicating which pericopes from the Bible were to be read on each Sunday and feast day and the pages where those pericopes were to be found. The peculiar shape of the editions of the Catholic New Testament in this period made them fit to follow the official liturgy of the Church.

Nevertheless, two features of Maria Ancxt's Dutch New Testaments made them somewhat peculiar. First, they bear on the title page a quotation of Mark 16:15-16a: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." According to August den Hollander, the printing of this quotation on the title page was an element that induced the Louvain theologians to include such editions on the Index of 1546, since they considered it a token of a dissident mindset, although the theologians did not make this suspicion explicit.⁵¹ If this is actually the case, Maria Ancxt's inclusion of this Bible verse was somewhat daring and, thus, an attempt to explore the limits of what was still possible. Moreover, Ancxt also included summaries above the chapters of her New Testament that were essentially borrowed from the New Testament and editions of the Bible that the Van Liesvelt house had published in the prior decades, though the summaries were largely catholicized in Ancxt's Bibles. Such a strategy may have been necessitated by the simple fact that these summaries were absent from the Louvain Bible of 1548 and were only added in its second edition of 1553, obviously too late for Ancxt to have them included in her first edition of the New Testament in the same year. As an illustration, I refer to the summary above Matt 16, which, according to the Liesvelt New Testament, has the words "How Jesus said that He would build his Church on the confession of the faith."⁵² Since the addition "on the confession of the faith" and thus the concealment of Peter's ministry was considered an expression of Protestant ideas, Ancxt had it removed from her editions of the New Testament. The

⁵⁰ François, "Catholic Church and the Vernacular Bible in the Low Countries," 265–75.

⁵¹ Den Hollander, *Verboden Bijbels*, 21.

⁵² Summary above Matt 16, according to Van Liesvelt's New Testament (1540) (comp. Liesvelt Bible [1535]): "Van die leeringhe der Pharizeen, Hoe Jesus sprac, dat hi zijn kercke tymmeren soude **op die belijdinge des gheloofs**. Hoe Petrus nae sijn belijdinghe van Christus ghestraft wert, Ende dat een yeghelijck zijn cruys draghen moet, die Christum na volghen wil, **Ende dat sommige die doot niet sien en sullen voor dat si den sone des menschen in sijn rijke sien**" [emphasis added in bold].

catholicization of the summary was completed by the addition of the sentence “God will reward everybody on the basis of his works” – the emphasis on works as a source of salvation being a genuine Catholic standpoint.⁵³ Also, in her later editions of the New Testament, Ancxt retained these summaries, which resulted in the summary above Matt 16 sounding even more Catholic than the summary included in the 1553 edition of the Louvain Bible, which has a quite neutral tone!

In 1560, Maria Ancxt printed two editions of the complete Bible for Jacomyne Bars, the widow of Henrick Peetersen van Middelburch. The text and its summaries are the same as the 1553 Louvain Bible, and the whole is preceded by a (shortened) prologue of the translator Nicolaus van Winghe, which is also contained in the same edition of 1553. Ancxt’s Bibles, as is the case with all her biblical editions, display the *cum gratia et privilegio* wording on the title page; on the verso of the title page the following is printed: “the Bible was checked and approved by learned men who received a mandate for that purpose by the Emperor,” and that it was therefore “admitted to be printed.” A more Catholic format than that was not to be found on the market at the time. Rarer still, is the edition that Maria Ancxt printed for another Antwerp publisher, Symon Cock (in the same year 1560), with the same format as the edition printed for Jacomyne Bars.

Maria Ancxt also ventured into the market for French New Testaments. In 1553, in the same year that she published a Dutch New Testament, she also brought a French edition onto the market, with an updated version published in 1561. And in 1555, a French version of the Epistle and Gospel readings for Mass left her printing office. Comparable conclusions can be drawn here as those that we found above relating to the Dutch Bible translations – conclusions that I explain elsewhere in greater detail.⁵⁴ To complete this section, it should be noted that none of the editions of the Bible printed by Maria Ancxt were ever included on the Index of Forbidden Books.

In conclusion, Christman’s argument that Maria Ancxt, after the death of her husband Jacob van Liesvelt, continued to publish Protestant biblical material without the consent of the competent book censors, and in open defiance of royal edicts, yet without being harassed by the authorities, cannot be maintained. Close investigation of the biblical copies in libraries in Europe and beyond clearly

53 Cf. summary above Matt 16, according to Ancxt’s New Testament (1553): “Van die leeringhe der Phariseen. Hoe Jesus sprack, waer op dat hy zijn kercke tymeren soude [text passage removed]. Hoe Petrus na zijn belijdinghe van Cristus ghestraft werdt. Ende dat een yeghelijck zijn cruys dragen moet, die Christum na volghen wilt, **ende dat God een yegelijc doen sal naer zijn gewercken**” [emphasis added in bold].

54 On Ancxt’s French Bible editions, see François, “The Antwerpian Printer Jacob van Liesvelt, his Widow and their Bibles,” – forthcoming.

demonstrates that the copies contain Catholic or largely catholicized material, and that the editions, without exception, bear the consent of the competent book censors. Maria Ancxt largely conformed herself to the censorship requirements; during the period in which she managed her printing office, no printer in the Habsburg Low Countries would have dared to do otherwise. She nevertheless tried to be innovative and creative within the boundaries of what was possible, as is shown by her publication of Campensis' Psalms. We do not see something as a "pragmatic toleration" that Ancxt or her publications may have needed from the part of the Antwerp city magistrate. This conclusion of course does not detract from Ancxt's merits as a widow who courageously continued the family business in unfortunate times, as Christman has rightly emphasized in both her publications. We may nevertheless hope that Christman's conclusions do not mark a new stage in the development of a confessionally biased Van Liesvelt narrative that does insufficiently take into account the format and content of the biblical materials themselves, nor engages in a critical discussion with the historiography.

5 Conclusion

The Grand Narrative or Paradigm of the liberation of Scripture by the Protestants, and the suppression of the Bible by the Catholics, has made its way into various narratives, myths or legends that developed within particular, national confessional traditions – I have shed light upon three such narratives from the Dutch Protestant confessional culture. In the Netherlands and in other regions of Europe,⁵⁵ more examples could be found, and contemporary historians ought to examine them with a critical eye. Notwithstanding the deconstruction into which this essay has ventured, and with a clear acknowledgment of the blind spots that are also present in Catholic historiography, I would like to stress as a final word that biblical culture was certainly more developed in early modern Protestantism than in early modern Catholicism, a difference that is reflected in the number of editions of the Bible that were printed in the respective milieus. The difference was due to the considerable reluctance among Catholic authorities to countenance

⁵⁵ An interesting and obvious parallel is William Tyndale, who was executed in 1536 in Brussels because of his "heretical" theological positions, whereas Protestant historiography since the seventeenth century propagated that he was martyred for having dared to translate the Bible into English. See Gergely Juhász and Paul Arblaster, "Can Translating the Bible Be Bad for Your Health? William Tyndale and the Falsification of Memory," in *More than a Memory*, ed. Leemans and Mettepenningen, 315–40.

vernacular Bible printing, which manifested itself far more outspokenly from the 1560–1570s onwards, a period later than the one I have discussed here.

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England and the Catholic Reformation: The Peripheries Strike Back

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Abstract: Although the Protestant Reformation has traditionally been the focus of research on early modern England, the last two decades have witnessed a rapid increase in scholarship on the experience of the country's Catholics. Questions surrounding the implementation of the Catholic Reformation in England have been central since the topic's inception as a subject of academic interest, and the field has more recently captured the attention of, amongst others, literary scholars, musicologists and those working on visual and material culture. This article is a position paper that argues early modern English Catholicism, though not doing away with all continuities from before the country's definitive break with Rome, was fully engaged with the global Catholic Reformation, both being influenced by it, but also impacting its progression. Whether through reading and writing, or more physical expressions of mission and reform, English Catholicism was a vital part of the wider Catholic Reformation.

Keywords: Catholic Reformation, England, Europe, exile, transnational, writing

1 Introduction

Tudor reform did not, despite the rhetoric of some of its protagonists, consign Catholicism to historical oblivion. Instead, populist suspicion of popery and the enduring presence of Catholics in England acted as serious engines of identity and state formation in England¹ during the time of the faith's official proscription, from the reign of Elizabeth I to Catholic emancipation in 1829. Though popular perceptions of Catholicism's premature death may still endure, the last two decades have seen major upheavals in the academic study of

1 See, for example, Peter Lake, "Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice," in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London: Longman, 1989), 72–106.

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English Catholicism, as a growing number of scholars have recognized the importance of the subject both to national and global history. This burgeoning interest is indicated by the renaming of the journal *Recusant History* as *British Catholic History*, and the start of the biennial Early Modern British and Irish Catholicism conference organized by Durham University and the University of Notre Dame. Moreover, the archival riches of Church bodies, especially religious orders, have stimulated several research projects based on Catholic sources written in a non-confessional manner.² The purpose of this article is to give a very brief overview of these recent historiographical developments and, perhaps, offer a pointer to how the scholarly trajectory could be continued. To achieve this, the article is split into three sections. The first involves the resurrection of a hoary old beast of a question that dates from the birth of the study of English Catholicism as an academic field roughly 50 years ago: namely, what did the Catholic Reformation look like for English Catholics? The second section will briefly highlight one specific area of the current boom in historiographical activity; that is, books and their circulation. Finally, it will be argued that one of the major defining characteristics of English Catholicism that is still regularly neglected by scholars, is the influence of its exile contingent. This will be framed in terms of recent discussion about the centre and peripheries in the Catholic Reformation, though with a slight but important caveat; when talking about the English Catholic experience – and the case can be made for the whole Tridentine enterprise – it would be more appropriate to talk of *centres* and *peripheries*, as the location of an exile institution had a major influence on the type of Catholic reform enacted, such as in Spanish or French territories.

2 Catholic Reform in England

The first part of this article wades into an old argument but one never satisfactorily settled, namely that between John Bossy and Christopher Haigh surrounding the question of English Catholicism after the accession of Queen Elizabeth I. Much of this scholarly debate centred around the question of continuity; namely, whether English Catholicism was a survivor of the past, the old religion, or whether English Catholics represented a newly minted collective after the break with Rome. For Haigh, the English Mission he implicitly imbues with the spirit of the Catholic Reformation, turned its back on the opportunities for continuity Catholicism,

2 For example, two projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Who Were the Nuns? (<https://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/>) [hereafter WWTN] and the Monks in Motion (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/mim/>) projects [hereafter MIM].

particularly in Lancashire, a county in the north-west of England. For Bossy, this cadre of committed spiritual warriors saved English Catholicism from slipping into generational conformity and disappearance. It may have been a rump community that remained or was even formed, but that it existed at all was a victory to be laid at the feet of Catholic Reformation missionary zeal.³ Academic opinion currently sits somewhere between these two views, but there are several arguments to make in support of Bossy's opinion. The first point is perhaps an obvious one. General historical consensus highlights as a critical moment in the creation of an identifiably Catholic community the arrival of the Jesuits, Edmund Campion and Robert Persons, in 1580 and the subsequent adopted policy of recusancy (non-attendance at the state church) as the gold standard marker.⁴ Yes, there may have been those who outwardly conformed to the state church before and after this, as well as a flexible, casuistical approach to individual cases where necessary, but this was the flagship policy, the chosen divider to create a separatist group. Pertinently, but frequently neglected in such discussions, is that this touchstone policy came directly with the imprimatur of those gathered for the Council of Trent, responding to a question about the legitimacy of attending Protestant state churches in England. In other words, it was the imposition of the Council of Trent and the Roman Church's will in giving a visible Catholic presence in England, the Roman Inquisition subsequently echoing the conclusion of the Council fathers.⁵ As Michael Questier has observed, "the aspiration and purpose of the first seminary phase of English Romanism, on the evidence of its attitude to conformity, was one of radical change, not staid continuity."⁶

Secondly, there are some vital clues about contrasting intra-Catholic views in a well-known but strangely under-exploited text. In his autobiography, John Gerard, S.J., noted that the chaplain serving the Wiseman family at Braddocks in Essex – where he was sheltered – treated him and those of the English

3 This debate was carried out in a series of publications, but the main arguments can be found in John Bossy, "The Character of English Catholicism," *Past and Present* 21 (1962): 39–59; John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570–1850* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975); Christopher Haigh, "The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation," *Past and Present* 93 (1981): 37–69; and Christopher Haigh, "From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th Series 31 (1981): 129–47.

4 For example, see Peter Lake and Michael Questier, "Puritans, Papists, and the 'Public Sphere' in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context," *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 587–627.

5 Ginevra Crosignani, Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., and Michael Questier, eds., *Recusancy and Conformity in Early Modern England: Manuscript and Printed Sources in Translation* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2010), 9–25 and 25–27.

6 Michael C. Questier, "What Happened to English Catholicism after the English Reformation?," *History* 85 (2000): 28–47 (38).

mission with suspicion. Philip Caraman translated Gerard's description of the Marian cleric as "one of those old priests who were always at odds with the young men, especially the Jesuits whom they looked on as meddling innovators."⁷ This is an extremely revealing line. Firstly, it highlights the generational division between continuity and Tridentine-enthused Catholics.⁸ Secondly and perhaps most pointedly, the term "meddlesome innovators" underlines that, to a priest from before Elizabeth's accession, these "young men" were espousing something new, or, at least, not the tried and tested views of continuity Catholicism. On one level, this lends against recent re-evaluations of Mary I's briefly attempted Counter-Reformation as the first testing ground for nascent Tridentine Catholicism,⁹ but for the argument at hand, it shows that the first taste of Tridentine Catholicism in England was something of a jolt to religious traditionalists. Moreover, that it was deemed "meddlesome" is also instructive. In this case, the continuity Catholic cleric was perturbed by the Jesuit Gerard's insistence on arranging the whole household – including the servants – around the practice of Catholicism. In other words, it was a thorough-going spiritual reformation to the whole life that Gerard was advocating. This was of huge impact in the relationship between the Catholic Reformation and England.

To take one particular individual, the English Benedictine monk, Augustine Baker, certainly considered a major change had taken place: looking back from the 1630s, he judged recusancy as proof of the initial success of the English missionary enterprise, plus described this early stage as a cleansing and purifying of Catholics because superstition had crept in before the English Protestant

7 Philip Caraman, ed., *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 29. Writing in the early 1950s, Caraman was seemingly prescient of how the changes of Vatican II would be interpreted.

8 For recent work on generational difference within the English Reformation, see Norman L. Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Alison Shell, "'Furor juvenilis': Post-Reformation English Catholicism and Exemplary Youthful Behaviour," in *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. Ethan Shagan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 185–206; Alexandra Walsham, "The Reformation of the Generations: Youth, Age and Religious Change in England 1500–1700," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series 21 (2011): 93–121; Lucy Underwood, "Recusancy and the Rising Generation," *Recusant History* 31 (2013): 511–33.

9 See, for example, Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

Reformation.¹⁰ It is this zeal for spiritual reform – so often remarked upon as a similarity between separatist Catholics of the Catholic Reformation and Puritans – that Baker commends as a necessary requirement for the missionary monk: “the missioner whose soul is not free from the loue of the things of the world, cannot auaille to cause another to putt out of his soule terrene loue, w^{ch} he needeth to do that would be a true professor of the Faith in England.”¹¹ Without it, he maintains, some Catholics go through the signs of outward persecution but are corrupted by internal feelings, such as the church papists who protect their property by outwardly conforming rather than risk losing it all for their faith.¹² Equally, Baker explicitly links the English missionary enterprise with wider global Catholic reform, alluding to the efforts of Francis Xavier, as well as attempts to re-Catholicize parts of Germany, the Netherlands and France.¹³

Another example is that of Margaret Clitherow, a Catholic laywoman executed in York in 1586. Peter Lake and Michael Questier have argued that the biography/martyrology of Clitherow, penned by her missionary cleric chaplain John Mush, was at least partly polemical, aimed at inculcating a culture of separatist recusancy in an identifiable Catholic community.¹⁴ However, it also went further, operating as a guide to Catholic Reformation living. Ultimately, Clitherow’s life, at least as presented by Mush, had this Catholic woman subverting all traditional orders: she refused to attend the Church so therefore undermined the state and, ultimately, prized her Catholicism above the loyalty owed to her husband who was left in ignorance of her subversive Catholic activities.¹⁵ Notably, such endeavours were

10 Ampleforth Abbey, MS 119 [hereafter “Baker, Part 2”], 5. For modern printed versions, partly printed in Augustine Baker, *A Treatise of the English Mission: The Second Part*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: Institute für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2012), and the remaining printed in Hugh Connolly, ed., “Father Augustine Baker’s Treatise of the English Mission: The Historical Portion,” in *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker and other Documents Relating to the English Benedictines*, ed. Justin McCann and Hugh Connolly, Publications of the Catholic Record Society 33 (London: Privately printed for the Society by J. Whitehead & Son, 1933), 157–84.

11 Baker, Part 2, 250–53.

12 Baker, Part 2, 254–56.

13 Downside Abbey, MS 26583 (Baker MS 27), 379; for a modern printed version, see Augustine Baker, *A Treatise of the English Mission: The First Part*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: Institute für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2011).

14 Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, “Margaret Clitherow, Catholic Nonconformity, Martyrology and the Politics of Religious Change in Elizabethan England,” *Past & Present* 185 (2004): 43–90; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (London: Continuum, 2011).

15 John Mush, “A True Report of the Life and Martyrdom of Mrs. Margaret Clitherow,” in *The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers, Related by Themselves*, ed. John Morris, vol. 3 (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), 331–440.

aimed at women, from the Jesuit Robert Southwell's *A Short Rule of Good Life*, published on a secret press in 1596/97 and designed as a guide to living as a Europeanized Catholic woman, to the tales of women rejecting the authority of their families – and particularly fathers – to fulfil their spiritual desire of entering religious life on the continent.¹⁶ In short, this form of Catholicism was something new and all encompassing, subverting all traditional allegiances and making them subservient to the missionary spirit of the Catholic Reformation. This is not to argue that there was no continuity from before England's ultimately decisive break from Rome, but rather that these elements of continuity were adapted. To take an instructive modern example, it is like the liturgical and theological redirections that occurred after the twentieth century's Vatican II: Catholics knew what went before and linked to it while simultaneously experiencing something very different. To argue otherwise is to raise something of a false flag. Nor was England the only country on the peripheries of Catholic Europe to feel the shock of the new: as Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin has argued, like England, parts of the northern Balkans had also been cut off from the initial burst of Catholic reform and the continuity Catholics there received this reformed Catholicism with similar suspicion, bordering on distaste.¹⁷

Naturally, all this means that there could be problems when applying the rules of Trent in England. For example, the Benedictine, Augustine Baker, recognized the difficulty of monks operating in a missionary territory such as England. Unlike in Catholic countries, “the case beinge as it is in England, that there is no legal meane to force his [a monk's] retourne, if he will proue disobedient & obstinate.”¹⁸ Similarly, the Jesuits had genuine concerns about how to observe the Tridentine norms in England, the very nature of life on the Mission causing significant differences between English Jesuits and their European confrères. Difficulties in

16 Susannah Monta, “Robert Southwell, SJ, *A Short Rule* ..., 1596/1597,” in *Treasures of Ushaw College: Durham's Hidden Gem*, ed. James E. Kelly (London: Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers, 2015), 82–83; Susannah Monta, “Uncommon Prayer? Robert Southwell's *Short Rule for a Good Life* and Catholic Domestic Devotion in Reformation England,” in *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Lowell Gallagher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 232–57; see for example, Isobel Grundy, “Women's History? Writings by English Nuns,” in *Women, Writing, History, 1640–1740*, ed. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (London: Batsford, 1992), 126–38 (136). For recent scholarly developments on the role of women within the English mission, see Jennifer Binczewski, “Solitary Sparrows: Widowhood and the Catholic Community in Post-Reformation England, 1580–1630,” PhD thesis, Washington State University (2017); Jennifer Binczewski, “Power in Vulnerability: Widows and Priest Holes in the Early Modern English Catholic Community,” *British Catholic History* 35 (2020): 1–24.

17 Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Europe, 1592–1648: Centre and Peripheries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 188 and 193–94.

18 Baker, Part 2, 145.

corresponding with superiors situated in mainland Europe meant that Jesuits on the English mission had to act before official assent could be granted.¹⁹ The very nature of the mission meant that English Jesuits had to behave differently to their European counterparts, for example gaining dispensation from the Tridentine decrees by Pope Gregory XIII in order to publish books without details of the author, place and publisher so that they could run secret presses and wage a pamphlet war in England.²⁰ Moreover, the English Jesuit practice of wearing lay attire even in mainland Europe rather than the traditional Jesuit soutane, as well as novel structures of management and bureaucracy, provoked regular bemusement and carping from Belgian Jesuits.²¹

3 A Cyclical Relationship

This characteristic of adaptation is perhaps most evident in a field currently experiencing much attention: the book trade,²² or more particularly, the spread of illicit books in England. New editions of pre-Reformation texts were circulated in England, though they were adapted for the novel working environment and prepared for a post-Council of Trent world. Eamon Duffy has argued that, after initially focussing on polemical material, the newly-minted seminary-trained missionary priests recognized that the old prayers had not gone through the required processes of Tridentine belt-tightening. This ultimately

¹⁹ See, for example, Victor Houliston, "Robert Persons's Precarious Correspondence," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1 (2014): 542–57.

²⁰ Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., "'Guiding Souls to Goodness and Devotion': Clandestine Publications and the English Jesuit Mission," in *Publishing Subversive Texts in Elizabethan England and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, ed. Teresa Bela, Clarinda Calma, and Jolanta Rzegocka (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 93–109.

²¹ Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., "Seventeenth-century Visitations of the Transmarine Houses of the English Province," in *With Eyes and Ears Open: the Role of Visitors in the Society of Jesus*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, S.J. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 96–125. See also Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., *"And Touching Our Society": Fashioning Jesuit Identity in Elizabethan England* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2013), 197–259. For wider Jesuit adaptation in the Catholic Reformation, see Silvia Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits between Obedience and Conscience during the Generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581–1615)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

²² The recently launched KU Leuven-database *Impressa Catholica Cameracensia* [ICC] includes the Catholic Book production in Douai and Saint Omer, the two towns that became the most prolific printing centres for English Catholicism after 1600 (https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/nieuwetijd/english/odis/ICC_search). Its features and contents are discussed in Alexander Soetaert and Violet Soen, "A Catholic International or Transregional Catholicism? The Printing Press, English Catholics, and their Hosts in the Early Modern Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai," *Catholic Historical Review* 106/4 (2020) (in press).

led to the publication of the first vernacular Tridentine primer in England, the *Manual of Prayers*, after 1575. Duffy contends that the *Manual* played a major role in transferring the devotional Catholic Reformation into England, whilst also being deliberately aimed at an English Catholic audience.²³ Polemically, Susan Royal has ventured that English Catholics recycled ancient and medieval styles of anti-heresy writing to counter John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.²⁴ In mainland Europe, Jaime Goodrich has explored how medieval spirituality, particularly the contemplative writing of Julian of Norwich, was remoulded to serve religious life at the English Benedictine convent in Cambrai.²⁵ In other words, pre-Reformation texts remained fundamental components of the English Catholic Reformation experience, but they were adapted to convey that movement's message and made suitable for the particular condition of England's adherents to the Faith. On a wider scale, this Catholic Reformation process of adapting older elements to make them fit for purpose, as highlighted by Simon Ditchfield,²⁶ shows England as much a part of this phenomenon as the "old" Tridentine heartlands, or the exciting "new" world being Catholicized.

Simultaneously, the writings of major Catholic Reformation figures, from the likes of Luis de Granada, O.P., to the Jesuits Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine, were also prepared for, and circulated amongst, an English Catholic audience.²⁷ These works and translations into the vernacular were

23 Eamon Duffy, "Praying the Counter-Reformation," in *Early Modern English Catholicism: Identity, Memory and Counter-Reformation*, ed. James E. Kelly and Susan Royal (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 206–25.

24 Susan Royal, "English Catholics and English Heretics: The Lollards and Anti-Heresy Writing in Early Modern England," in *Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Kelly and Royal, 122–41.

25 Jaime Goodrich, "'Attend to Me': Julian of Norwich, Margaret Gascoigne and Textual Circulation among the Cambrai Benedictines," in *Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Kelly and Royal, 105–21.

26 Simon Ditchfield, "Decentering the Catholic Reformation: Papacy and Peoples in the Early Modern World," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 101 (2010): 186–208. These adaptations included in approaches to lay devotions, such as Susannah Monta's exploration of poetic domestic liturgies: Susannah Monta, "John Austin's *Devotions*: Voicing Lyric, Voicing Prayer," in *Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Kelly and Royal, 226–45. Equally, it could mean seeking specific dispensations, like those sought by the English Jesuits: see n. 21 and 22 above.

27 Alexandra Walsham, "Wholesome Milk and Strong Meat: Peter Canisius's Catechisms and the Conversion of Protestant Britain," *British Catholic History* 32 (2015): 293–314; Earle Havens and Elizabeth Patton, "Underground Networks, Prisons and the Circulation of Counter-Reformation Books in Elizabethan England," in *Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Kelly and Royal, 165–88; Alexander Soetaert, "Catholic Refuge and the Printing Press: Catholic Exiles from England, France and the Low Countries in the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai," *British Catholic History* 34 (2019): 532–61.

vital parts “of the parallel programmes of evangelical conversion and moral renewal” common to both sides of the reformation debate, and in this case show the “internationalism of the British Counter-Reformation and its book trade.”²⁸ These “domme preachers” of Luis de Granada’s description featured significantly in English lay Catholic libraries, as argued by Earle Havens, and could even find their way into the remotest of corners, as revealed by Hannah Thomas’ work on the Jesuit missionary library at the Cwm on the border between England and Wales.²⁹

Equally, it is worth noting that England’s Catholics captured the imagination of mainland European writers, both as subjects – such as in Spain, where Diego de Yepes and Pedro de Ribadeniyra were amongst the more notable authors of works about the persecution in England³⁰ – but also with their own efforts. For example,

28 Alexandra Walsham, “Luis De Granada’s Mission to Protestant England: Translating the Devotional Literature of the Spanish Counter-Reformation,” in *Publishing Subversive Texts*, ed. Bela, Calma, and Rzegocka, 129–54 (130–31) and Walsham, “Religious Ventriloquism: Translation, Cultural Exchange and the English Counter-Reformation,” in *Transregional Reformations: Crossing Borders in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Violet Soen, Alexander Soetaert, Johan Verberckmoes, and Wim François, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 61 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 123–55. Also Alexander Soetaert, “Transferring Catholic Literature to the British Isles: The Publication of English Translations in the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai (c. 1600–50),” in *Transregional Reformations*, ed. Soen, Soetaert, Verberckmoes, and François, 157–85 (169–71). On François de Sales’ reception in England, see Mary Hardy, “The Seventeenth-century English and Scottish Reception of Francis de Sales’ An Introduction to a Devout Life,” *British Catholic History* 33 (2016): 228–58.

29 Alexandra Walsham, “‘Domme Preachers’? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print,” *Past and Present* 168 (2000): 72–123; Hannah Thomas, “The Society of Jesus in Wales, c. 1600–1679: Rediscovering the Cwm Jesuit Library at Hereford Cathedral,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1 (2014): 572–88; Hannah Thomas, “‘Books which are necessary for them’: Reconstructing a Jesuit Missionary Library in Wales and the English Borderlands, ca. 1600–1679,” in *Publishing Subversive Texts*, ed. Bela, Calma, and Rzegocka, 110–28; Earle Havens, “Lay Catholic Book Ownership and International Catholicism in Elizabethan England,” in *Publishing Subversive Texts*, ed. Bela, Calma, and Rzegocka, 217–62.

30 Diego de Yepes, *Historia Particular de la Persecucion de Inglaterra* (Madrid: por Luis Sánchez, 1599); Spencer J. Weinreich, ed. *Pedro de Ribadeneyra’s ‘Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England’: A Spanish Jesuit’s History of the English Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). On the impact in Spain of English Catholic writing about the persecution, see Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, “English Recusant Controversy in Spanish Print Culture: Dissemination, Popularisation, Fictionalisation,” in *Forming Catholic Communities: Irish, Scots and English College Networks in Europe, 1568–1918*, ed. Liam Chambers and Thomas O’Connor (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 201–31. For the influence in Europe of English Catholic experiences of martyrdom in an earlier period of reformation, see Anne Dillon, *Michelangelo and the English Martyrs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

Thomas Stapleton's *Promptuarium Morale* was designed for the lecture theatre, a defence of the Catholic faith for the Catholic Reformation academy. In contrast, his *Promptuarium Catholicum* went for the Protestant jugular, relentlessly pursuing its opponents as part of the early modern war of words, the work providing sermon texts for parish clergy. This was English manufactured ammunition for the Catholic clergy of Catholic Reformation Europe, the liturgical year acting as Stapleton's chosen battlefield.³¹ Such output had pastoral and polemical purposes, marking the juncture between devotion, scholarship and controversy in the Catholic Reformation. Another example is the English Benedictine monk, Anthony Batt of St Laurence's, Dieulouard. More commonly a translator of texts into English, in 1640 a French translation of his *Thesaurus absconditus in Agro Dominico inventus*, was published, allowing him to reach an audience of French *devotes*, unlike many English Catholic writers of the period.³² Alternatively, there has recently been a glut of scholarship attesting to the influence of Edmund Campion's work, in particular his *Rationes Decem*, in central Europe.³³ Indeed, as Gerard Kilroy has attested, that book had its roots in Campion's experience of the Catholic Reformation in the continental mainland.³⁴ As such, it represents the cyclical relationship between England and the Catholic Reformation; a book formed by ideas in Catholic Europe, penned and distributed on a secret press in England, going through various editions back in mainland Europe to influence the advance of the Catholic Reformation there.

31 William Sheils, "The Gospel, Liturgy and Controversy in the 1590s: Thomas Stapleton's *Promptuarium*," in *Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Kelly and Royal, 189–205; see also William Sheils, "Polemics as Piety: Thomas Stapleton's *Tres Thomae* and Catholic Controversy in the 1580s," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60 (2009): 74–94; Wim François, "Thomas Stapleton, controversetholoog tussen Engeland en de Nederlanden," in *Religie, hervorming en controverse in de zestiende-eeuwse Nederlanden*, ed. Violet Soen and Paul Knevel, Publicaties van de Vlaams-Nederlandse Vereniging voor Nieuwe Geschiedenis 12 (Herzogenrath: Shaker Publishing, 2013), 37–63.

32 MIM, 197.

33 See, for example, Svorad Zavarský, "Invisible Threads of Divine Providence: The British Links in and of the Polemical Theology of Martinus Szent-Ivany, S.J. (1633–1705)," in *Jesuit Intellectual and Physical Exchange Between England and Mainland Europe, c. 1580–1789: 'The World is our House'?*, ed. James E. Kelly and Hannah Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 210–34; Clarinda Calma, "Edmund Campion's Prague Homilies: The *Concionale ex concionibus a R.P. Edmundo Campiano*," in *Jesuit Intellectual and Physical Exchange Between England and Mainland Europe*, ed. Kelly and Thomas, 43–66; Clarinda Calma, "Communicating Across Communities: Explication in Gaspar Wilkowski's Polish Translation of Edmund Campion's *Rationes Decem*," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1 (2014): 589–606.

34 Gerard Kilroy, "A Cosmopolitan Book: Edmund Campion's *Rationes Decem*," in *Publishing Subversive Texts*, ed. Bela, Calma, and Rzegocka, 185–216. See also his *Edmund Campion: A Scholarly Life* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

4 English Catholicism: Centres and Peripheries

This leads to my final area of discussion: mainland Europe. Alexandra Walsham's recent collection of a decade's worth of essays, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain*, despite its frequent excellence, had a significant blind spot: namely, the role of the English Catholic diaspora.³⁵ For a collection about the Catholic Reformation, there is surprisingly little specifically on the exile communities. Yet this runs the risk of treating England in isolation. It was here, at these institutions in mainland Europe, that English Catholic children were educated, where Catholic women religious lived their lives, where the clergy – who are frequently cited as the vehicle for the transfer of Catholic Reformation ideas to England – were formed. Ultimately, the institutions of this diaspora were the engine room in the process of bringing the Catholic Reformation to Protestant Britain. Therefore, if scholars want to understand the Catholic Reformation in England, then they need to know about the commitment of these institutions and individuals to those reforms.

Largely because they have been better at preserving and promoting their archives and histories, this would now usually lead to a discussion of Jesuit activity in England. Indeed, there is a burgeoning amount of important historiography on this very topic.³⁶ So, in order to suggest the English Catholic experience was spread widely, English Benedictine monks will form the first case study. One particular monk, Augustine Bradshaw, was a serial reformer. Bradshaw was the great architect of the re-founding of English Benedictine monasticism, having a significant hand in the starting of both St Gregory's at Douai and St Laurence's at Dieulouard in the opening decade of the seventeenth century. His observance of the Rule was known to be strict and may have been at least partly behind his replacement as prior of St Gregory's. Travelling back from Spain around 1613, Bradshaw was approached by Cardinal Richelieu's ally, the Capuchin Joseph du Tremblay, who sought the English Benedictine's help in reforming certain abbeys. The French Capuchin was at the time working with the Abbess of Fontevrault, Louise de Bourbon, who was intent on reforming monastic obedience in the dual-houses that

³⁵ Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

³⁶ Admittedly, the author has been one of those to contribute to this historiography. Apart from examples cited elsewhere in this article, see Victor Houlston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1589–1597: Building the Faith of Saint Peter upon the King of Spain's Monarchy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1598–1606: "Lest Our Lamp Be Entirely Extinguished"* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Robert E. Scully, SJ, *Into the Lion's Den: The Jesuit Mission in Elizabethan England and Wales, 1580–1603* (St. Louis, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2011).

formed the order under her authority. Du Tremblay recommended Bradshaw "as one full of zeal, sanctity, ability, and energy." Thus, the English Benedictine embarked on his work that autumn and proved so successful that he was employed as a reformer and restorer of monastic discipline in a series of other houses, including at the abbeys at Remiremont and Poitiers. He died in 1618 at the Cluniac monastery in Longueville, near Rouen, which he had been sent to reform two years before. It is hardly hyperbolic that the English monk Francis Waldegrave described Bradshaw in his grave epitaph as "the happy and prosperous repairer of Monastic discipline."³⁷

Bradshaw was not a one-off. In 1611, the bishop of St Malo was so impressed by the "learning and piety" of the English monks that he encouraged them to set up a base there; which they duly did, forming two Benedictine nunneries at the request of the bishop in the meantime.³⁸ Having been officially exiled from England after several years on the mission, Dunstan Everard of St Malo sought to reform the Abbey of St Nicholas aux Bois, near Amiens, in 1633, with Paul Robinson of St Laurence's, Dieulouard, sent to assist him. The president of the English Benedictine Congregation (EBC), Leander Jones, instructed the prior of St Malo, Deodatus L'Angevin, to support Everard in this endeavour.³⁹ Overlapping with part of his time as EBC president, Clement Reyner was engaged in the reform of the Abbey of St Peter's, at Mount Blandin ("Blandijnberg") in Ghent, from 1633 to 1641. He was invited to become its abbot but declined, agreeing to manage it till a suitable candidate could be found.⁴⁰ Perceived as both leaders of the Tridentine reform of monastic discipline in France, and reform of the different branches of the Benedictines, particularly from the 1620s onwards, monks of the EBC reportedly had to excuse themselves from this reforming work, citing that their vocation was instead the English Mission.⁴¹ There is much scholarly research to be carried out on the role of the exile communities within attempts at Catholic reform in mainland Europe, and it is the next intended study of the author. Yet what may be happening here is the English Benedictines playing an active role in the re-Catholicization of France after the Wars of Religion. Indeed, similarities can be seen in Germany, where the English monks took advantage of the destruction of the Thirty Years War to establish themselves as vehicles of reform in Lampspringe, near Hidesheim,

37 MIM, 668; Bennet Weldon, *Chronological Notes, Containing the Rise, Growth and Present State of the English Congregation of the Order of St. Benedict* (London: J. Hodges, 1881), 90–1, 120–22.

38 Weldon, *Chronological Notes*, 79–81.

39 MIM, 449, 320; Ampleforth Abbey Archives, Peter Athanasius Allanson, "Biographies" (unpublished).

40 MIM, 363; Silos Papers, xix, 198, printed in CRS 33, 266–73 (271); Weldon, *Chronological Notes*, 91, 128, 179.

41 Weldon, *Chronological Notes*, 128.

Germany, something which the English Jesuits also attempted.⁴² The English monks were not the only people from Catholic Europe's peripheries to do this; the Irish Franciscans set up a new foundation dedicated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Prague in 1631, not only to train their own missionaries, but because the Holy Roman Emperor and the Cardinal Archbishop of Prague both saw them as a vital means of re-Catholicizing Bohemia.⁴³ Apparently, the experience of those on the peripheries was seen as useful for efforts at Catholic reform across mainland Europe, plus those from the peripheries seemingly had a reputation as being standard-bearers of Catholic reform. They even found their way to helping out local Inquisitions, such as in Spain, where English Jesuits linked to the English College in Valladolid helped vet books, especially works in English.⁴⁴

Turning to the female side and the English convents in mainland Europe, this enterprise is unmatched in the Early Modern period. During the years of proscription in their homeland, 22 English convents were established in mainland Europe, as well as one survivor from the pre-Reformation period, not to mention a series of houses established by the unenclosed followers of Mary Ward.⁴⁵ As with the monks, the exile nuns were committed to the rules of Catholic Europe as laid out in the decrees of the Council of Trent. For example, the Rule copied by Prioress Anne Worsley in the first half of the seventeenth century for use at the Antwerp and later the Lier Carmelite convents expressly mentioned the Tridentine decree that limited the size of convents, and heeded the pronouncements against

42 Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., "Spoils of War?: The Edict of Restitution and Benefactions to the English Province of the Society of Jesus," in *Jesuit Intellectual and Physical Exchange Between England and Mainland Europe*, ed. Kelly and Thomas, 186–209 (197–201). For the English abbey at Lamspringe, see Anselm Cramer, ed., *Lamspringe: An English Abbey in Germany* (Ampleforth: Ampleforth Abbey Press, 2004).

43 Micheál Mac Craith, "The Irish Franciscan Continental Colleges and the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception," in *Rome and Irish Catholicism in the Atlantic World, 1622–1908*, ed. Matteo Binasco (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 137–65 (155–57). It should be noted that this pattern of establishing structures for training secular and regular clergy was not only an English phenomenon. Catholics from the other nations of the British Isles also set up their own national institutions for this purpose. See, for example, Thomas McNally, *A Saltire in the German Lands: Scottish Benedictine Monasteries in Germany, 1575–1862* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 2016); Liam Chambers and Thomas O'Connor, eds., *College Communities in Exile: Education, Migration and Catholicism in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Matteo Binasco, *Making, Breaking and Remaking the Irish Missionary Network: Ireland, Rome and the West Indies in the Seventeenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

44 Ana Sáez Hidalgo, "'Extravagant' English Books at the Library of El Escorial and Jesuit Agency," in *Jesuit Intellectual and Physical Exchange Between England and Mainland Europe*, ed. Kelly and Thomas, 155–85.

45 For an overview, see James E. Kelly, *English Convents in Catholic Europe, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

overcrowding and extreme poverty.⁴⁶ Around the middle of the seventeenth century, the Rouen Poor Clares drafted a letter to “show that is not against the Counsel of Trent to have the holy Sacrament in our Quire,” to answer a question posed to the abbess.⁴⁷ By the late 1660s, the Louvain Augustinians, in a series of ordinances made by the convent council to ensure the community’s statutes were properly followed, reinforced the rule that no nun should speak alone to a visitor at the grate, except the “Extraordinary Confessour whoe is licensed to heare confessions at the cloyster 2 or 3 tymes a yeare according to the Holy Councell of Trent.”⁴⁸ Taking the implementation of enclosure as a recognized marker of Tridentine practice, it is remarkable just how committed English women religious were to this decree.⁴⁹ Indeed, the English nuns’ zeal for enclosure was so great that they quickly became renowned for it. For example, following her election as prioress of St Ursula’s, Louvain, in 1570, the first thing Margaret Clement sought to reform in the convent, “was to bring in inclosure, which had never benn well kept, before her time.”⁵⁰ This she did only seven years after the decree by the Council of Trent, underlining just how seriously this Englishwoman was taking the regulations. The commitment to enclosure displayed by English women religious could also be spread as a form of missionary activity. In the early 1640s, the abbess of the Cambrai Benedictines, Catherine Gascoigne, was asked by the Archbishop of Cambrai, Henri-François van der Burch, to reform “the Religious Dames of S Lazars” in Cambrai; her reputation for discipline having gone before her, this she did “to the spirituall profet of those Religious, reducing them to the happy estate of inclosure with the stricte observance of our holy Rule & al Regular discipline.”⁵¹ In 1655, requiring a new permanent residence, the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre

46 Nicky Hallett, *Lives of Spirit: English Carmelite Self-Writing of the Early Modern Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 245.

47 Caroline Bowden, “History Writing,” in *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, gen. ed. Caroline Bowden, vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 373.

48 James E. Kelly, “Convent Management,” in *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, gen. ed. Caroline Bowden, vol. 5 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 376.

49 The following paragraph is drawn from a much longer treatment of the subject in Kelly, *English Convents in Catholic Europe*, Chapter 2.

50 Nicky Hallett, “Life Writing I,” in *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, gen. ed. Caroline Bowden, vol. 3 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 16.

51 Joseph S. Hansom, ed., “The English Benedictines of the Convent of our Blessed Lady of Good Hope in Paris, now St. Benedict’s Priory, Colwich, Staffordshire,” in *Miscellanea VII*, Publications of the Catholic Record Society 9 (London: Privately printed for the Society by the Aberdeen University Press, 1911), 334–431 (366). The community was apparently a Benedictine one. This did not mean that English women religious neglected their role as part of the English mission: see, for example, Laurence Lux-Sterritt, *English Benedictine Nuns in Exile in the Seventeenth Century: Living Spirituality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 101–35.

in Liège were granted a house belonging to a small local community of women religious, whose life was not considered as exemplary in comparison to that of the English community.⁵²

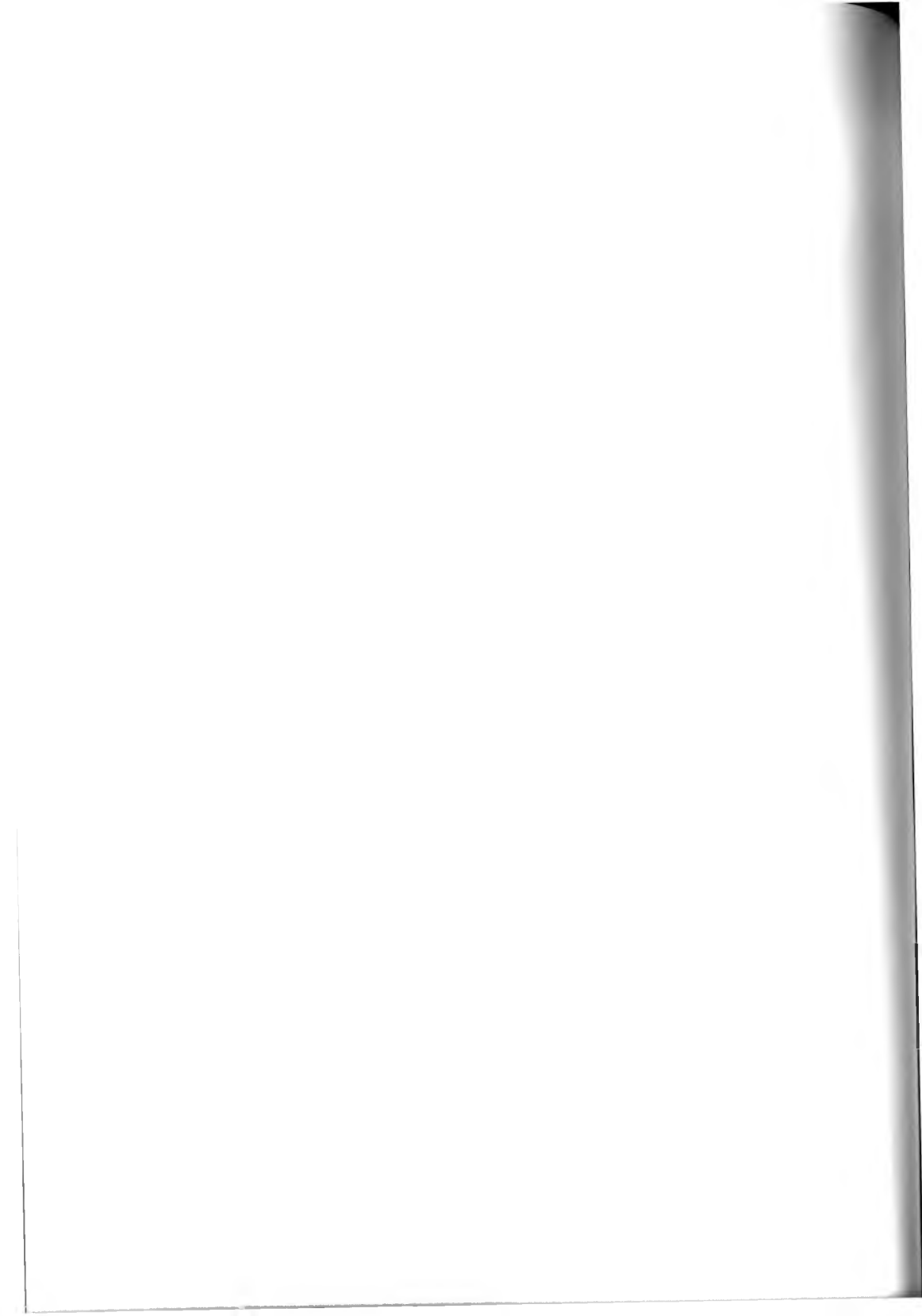
Equally, far from the sealed-away women of anti-Catholic literature, English women religious had experience of the wider Catholic Reformation. In 1619, the first English Carmelite convent was solemnly dedicated in Antwerp. Like the other early English convents, it was initially home to English women who had experience of "local" convents in mainland Europe: the first prioress, Anne Worlsey, had been professed at Mons; as had another of the founding community, Frances Ward, who had also spent six years as sub-prioress at a Carmelite convent in Kraków.⁵³ From Antwerp was founded a number of other Carmelite houses, including the English communities at Lier and Hoogstraten. From Hoogstraten would be founded the first English-speaking convent in America, that of Port Tobacco in Maryland in 1790. However, underlining their role as members of an international order and church, Carmels which were not specifically English were also founded from Antwerp in locations as diverse as Bois-le-Duc ('s-Hertogenbosch), Bruges, Cologne, Alost and Düsseldorf.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, it was the people – male and female – in these foundations in mainland Europe that conveyed the Catholic Reformation to England, whether through pastoral activity, the written apostolate (including letter-writing) or schooling youngsters who would return to their homeland and raise their own Catholic families. However, they were not only English exiles; they balanced this identity with being committed and active members of the wider Catholic Reformation and Church Militant. Moreover, as far as England and the Catholic Reformation is concerned, this relationship was not just the traditional historiographical image of English Catholicism receiving the Tridentine reforms, but rather English Catholics were actually engaging with, giving to and leading some aspects of that global initiative. On the peripheries England may have been, but it was a vital part of the Catholic Reformation.

⁵² Richard Trappes-Lomax, ed., "Records of the English Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre of Liège, now at New Hall, 1652–1793," in *Miscellanea X*, Publications of the Catholic Record Society 17 (London: Privately printed for the Society by J. Whitehead & Son, 1915), 1–247 (104–5).

⁵³ WWTN, AC140, AC132; Mark A. Tierney, *Dodd's Church History of England from the Commencement of the Sixteenth Century to the Revolution in 1688*, vol. 4 (London: Charles Dolman, 1842), 112–15.



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Ambiguous Memories of the Reformation: The Case of Norway

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Abstract: The Reformation came to Norway along with Danish annexation of political and ecclesiastical power. For this reason, Norwegian history writing seldom appreciated the history of the Norwegian Reformation, and preferred to look further back to the history of the Middle Ages in search of national, as well as religious, roots of Norwegian Christianity. This was already the case in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Norwegian historical writing. In nineteenth century historical research, the strategy was underpinned by focussing on the medieval period of Christianization: Norwegian Christianity was imported from the West, from England. Here, the Pope was not at all important. Instead, some key Reformation values were addressed in a kind of “proto-Reformation” in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The King was the ruler of the church; native, Old Norse language was used and promoted; and the people (strongly) identified themselves with their religion.

Keywords: Norway, Reformation historiography, proto-Reformation

1 A Special Case

Norway certainly belongs to the periphery of the Reformation movement in the sixteenth century. In terms of late medieval religious topography, the country was quite important due to its ecclesiastical centre at Nidaros, an archbishopric since 1153, with a cathedral built over the relics of Saint Olaf. During the Middle Ages, Nidaros was not only an important centre of ecclesiastical administration in the North, but also a prominent destination for pilgrims from many parts of Europe. This ecclesiastical centre had lost its power with the Reformation. At the same time, Norway was placed under Danish rule, and Copenhagen was

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established not only as the capital of Denmark, but also as the new political and ecclesiastical centre of Norway. In this way, the Reformation contributed dramatically to placing Norway in the peripheries in a way that the country was not at all acquainted with.

But Norway was not just side-lined to a role on the fringe of the Reformation; it turned into a special kind of peripheral role, worth noticing for comparative studies of the Reformation. In most of the countries that converted to Lutheranism or to Calvinism during the sixteenth century, the change of religion was in one way or another fostered by support from the population – most often by social elites. Dukes, princes, parts of the nobility or city councils supported the ideas of the Reformation. In Norway, this kind of support was almost totally absent. However, even with this unfavourable point of departure, the Reformation was not only introduced by the Danish king to Denmark, but enforced in his new lands to the North as well. From 1536/37 on, the king decided that Norway, too, was to be a Lutheran country. New Lutheran church law and a new church order were introduced; new Superintendents were installed; all pastors were to convert to Lutheranism or abandon their positions; and new religious and cultural ideals gradually spread among the people.

On the one hand, Norway did not ask for or want a Reformation, and was unprepared for religious change. On the other hand, only a few generations after 1537, Norway, too, was totally dominated by the ideas and the values of the Reformation, politically as well as culturally. With the outline of this most ambivalent point of departure, this article will take a closer look at a few significant contributions to the Norwegian historiography of the Reformation: How did early modern and modern historians and church historians in Norway deal with this ambiguous history of the Reformation? How did they interpret the Reformation, and how did they relate to the obvious and quite radical tensions between national and confessional values and ideals? The focus will first be on establishing patterns of interpretation during the earliest generations after the Reformation, and secondly on the elaboration of these patterns during the early periods of critical historical research in the nineteenth century.

2 Humanism and Reformation

In Oslo and Bergen, as in many other European cities, humanist circles were established prior to the Reformation. New Lutheran church leaders were recruited from among these people. Hardly any of these first generation

Lutheran humanists showed any particular interest in Lutheran theology, and they published surprisingly few texts aimed at promoting Lutheranism, neither from a theological nor more popular basis.¹ Religious texts supporting the new religion were mostly imported from Denmark and written by Danish theologians.² Norway had no Reformation hero; no theologian who had spent time in Wittenberg before returning back home to have success in promoting the ideals of the Reformation. Even within a Nordic context, this is unusual. Denmark and Sweden had several famous religious leaders of the Reformation,³ and even Finland (with the diocese of Åbo, then part of Sweden) had Mikael Agricola who returned to Åbo from Wittenberg and became bishop there.⁴

In Norway, the early Reformation humanists first and foremost used their academic training to study, collect and edit literary traditions from medieval Norway. In particular, two of these Reformation-minded humanists deserve to be mentioned: *Absalon Pederssøn Beyer* (1528–75) and *Peder Claussøn Friis* (1545–1614). Both of them held important ecclesiastical positions in early Lutheran Norway, and both were loyal to the new church order introduced by the Danish king. Both were Norwegian by birth. Absalon Pederssøn Beyer belonged to the humanist circle in Bergen. Peder Claussøn Friis was a provost in the far south of Norway, and was very well linked to humanist circles both in Bergen and in Oslo.

1 One of the most interesting Norwegian testimonies to the efforts of promoting Lutheranism in the sixteenth century comprises the reports from the visitations of superintendent Jens Nilssøn in Oslo, edited and published by Yngvald Nielsen in 1885 under the title *Biskop Jens Nilssøns Visitatsbøger og reiseoptegnelser 1574–1597* (Kristiania: A.W.Brøggers Bogtrykkeri). Moreover, a few collections of sixteenth century sermons have been published, and also a treatise discussing the question of religious images written by superintendent Jens Skielderup i Bergen, *En Christelig Underuisning aff den hellige Scrifft/om huad en Christen skal holde om Affgudiske Billeder oc Stytter vdi Kirckerne* (København: Matz Vingaard, 1572).

2 Several Danish Reformation leaders were highly influenced by Melancthon. Among them, the first superintendent of Seeland, Peder Palladius (1503–60), was the most influential in the first generation. He published a number of books to transmit and adapt Lutheran teaching to local settings. Many of his books were also read in Norway. In the second generation, the most influential Danish author was Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600).

3 In addition to Palladius and Hemmingsen, Denmark also had Hans Tausen (1494–1561), who started a Reformation movement in Viborg as early as 1525. Sweden had first of all the two brothers Olaus Petri (1493–1552) and Laurentius Petri (1499–1573). The former promoted the Swedish Reformation decisively during the early years; his brother became the first Lutheran Archbishop of Uppsala.

4 Cf. Simo Heininen, *Mikael Agricola. Hans liv och verk* (Stockholm: Artos & Norma, 2017).

3 Establishing a Patriotic Historiography of the Reformation

3.1 Absalon Pederssøn Beyer

Absalon Pederssøn Beyer was born in 1528. The first Lutheran superintendent in Bergen, Geble Pederssøn, recognised his talents, and offered him his patronage and support. At the age of 16, Absalon was sent to Copenhagen to study theology under Peder Palladius, the leading figure of the Danish Reformation. After five years of studies there, he spent two years in Wittenberg in order to follow the lectures of Philipp Melanchthon. Finally, he obtained his master's degree in Copenhagen before returning to Bergen. There, he worked as a lecturer and as the rector of the chapter school, as a pastor at the Bergenhus castle and as an academic author for the rest of his life.

As an author he has given us several interesting works, not least a diary reporting on daily life in Bergen in the late sixteenth century. But his main academic achievement is a national history and topography: *Om Norgis Rige* ("On the realm of Norway"), written in 1567 and distributed in a number of manuscripts until it was first printed as late as 1781.⁵ It is a book of no more than approximately 100 pages. Absalon's most important sources were manuscripts from the old Norse sagas (about the medieval kings of Norway) and old Norwegian laws (not least the *Landslov* of Magnus Lagabøte, one of the first medieval codices for an entire country, not merely a landscape). His theoretical approach to history writing is evidently influenced by Melanchthon and by his humanist studies in Wittenberg.

The history of the realm of Norway is like the history of man: it has to be seen as a development comprising of childhood, youth, adult strength and at last old age. According to Melanchthon's *Chronicon Carionis* and also according to Absalon, a country's strong period tends to last for about 500 years. Applied to Norway (described as a lady in Absalon's book), this means that her years of strength are over, and can only be looked back upon. Those were primarily the days of the influential Norwegian kings from the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. The latest developments with the Reformation and the Danish annexation of Norway are to be ruefully interpreted as decay. Here, Norway has changed into a weak old lady, no longer able to defend what she had obtained in her earlier life. "She had become so old, cold and barren that she could no longer bear royal children who could rule

⁵ Here quoted from the edition Absalon Pederssøn Beyer, *Om Norgis Rige* (Bergen: F. Beyers forlag, 1928).

the country. Her nobility, the good warriors and fighters have left her, some by sword and some by the pestilence ...”⁶

Norway is an old widow who is hardly able to walk on her own. But even if she seems to have lost all her former power, there is still something left. In the second part of his treatise, Absalon wants to demonstrate that “the kingdom of Norway is not yet so old, that there is no more strength, wisdom and power left.” God has still blessed the country with a number of gifts.⁷

The most surprising aspect about Absalon is the way he includes and talks about religion as part of these gifts in the second half of his book. He is a well-trained theologian from the best Lutheran universities, and holds a position as a theological teacher and as a pastor at the court of one of Denmark’s highest ranked representatives in Norway. In spite of all this, he offers an interpretation of recent history where the fact that Norway, owing to the Reformation, has returned to the true religion is part of a tragic development, to be looked upon as the end of a glorious history of Norway. One of Absalon’s interpreters in Norway puts it this way: “Here, the patriot in Absalon is stronger than the Lutheran.”⁸

The miserable current situation explicitly includes religious life: “Item, we tear down the monasteries and churches that our fathers have built up, and where we earlier could maintain 27 churches (that is the number of churches built in wood or in stone previously at hand in Bergen), all of them with roof and ornaments, we can now hardly maintain 4.”⁹

But Absalon goes even further than this to defend pre-Reformation religious life. Before the Danish take-over in 1537, the archbishop in Nidaros had removed the shrine of St. Olaf and kept it in his castle at Steinvikholm, close to Nidaros.¹⁰ But in 1567, when Absalon wrote his treatise, the relics seem to have been returned, and they are praised by Absalon as if no religious change had taken place at all with the Reformation: he regards the relics of Olaf as particularly precious among Norway’s still remaining gifts or “ornaments,” since his body according to the

6 Absalon, *Om Norgis Rige*, 40: “[...] hun blev saa gammel, kold oc ufructsommelig, at hun kunde icke nu føde sjelf kongebørn, som skulle vere hennis regentere. Hennis adel, gode kemper oc stridsmend fulle henne ifra, en part ved sverd, en part ved pestilenze ...”

7 Absalon, *Om Norgis Rige*, 49.

8 Absalon, *Om Norgis Rige*, 19 (Introduction by H. Beyer).

9 Absalon, *Om Norgis Rige*, 43: “Item de kloster oc kircker som vore forfædre haffuer op bygt, bryde vi neder, oc der som man tilforn haffuer kunnit holle 27 kircker ved magt (saa mange kircker smaa oc store aff tre oc sten haffuer i Bergen verit) med tag oc anden ornament, kand mand nu icke, heller neppelig, holle 4.”

10 On the complicated story of what happened to St. Olaf’s shrine after the Reformation, see Øystein Ekroll, “St. Olavs skrin i Nidaros,” in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153–1537*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag, 2003), 325–350.

author has been preserved unchanged and untarnished for 537 years. Nothing similar could be said about the holy kings of Sweden or of Denmark: St. Erik or St. Knud. This was only the case with St. Olaf, and it

no doubt happened in order for God to make it clear, that St Olaf's undertakings, his learning, his confession and his warfare had been justified, and that God will wake him up again to eternal life and give him the incorruptible crown of honour. God wants to announce this through Olaf's body: just like God preserves his body unharmed, he will in the same way preserve his soul unharmed and let them come together and be immortal.¹¹

The approval of Norway's pre-Reformation traditions is not restricted to the praise of St. Olaf. Even though Norway, due to its location in the "utmost north of the world," was one of the last countries to convert, Absalon praises it for "true religion and its knowledge of God."¹² "Since the country turned to Christianity, its inhabitants have ever since clung firmly to the word of God, which has sometimes been purer here in Norway, and sometimes darker ..."¹³

Absalon's history of Norway's rise and fall is first and foremost a history of the Norwegian kings. After the Danish annexation of the country, the old and tired lady Norway is no longer capable to bear her own royal children. And the story of the medieval kings of Norway belongs to the most precious parts of the country's heritage. Therefore, humanist efforts were invested in bringing these traditions to new life again.

3.2 Peder Claussøn Friis

The most notable person to be mentioned in connection with this is Peder Claussøn Friis. Trained in the Old Norse language, he was a pioneer in translating the Old Norse sagas. His comprehensive translation, *Norske Kongers Chronica* ("The Chronicles of Norwegian Kings"), was published posthumously in Copenhagen in 1633, and was to become a main contribution to the reception of the saga literature. He also published a short version of the work, *En kort Extract af de norske Kongers*

11 Absalon, *Om Norgis Rige*, 53: "[...] hvilket uden al tvivl er der for skeet, at Gud baade vil dermed give tilkenne, at St. Oluffs sag, lerdøm, bekendelse, krig haver verit ret, oc at Gud vil opvecke hannom til det evige liv, oc give hannom den uforgengelig ærens krone, oc det giver Gud tilkenne udi hans legome, saa at ligervis som Gud bevarer legomet uforkrenkt, saa vil han oc bevare sjelen uforkrenkit, oc lade dennem komme sammen oc blive udødelig."

12 Absalon, *Om Norgis Rige*, 55.

13 Absalon, *Om Norgis Rige*, 56: "[...] have undersaatterne i rigit altid siden hengit hart ved Guds ord, hvilket stundom haver verit renere her i Norge, stundom mørkere ..."

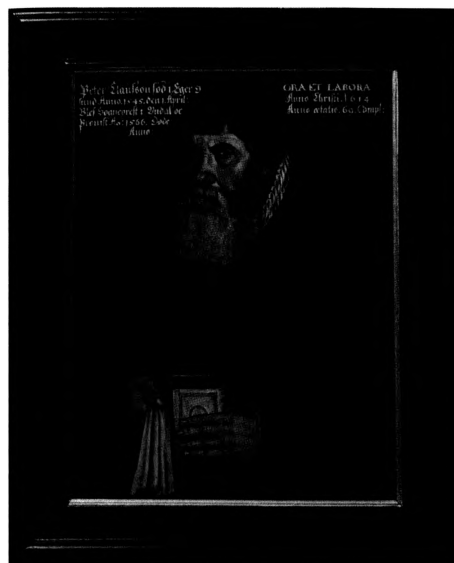


Figure 1: Epitaph for Peder Claussøn Friis in Valle Church, Sør Audnedal in Norway. It is a typical epitaph from the tradition of the early generations of Lutheran clergy. The inscription in the upper right corner ORA ET LABORA is certainly not typically Lutheran, but may nevertheless be most suitable to the hardworking clergyman and writer who was to be remembered by this epitaph (© Birger Lindstad, Riksantikvaren).

Chronica. Here, the story of the Norwegian kings until 1387 is linked to a brief topography of Norway Figure 1.¹⁴

Absalon Pederssøn Beyer had also been interested in topography, and the second part of his *Om Norigs Rige* included quite comprehensive descriptions of nature and natural resources in different parts of the country, including the dominions overseas. All this belonged to the gifts of God, still available to the old lady of Norway. These descriptions are followed up by Peder Claussøn Friis, especially in his *Norrigis Bescriffuelse* ("Description of Norway"), finished in 1613 and published in Copenhagen in 1632. It was an important task not just to deal with the Norwegian mainland, but also with Iceland, Greenland, Orkney and the Faroe Islands. These dominions had all been parts of Norway and the diocese of Nidaros in the old days, and they were well worth remembering and describing – even though all of them now belonged to Denmark.¹⁵

Once again, we see humanist efforts from an important representative of the early Lutheran clergy in Norway, mobilised not in order to study the Bible in its original languages, but to study the classical sources of Norwegian history in the original Old Norse language, primarily the history of its kings. The identity of

¹⁴ Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, "Peder Claussøn Friis," *Norsk biografisk leksikon NBL*: https://nbl.snl.no/Peder_Clauss%C3%B8n_Friis; accessed June 26, 2020.

¹⁵ *Norrigis Bescriffuelse*, ed. Ole Worm (København: Melchior Marzan, 1632); *Snorre Sturlesøns Norske Kongers Chronica*, ed. Ole Worm (København: Melchior Marzan, 1633).

Norway is closely linked to these royal traditions, but the days of glory once again end in the fourteenth century. The Reformation definitely does not belong to the glorious parts of this history.¹⁶

3.3 Denmark: Erasmus Laetus

For comparative purposes, a brief look at similar humanist contributions with a totally different theological and ideological profile in Denmark may deserve attention. Here, too, history writing was strongly influenced by Melanchthon. But the Reformation is not at all excluded or looked upon as the miserable end of a glorious past. Quite the opposite: the Reformation kings of Denmark serve as a point of departure or as a culmination of a succession of rulers dating back to antiquity.

The dominating pattern is summarised in a preface to a book published by the Danish theologian, poet and historian *Erasmus Laetus* in 1560.¹⁷ The preface is written by Melanchthon himself, starting with some main ideas from the *Chronicon Carionis* before developing them further by adding the success of the Danish Reformation kings to the row of prominent international rulers from earlier periods of history – from David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah in the Old Testament through Constantine and Theodicius in Late Antiquity and up to Christian III, the first Danish Reformation king. Common to all of them is that they were not just political rulers, they were – as some type of “theocratic rulers” – also supreme protectors of the temple or the church.

In this way, the Reformation kings of Denmark are not only the peak of the development of Danish kings since the Middle Ages, they represent something

¹⁶ The tradition of historiography was continued a few generations later by the Icelandic born *Tormod Torfæus*, who had spent great parts of his life as a historical author and researcher at Karmøy in southern Norway. He is regarded as one of the founders of the discipline of critical history writing in Norway. He, too, focused on the medieval tradition and Norway's kings in the Middle Ages. His extensive volume *Historia rerum Norvegicarum* ends in 1387 and is mainly preoccupied with the interpretation of the original sources from the saga period. See Tormod Torfæus, *Historia rerum Norvegicarum*, 4 vols. (København: Joachim Schmitgen, 1711). See also Torgrim Titlestad, *Tormod Torfæus – ei innføring* (Stavanger: Erling Skjalgssonselskapet, 2001).

¹⁷ For more on Erasmus Laetus see: Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, “A Safe Haven for the Church – On Melanchthon's Influence on Historical Discourse in Sixteenth-Century Denmark,” in *Philipp Melanchthon und seine Rezeption in Skandinavien*, ed. Birgit Stolt (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998), 113–135, especially 114. See also, Karen Skovgaard-Petersen and Peter Zeeberg, *Erasmus Laetus' skrift om Christian IVs fødsel og dåb (1577)* (København: C.A. Reitzel, 1992).

more. They are to be regarded as an example of ideal rulers of society, realizing the political ambitions of the Lutheran Reformation. As an ideal ruler of this type, Christian III promoted peace and supported learning and the muses. But the ultimate aim of his rule was “pious and salutary Reformation of the church.”¹⁸

4 The New Nation and the Reformation

In 1814, the union between Denmark and Norway was dissolved, Norway was again a country in its own right, and a new national parliament adopted a constitution for the country. Since 1811, a Norwegian university had also been established in Kristiania (now Oslo). How did the historiography of Reformation in Norway evolve in this new political context reinforcing the idea of Norway as a reborn nation?¹⁹

The first extensive Reformation history written in Norwegian by a Norwegian was Stener Johannes Stenersen's *Udsigt over den Lutherske Reformation*.²⁰ Stenersen (1789–1835) was at this time a lecturer in Church History at the University of Kristiania. His two-volume work on the Reformation is a printed edition of his lectures, introducing the theology of Luther and the history of the German Reformation.

The *Udsigt* starts with an introduction presenting the entire history of the church prior to the Reformation as a prelude to what took place with Luther. The survey of the Reformation itself concentrates on Luther, and frequently refers both

18 In Norway, this tradition of historiography, resting heavily on Melanchthon and his *Chronicon Carionis* and ending up praising the Danish kings for having introduced the Reformation, also found a representative: Hallvard Gunnarssøn (1550–1608). He had studied in Copenhagen and Rostock, and had been a lecturer for almost 30 years at the cathedral school in Oslo. His *Chronicon regum Norvegiae* deals with the Norwegian kings up to the death of Håkon Håkonsson in 1263, but a final section with shorter descriptions of the Danish - Norwegian kings is also added. This addition was written by the Danish historian Hans Sadolin. And here, Christian IV is praised for having introduced the Reformation. See Inger Ekrem, “Melanchthon – Cythraeus – Gunarius. Der Einfluss de Geschichtsusunterrichts und der Geschichtsschreibung in den deutschen Ländern und in Dänemark-Norwegen auf einen norwegischen Lektor (ca. 1550–1608),” in *Reformation and Latin Literature in Northern Europe*, ed. Inger Ekrem et al. (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), 207–225.

19 Cf. here also Tarald Rasmussen, “Erkjennelse og interesse. Middelalderen i norsk kirkehistorisk skriving,” in *Den kirkehistoriske utfordring*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag 2014), 27–34.

20 Stener Johannes Stenersen *Udsigt over den Lutherske Reformation: med en Indledning om Kirkens Tilstand før samme* (“A survey of the Lutheran Reformation, with an Introduction Concerning the State of the Church before the same”) (Kristiania: Grøndahl, 1818–19).

to his works and to the first Luther-biography written by Johannes Mathesius. Philipp Marheinecke's *Geschichte der deutschen Reformation* is another main source for Stenersen's history of the Reformation up to 1530.²¹ Marheinecke's work was published in 1816 in Berlin on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation, in order to keep the memory alive of "those great days of the history of our fatherland."²² A similar national context is totally absent in Stenersen's work. Norway is not mentioned at all in his two volumes. The Reformation is a German undertaking, and its relevance for Norway has to be stated in general confessional terms.

Celebrations of the Reformation were also held in Norway in 1817, but here again, no link between the Reformation and the re-born Norwegian nation was established. The celebrations instead focussed on the general fruits of the Reformation. The Norwegian church historian Oluf Kolsrud (1885–1945), who thoroughly analysed the 1817-celebrations in an article in 1917, concluded with five important observations: the Reformation brought a) intellectual progress in knowledge and understanding; b) liberation from the tyranny of the papacy (but not in order to embrace republicanism instead of obedience to the legitimate ruler); c) moral progress, compared to the Middle Ages; d) distribution of the Bible in the vernacular of the people; and e) last but not least, Luther's success in promoting a school and learning programme for children. This last merit was, according to Kolsrud, the most important of all in 1817, and seen as the most glorious fruit of the Reformation in the 1817 celebrations in Norway.²³

Stenersen's book on the Reformation was published at a time when a new feeling of national identity was emerging in Norway, as across many other European countries. A new nation was to be established, and historical research at the new university of Kristiania would support these efforts. At the same time, at least theology and church history were supposed to support and underpin the confessional Lutheran framework of the new nation, equally stated in its constitution. Could this double task be accomplished by continuing to talk about the Reformation in general terms, without confronting the fragile question of the Danish introduction of the Reformation in Norway as an attack on Norwegian sovereignty? Was the Reformation more of an enemy than a friend in the process of Norwegian

²¹ Philipp Marheinecke, *Geschichte der deutschen Reformation*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1816).

²² Marheinecke, *Geschichte der deutschen Reformation*, vol. 1, Vorrede p. IV: "[...] mit der Erinnerung an jene großen Tage der vaterländischen Geschichte ..."

²³ Olaf Kolsrud, "Reformationsjubilæet i Norge 1817," in *Norsk teologi til reformationsjubilæet 1917* ed. Olaf Kolsrud (Kristiania: Grøndahl & Søn's forlag, 1917), 250–295, especially 293–295.

nation building during the nineteenth century? Was it possible to continue the line of Stenersen, in promoting Lutheranism only in terms of general ideals connected to German history, while disregarding the negative aspects of the Reformation as part of Norwegian history?

For several decades in the nineteenth century the attitude to these questions was strongly influenced by an ongoing discussion on how Norwegian theology and church life should relate to the famous Danish theologian Nicolai F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872). In his thinking, Christianity had to be fundamentally connected to national traditions and national history, not only to the Reformation, but also further back to the Middle Ages. Christianity had to be contextualized in this way in order to come into its own right. Different parts of the world had developed different forms of Christianity, deeply rooted and deeply influenced by national and regional contexts. These various forms of Christianity also found different religious expressions, not least through music and singing. Grundtvig was no less famous as a hymn writer than as a theologian.

In Norway, the Grundtvig way of thinking also had its followers, but the dominant academics at the University of Kristiania rejected it. Stenersen himself had an ambiguous attitude to Grundtvig, but the most influential professor at the Kristiania faculty throughout the 1840s and 1850s, Gisle Johnson (1822–94), rejected Grundtvig's position on fundamental grounds, and replaced it with Lutheran confessionalism. Here, Reformation history was to be studied and taught according to the tradition from Stenersen; it was to be converted to, and treated in terms of, dogmatics and confessional Lutheranism, and not at all in terms of national history.

The price to be paid for this was that Norwegian university theology was to a great extent detached from the national challenge of establishing the academic basis of Norwegian nation building. To Johnson and his followers, it seemed difficult to connect a Lutheran identity to National Norwegian interests without being linked to, or associated with, Grundtvig and his followers. And this price was too high. Therefore, academic theology up until around 1900 frequently preferred to keep the nation building project at a distance, and instead concentrate its efforts on the strengthening of a confessional position.²⁴

The academic discipline of history at the University of Kristiania was closely linked to the project of nation building and to the efforts of defining national and

24 One interesting effect of this strategy was the hiring of the excellent German scholar Carl Paul Caspari (1814–92) from Germany to the University of Kristiania. He was recruited by Gisle Johnson in order to assist in the battle against Grundtvigianism, and to take part in the task of disproving the Grundtvigian presupposition that the words of the Apostolic confession could be traced back to Jesus himself.

political identity. Historical research to a large extent served such purposes, and here again, for obvious reasons, the Reformation in Norway had little or nothing to offer. Instead, the High Middle Ages, the period of Norwegian strength and influence, preserved its position as a major field of historical investigation.²⁵ One obvious hero was king Sverre (1177–1202). His resolute protest against Rome and the pope on behalf of his country could in a Norwegian context overrule and replace Luther's protest against the papacy. Moreover, the specific structure of Norwegian rural society in the Middle Ages, with a smaller degree of feudal subordination of "ordinary people," could serve as a source of identification for the modern democratic Norway, after the long period of subordination under Danish rule.

5 Christianisation as a Substitute for the Reformation

Not only was it the historians in Norway who preferred the High Middle Ages to the Early Modern period and the Reformation. The church historians followed a similar path too. From their point of view, the Norwegian Reformation was nothing to be proud of. The first one to state this explicitly within the framework of academic teaching was professor of church history Anton Christian Bang (1840–1913) in his book *Udsigt over Den norske Kirkes Historie: efter Reformationen*. Bang started out as a professor two years after he had published this book, and in the preface he writes that it is "... the first attempt to offer a comprehensive account of the history of the Norwegian church after the Reformation Figure 2."²⁶

In the introduction to the book, the Reformation in Norway is presented in the following way:

[...] while life on other places is rich and the development prosperous, everything here with us is just meagre and at times almost crippled. [...] The same seed, which under more favourable

²⁵ This way of looking at the history of Norway was promoted not least by Ernst Sars (1835–1917), professor of history at the University of Oslo since 1874. An influential work of his is *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, 4 vols., 1873–91. Several later historians both in the nineteenth and the twentieth century have confirmed and further developed his line of argument, and his strategy of a historical underpinning of Norwegian national identity.

²⁶ Anton Christian Bang, *Udsigt over Den norske Kirkes Historie: efter Reformationen* (Kristiania: Albert Cammermeyer, 1883), V: "[...] det første Forsøg paa at levere en samlet Fremstilling af den norske Kirkes Historie efter Reformationen, ... "



Figure 2: Anton Christian Bang was Professor of Church History before he took over the position as Bishop of Oslo in 1896. This picture is from 1907 (© Szacinski/Oslo Museum).

conditions could flower and give wonderful fruits, is up here only capable of fostering dwarf trees [...] Dealing with the post-Reformation history of our church, one is confronted with the tedious and poor life in a province, in an annex ...²⁷

Four years after the publication of his work on the Church of Norway after the Reformation, Bang published a similar and much more comprehensive work on the Church of Norway “under Catholicism.”²⁸ Being the first to publish an academic treatise on the Church of Norway “after the Reformation” in 1883, he was not the first to write about Norway and the Church of Norway “under Catholicism.” Rudolf Keyser (1803–64), a founding father of academic history writing in Norway,²⁹ had already published a huge two volume (almost 1500 pages) work on *The History of*

²⁷ Bang, *Efter Reformationen*, 1: “... medens Livet paa andre Steder er rigt og Udviklingen fyldig, saa er alt hos os kun maget og til sine Tider næsten forkrøblet. [...] De samme Frø, der under heldigere Omstændigheder udvikle sig frodig og afsætte skønne Frugter, formaa heroppe kun ligesom at frembringe Dvergræer. [...] Det er det ensformige og fattige Liv i en Provins, i et Annex, man har for sig, naar man beskæftiger sig med vor Kirkes efterreformatoriske Historie ...”

²⁸ Anton Christian Bang, *Udsigt over Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen* (Kristiania: Albert Cammermeyer, 1887).

²⁹ Cf. Per Sveaas Andersen, *Rudolf Keyser, embetsmann og historiker* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1960).

the Church of Norway under Catholicism³⁰ in 1856–58. Bang could lean on Keyser for important academic support, but he also set his own priorities.

In Bang's book, it is of particular interest to observe the way he praises the period of Christianisation of Norway in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It is true, he writes, that some of the new religious impulses coming from the South that Danish and German missionaries had brought, had a certain influence in the southern parts of the country around Kristiania. But on an overall and national level, it is important to conclude that the decisive influence came from the West, from England:

It was from the Anglo-Saxon Britain that Christianity found its way into the Norwegian people as a whole. Among all the peoples, that during the first half of the Middle Ages took the Christian faith, there was hardly any nation where such a deep, warm and beautiful Christianity could take root like it did among the Anglo-Saxons. There, a rich Christian life flowered, God's word was translated into their language, and several prominent poets emerged and praised the Lord with their songs. The most characteristic part of the Christianity of the Anglo-Saxons was the wonderful merging of the Christian and the popular, which has to be admired even today. [...] In this way, the daughter-congregation in Norway could receive a beautiful heritage from its mother-congregation in England.³¹

This focus on the Christianisation of Norway from the West also had support from Keyser, and had been further underpinned by an important contribution from the German professor of legal history Konrad Maurer in his two volumes work *Die Bekehrung des Norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume, in ihrem geschichtlichen Verlaufe quellenmäßig geschildert*.³² Maurer visited Norway several times, and he also spent a semester at the University of Kristiania in 1876. To Bang, he was a most

³⁰ Rudolf Keyser, *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, 2 vols. (Kristiania: C. Tønsbergs forlag, 1856–58).

³¹ "Det var fra det angelsaksiske Britannien, at kristendommen fandt sin indgang blandt det norske folk i sin helhed. Af alle de mange folkeslag, der i første halvdel af middelalderen antog den kristne tro, var der maaske ingen nation, hos hvem en saa dyb, varm og skøn kristendom slog rod som hos angelsakserne. Et rigt kristeligt liv blomstrede blandt dem, Guds ord blev oversat paa deres tungemål, og der opstod flere betydelige digtere, der paa modersmaalet kvad sine sange til Herrens pris. Hvad der gav angelsaksernes kristendom sit mest fremtrædende præg, det var den skønne sammensmelting af det kristelige og det folkelige, som man endnu den dag idag maa beundre. [...] Dattermenigheden i Norge kunde saaledes modtage en skøn arv fra modermenigheden i England." Quoted from a combined and illustrated edition of the two books: Anton Christian Bang, *Den norske kirkes historie* (Kristiania: Gyldendal Boghandel Nordisk forlag, 1912), 31–32.

³² Konrad Maurer, *Die Bekehrung des Norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume, in ihrem geschichtlichen Verlaufe quellenmäßig geschildert*, 2 vols. (München: Christian Kaiser, 1855–56).

important international authority, who went into much more detail on the topic of the Christianisation from the West than Keyser had done in his work.³³

There are obvious similarities between Bang in 1883–87 and Absalon Peder-ssøn Beyer in 1567; both in their way of looking – not at the Middle Ages, but at the Reformation as a dark age of decay; and in their way of praising the Middle Ages and the period of Christianisation as those parts of history where the Church of Norway could find its most precious roots. Even though Bang operates within a modern university and finds support both in German and Norwegian historical research, much of what he has to say follows in the footsteps of his sixteenth century predecessor.

But there are differences too that are worth noticing. Bang's strong focus on the fact that Christianisation in Norway came from the West is remarkable, and not present in the work of Absalon. This question had been discussed in detail especially by Maurer, and Bang appreciated Maurer's conclusions not only for their contributions to historical research, but also for ideological reasons. It was a good thing for a Lutheran church with a most ambivalent relationship to the Reformation to be convinced that the religious roots of the country before the Reformation were not primarily linked to Rome and to the pope. The Church of England was definitely a much better alternative. Any support of this way of interpreting the Christianisation of Norway, be it from historians or from legal historians, was most welcome.

From this point of departure, it was also easier to appreciate medieval Christianity on a broader scale from a positive perspective: not as a dark prelude to the re-discovery of the Reformation, but rather as a positive prelude to – and partly even as a *medieval substitute* to – the Reformation. In several other Lutheran countries, the Reformation meant a new start of a national history, liberated from Rome. It also meant a return to, and a new start for, use of the native language, rather than Latin. And it meant closer connections between church and people: Christianity did not belong to the clergy, but to the people.

In Norway, little of this came with the Reformation. The situation was rather opposite, at least when it came to Norwegian sovereignty and the use of the Old Norwegian language. The royal traditions of Norway and the Old Norse language were studied by the sixteenth century humanists, but for practical purposes all this had been overruled by the Danes and the Danish language.

When starting to write national church history again in the nineteenth century, Bang could conclude that these essential fruits of the Reformation had already

³³ In 1890, the Norwegian legal historian, Absalon Taranger, further developed Maurer's theories in his: Absalon Taranger, *Den angelsaksiske kirkes indflydelse paa den norske* (Kristiania: Grøndahl & Søn Bogtrykkeri, 1890). The book was dedicated both to Maurer and to Bang.

been present in the Norwegian church since the high Middle Ages. The idols of Roman Catholic Christianity that Luther had to fight in Germany in the sixteenth century, had already been conquered in Norway during the process of Christianisation with the destruction of Old Norse idols.

The Christianisation implied the subordination of Norway into a supranational church structure only to a limited extent. Far more important was the national aspect, which was already evident in the eleventh century. The king was already at this time the primary agent representing the new religion, a characteristic part of Protestant Lutheran societies in the Early Modern period. Christianity more or less accompanied the birth of the Norwegian nation, for the first time united under a strong king (Olaf Haraldsson, i.e. St. Olaf), who together with his bishop was also in charge of religion in the country. And Christianity in the eleventh century was even accompanied by a new life given to the native Old Norse language, which was from the outset used in most of the religious texts. In this way, the religion of eleventh and twelfth century Norway could be interpreted as a kind of proto-Lutheranism, closer to nineteenth century Protestantism than to nineteenth century Catholicism Figure 3.

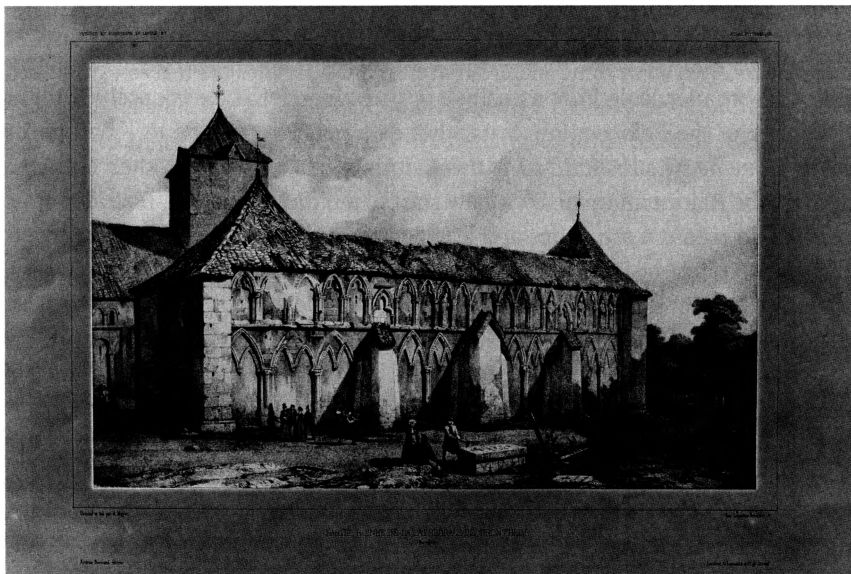


Figure 3: Ecclesiastical decay in post-Reformation Norway. A priority task for the new Norway of the nineteenth century was to restore the Cathedral of St. Olaf. Etching by August Meyer of the west front of the Nidaros Cathedral from 1839 (© Henning Grøtt, Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider).

These were more or less the same national advantages as the ones that in other Nordic countries (and in Germany) could be attributed to the Reformation. But since the character of the Norwegian Reformation was so particular, a different writing of national church history was needed. And in Norway, the intense pre-occupation with the period of Christianisation to a considerable extent replaced the research on the Reformation period. As with the historians, the Norwegian church historians also found what they needed (i.e. the close and positive link between religion and national identity) in the Middle Ages; not in the Reformation.

6 Conclusion

A. C. Bang's and Absalon Pederssøn Beyer's way of thinking about the Reformation in Norway; and Bang's interpretation of the Christianisation as a kind of prelude or substitute to changes that took place elsewhere with the Reformation; have continued to influence Norwegian historiography as well as Norwegian church politics. The most popular person from the Reformation of Norway is the Catholic Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson. He defended national interests, but had to escape in 1537 when the army of the Danish king was on its way to Nidaros.³⁴ Also, the preparations for the celebrations of the millennium of St. Olaf's martyrdom in 2030 is a huge undertaking in Norway,³⁵ as it was with the celebration of the 900th anniversary of St. Olaf in 1930 as well.³⁶ Remembering the Reformation, be it the Reformation in Germany in 2017 or the Reformation of Denmark and Norway in 1937, is a small event in comparison.

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³⁴ See, for instance, Halfdan Koth, *Olav Engelbriktsson og sjølvstende-tapet 1537* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1951).

³⁵ The preparations have already started a long time ago and are being coordinated by the national cultural centre in Stiklestad ("Stiklestad Nasjonale Kultursenter"). <https://stiklestad.no/nasjonaljubileet2030/> A comprehensive report on the preparations of the national jubilee in 2030 was published in 2018. <https://stiklestad.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/sluttrapport-forstudie-nasjonaljubileet-2030.pdf>.

³⁶ A number of books were published in Norway on this occasion. One of the most significant was once again edited by Oluf Kolsrud: *Nidaros og Stiklestad. Olavs-Jubileet 1930. Mindeskrift*, ed. Oluf Kolsrud, *Norvegia Sacra* 10 (Oslo: Steenske forlag, 1937). Here, preparations and celebrations in Norway, as well as abroad, are comprehensively documented.

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Problems with the Interpretation of the “Slovak Reformation”

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Abstract: Structural problems of communities affected by the “Slovak Reformation,” issues with accepting the situation or simply the relationships among various cultural phenomena, like literacy or language policies, are key aspects in studying the impact of the Reformation in Hungary, especially with respect to Slovaks. Information gathered from the Reformation had a direct and long-lasting impact on the formation of vernacular language, as well as on the search for and the construction of an ethnic identity. Searching for evidence left by the Slovak presence in the Reformation movement thus presents challenging though notable problems for Slovak historiography. The confessional division and its political as well as cultural implications have evoked long-lasting discussions among historians as well as politicians. This study focuses on the most relevant issues within these processes.

Keywords: Slovak Lutherans, Reformation traditions, diversities, language, history and historiography

1 Introduction

The acceptance and development of the Reformation ideas among theologians, townsfolk, noblemen and simple believers in the Kingdom of Hungary was an interesting and multi-faceted process. It not only provoked debates and confrontations among those involved, but also became a catalyst for the creation of modern historiography. In trying to understand how the process was carried out with regard to historiography, which was attempting to (re)construct and portray the Slovak community’s historical knowledge, we encountered several interesting circumstances. There arises immediately a very simple though important question: how to define the notion of “Slovak-ness” in the context of the Hungarian Kingdom’s Reformation? Was this process fragmented due to the ethnicity of its representatives? How was the language situation perceived by the contemporary “native” intellectuals

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and what were their answers to the perceptions they had been confronted with? In my text I try to explain both aspects of this interesting, but little-known case.

First of all, adopting the ideas of the Reformation was related to a few specific processes which were the result of the cultural and social situation of Reformation supporters who spoke Slovak as their mother tongue.¹ Slovak, in fact, was a spoken language with various dialects. It was also known as a language adopted by educated people from a “foreign” environment which was used in the liturgy, published works and in cultivated communication.² It was standardized through important texts, which reinforced and unified the teachings of the Reformation. Catechisms and hymnals were the first publications to be mass produced; though the linguistic canon was defined only by the Bible, which was adopted and reproduced in a Czech “Kralice” edition.

The second, equally important, factor was that creating historiography was a process undertaken in a strongly polarized environment, but that did not affect the methodology. The historiography was defined from a single confessional point of view and claimed to interpret the past, constructed as a platform for legitimisation of the *whole* ethnic community without considering the existence of any other community with a different confessional identity. For this reason, it is interesting to note both the conditions that led to such polarization as well as the turnover in the interpretation of the Reformation within the historiography, which intentionally *revealed* the involvement of “Slovaks” in the movement.

2 The Process of Adopting the Ideas of the Reformation

After the spread of the Reformation, citizens whose mother tongue was Slovak – or more precisely, one of the regional dialects – started from the same point as the other ethnicities within the Kingdom of Hungary: it was necessary to quite

1 There have been numerous studies published on the spread of the Reformation in Hungary. Useful surveys include: Zoltán Csepregi, “Die Anfänge der Reformation im Königreich Ungarn bis 1548,” in *Die Reformation in Mitteleuropa / Reformacija v srednji Evropi*, ed. Vincenc Rajšp et al., Srednjevropaska znanstvena knjižnica / Mitteleuropäische wissenschaftliche Bibliothek 4 (Ljubljana – Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 127–147; Zoltán Csepregi, “Die Rezeption der deutschen Reformation in ungarländischen Städten und Herrschaften,” in *Exportgut Reformation: Ihr Transfer in Kontaktzonen des 16. Jahrhunderts und die Gegenwart evangelischer Kirchen in Europa*, ed. Ulrich A. Wien and Mihai D. Grigore, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Beihefte 113 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 161–189.

2 See, Lubomír Ďurovič, “Zpráva pisma slowenského Tobiáša Masniciá a problém slovenskej identity” [Zpráva pisma slowenského by Thobias Masnicius and the Problem of Slovak Identity], *Slovenská reč* 73 (2008): 129–138.

resolutely cope with the need to accept the basic framework of the Reformation – namely, access to the Bible as the source of authentic and true faith. However, this challenging aspect of the Reformation was difficult to realize as the general orientation of the social elite towards Latin schooling; and the acute theological problems that resulted from the clarification of confessional positions left an impact on the linguistic abilities of the Slovak speaking Lutherans. Elevating the locals' spoken language to a level able to express the words of the Bible and to make binding doctrinal texts accessible became an urgent, though problematic, issue. The very first creeds or confessions from the mid-sixteenth century were written in Latin. Their outline, assessment and use were associated with the community of theologians and townsfolk with a Latin education who prepared them. It took a further three decades before various doctrinal texts appeared among ordinary people in an understandable language.³ This delay may be explained, with regard to Slovak-speaking citizens, by the absence of a standard stabilized language with precise religious and political terminology which may have resulted in misunderstandings. Inaccuracies in translations of the texts, the goal of which was to legitimize the new community, could lead to inaccurate interpretation of religious doctrines and may have consequently made political adversaries question the legal status of the new Church and deny its right of existence.

It is probably no coincidence that the first original works that clearly defined the theological views of Slovak Lutherans were published at the time of the conflicts arising from the theological orientation of urban communities in Eastern Slovakia.⁴ Publishing Luther's *Small Catechism*, the first original book in *Slovakized Czech* (1581 Bardejov, 1583 Hlohovec), with a consistent interpretation of the teachings, was undoubtedly motivated by a need to strongly declare orthodox Lutheran views at a controversial time, in answer to the supporters of Crypto-Calvinism. Until this time, the use of what were obviously acceptable Czech hymnals or religious songs by Johannes Silvanus (Silván) published in 1571 in Prague,⁵ did not have to correspond to the orthodox character of the Reformation

3 Ján P. Ďurovič, *Evanjelická literatúra do tolerancie* [The Lutheran Literature until the Toleration Period] (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1940), 38–43. There appears to have existed a Slovak translation of the 1574 edition of the *Confessio Pentapolitana*, too. See Slovak National Archives: fund Zay – Bučiansky archív, Collection of Lutheran manuscripts, carton 164, *Collectaneorum Volumen V*, fol. 1–2.

4 Miloslava Bodnárová, "Reformácia vo východoslovenských kráľovských mestách v 16. storočí" [Reformation in the Royal Cities in East Slovakia in the Sixteenth Century], in *Reformácia na východnom Slovensku v 16.-18. storočí* [Reformation in Eastern Slovakia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries], ed. Ferdinand Uličný, Acta Collegii Evangelici Prešovienis 2 (Prešov: Biskupský Úrad Východného Dištriktu ECAV na Slovensku, 1998), 19–38.

5 Joannes Silvanus, *Písne nové na sedm žalmů kajících a jiné žalmy* [New Songs on Seven Penitential Psalms and Other Psalms] (Prague: s.n., 1571; 2nd ed. 1578);

teachings. These hymnals were produced by Utraquists (1522, 1531) or the Czech Brethren (1541). Literary science had also identified Zwinglian elements in Silvanus' songs.⁶ Yet, it was important that these publications used religious terminology. The almost simultaneous acceptance of the *Bible of Kralice*, published in 1579–1594 (later confirmed as binding by the synod in Žilina in 1610) – despite originating from the school of translation of the Czech Brethren, which was close to Calvinism – was another practical step which enabled Slovak speaking Lutherans to have immediate contact with the authentic source of their faith. An important aspect of making the Bible accessible was the impact on the standardization of cultivated communication. The style of language used was accepted as standard in texts, which claimed to be the mediators of religious doctrines and later on of legal praxis.⁷ The Czech translation allowed certain terms to be used as part of the linguistic practice of Slovak Lutherans, and these remained in their linguistic canons until the end of the twentieth century. The specific language made contact between believers and God possible. As the highest level of communication, it required consistency, accuracy and the invariability of linguistic devices. The language of biblical statements gradually entered other types of published works which were better suited for use in day-to-day religious life (hymnals, prayer books, and literature cultivating religiousness etc.).

Thus, the Reformation did not immediately lead to a clear inclination towards the local language, as was the case with the Germans, nor did it identify with the gradual cultivation of the vernacular, as it did for the Hungarians.⁸ However, the adaptation of the Czech language did not represent a lean towards a foreign language. Linguists assume that the Slavic dialects spoken at that time were much less diverse. In addition, there has been a long tradition of using the Czech as a diplomatic language at some levels of state administration or legal processes in the

6 Ludmila Čuprová, "Poznámky k životu a dílu Jana Silvána" [Remarks on the Life and Work of Jan Silván], in *Litteraria. Štúdie a dokumenty* I., ed. Oskar Čepan (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1958), 5–68. See also Eva Tkáčiková, "J. Silván – J. Tranovský – S. Hruškovíc a cesty našej duchovnej poézie" [J. Silván – J. Tranovský – S. Hruškovíc and the Trajectories of Our Spiritual Poetry], in *Cithara sanctorum 1636 – 2006*, ed. Miloš Kovačka and Eva Augustínová (Martin: SNK, 2008), 12–18, esp. 13–14.

7 Peter Benka, "Mestské prisahy v Bardejove v ranom novoveku ako prameň kultúrnych a sociálnych dejín" [Town Oaths at Bardejov in the Early Modern Period as a Source for Cultural and Social History], *Historický časopis* 66 (2018): 27–54. For the editions of the town oaths collection see: *Prisazné formuly zo 16.–18. storočia 1/ Formulae Iuramentorum Saeculi 16–18*, vol. 1, ed. Peter Benka, Martin Homza, and Pavol Žigo (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, 2018).

8 István Bitskey, *Konfessionen und literarische Gattungen der frühen Neuzeit in Ungarn: Beiträge zur mitteleuropäischen vergleichenden Kulturgeschichte*, Debrecener Studien zur Literatur 4 (Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang, 1990); David P. Daniel, "Publishing the Reformation in Habsburg Monarchy," in *Books have their own destiny. Habent sua fata libelli*, ed. Robin B. Barnes (Kirkville, MO: Thomas Jefferson Press, 1998), 47–60.

towns with a Slavic population.⁹ Scholars who were part of the Reformation movement frequently studied or had spent a time in a Czech speaking setting. The new editions of Luther's catechism (1612, 1634) and the hymnal *Cithara sanctorum* (1636) in the adopted Czech language, which became the most widely used book by Slovak Lutherans in the Kingdom of Hungary, subsequently defined not only the theological – in this case Lutheran orthodoxy – but also the linguistic standards.¹⁰

The stability of both of these phenomena was not only supported by religious circumstances. At a time when the Evangelical beliefs were threatened by advancing Re-catholicization, it was important to identify with the creed through symbols and informal distinctive features, and also through language used in the liturgy, especially as dedication to a specific faith could not be reinforced institutionally through the official forms of religious life. People who had no direct contact with the evangelists as a result of Re-catholicization could not visit their churches or perform any public group religious practices. For the most part, they maintained their faith at home. Understandably, religious songs played a vital role, such as the *Cithara sanctorum* hymnal that provided a less costly summary of theological knowledge intended for the lower classes. The lyrics addressed situations in the lives of believers. In this way, the hymnal and catechism that employed the language of the Bible became an almost exclusive and certainly wide-spread source of religious teaching, especially during the times of religious persecution. Hence, the Bible was not the only symbol of unity and integrity for the Lutherans: the two types of texts and the language they were published in had the same “canonized” value.

A thorough distinction between the two opposing confessional communities, Lutherans and Catholics, was not only exhibited at the level of their doctrines but both groups also displayed distinct forms of language in their publications. The Catholics gradually began to advocate the use of a current form of spoken language; first in sermons and later in different literary genres. Moreover, a conscious distinction was made between its users and those people with “heretical” ideas.¹¹ Simultaneously, the Biblical Czech used by Slovak speaking Lutherans in the liturgy and

9 The most important legal codex of the city of Žilina from 1381, newly edited. Rudolf Kuchár, ed., *Žilinská právna kniha - Preklad magdeburského práva, zápisy právnych úkonov žilinských mešťanov* [The Žilina Legal Book - The Translation of the Magdeburg Law, Records of Legal Acts of Burghers in Žilina] (Bratislava: Veda, 2009).

10 Ľubomír Ďurovič, “Pôvod a podoba češtiny ako spisovného jazyka Slovákov (Niektoré závery filologickej analýzy Bardejovského katechizmu)” [The Origin and Form of Czech as Written Language of Slovaks. Some Results of the Philological Analysis of Bardejov Catechism], in *Prehľadná spisovnej slovenčiny* [Pre-history of Written Slovak], ed. Ľubomír Ďurovič (Bratislava: Veda, 2018), 33–53.

11 Czech terms used in the Catholic catechism from the late 1780s were explicitly defined as suspicious and mocking in a report on a textbook, prepared by a canon from Nitra, Johannes Ludovicus Schwartz. See Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár – Országos Levéltár, C 69, 1780, Scholae Nationales, Miscellanea, fons 3, pos. 54, fol. 97.

written communication gradually became their characteristic feature, and later even a symbol of their connection to their Czech co-believers, being either in exile in Germany or underground at home. Moreover, since a large number of Czech Protestant exiles found shelter among Slovak speaking Lutherans after 1627, a continuation of the Reformed tradition was established, from Jan Hus to Martin Luther, especially among the Slovak Lutherans. It had been employed as a theological argument that would confirm the "exceptionality" of them within the ethnically mixed church communities during the eighteenth century. The idea that Hussitism constituted a significant precursor to Lutheranism found intensive support, in spite of the fact that historical continuity with the Reformation in this area is almost impossible to sustain. It appears to be an invention of early modern scholarship. The commitment to this inauthentic but theologically impressive tradition allowed minorities to gain greater acceptance within the multi-ethnic religious community.¹²

In addition to the above mentioned, we also encountered other processes within the Church that are currently overlooked in the historiography. The "Slovak" speaking members of the congregations received secure spiritual care from the Church, but were since the very beginning of the spread of the Reformation also influenced by decisions made by town authorities or patrons. The community of "Slovak" townsfolk continuously became stronger not only in number but also economically and culturally as shown by conflicts within the town community on the question of dual representation based on ethnicity. The group was understandably interested in having a say in the decision-making process on municipal matters.¹³ Similarly, in the aristocracy, which identified

12 For more on mechanism and purpose of the traditions, see *Die Konstruktion der Vergangenheit. Geschichtsdenken, Traditionsbildung und Selbstdarstellung im frühneuzeitlichen Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke and Arno Strohmeyer, *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, Beiheft 29 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002).

13 In the background of these conflicts between the German and Slovak speaking burghers were efforts and interests to eliminate the "foreign" phenomenon in municipalities; namely, the noblemen. For a complex explanation of these confrontations in one of the mining towns, Banská Bystrica, see Jozef Markov, *Odraz politických zápasov v obecnej správe Banskej Bystrice v 16.-19. storočí* [The Reflection of the Political Struggles within the City Administration in Banská Bystrica from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1973); Jozef Vozár, "Národnostné pomery v stredoslovenských banských mestách v období neskorého feudalizmu" [The Ethnic Relationships in the Mining Cities in Central Slovakia in the Late Feudal Period], in *Národnostný vývoj miest na Slovensku do roku 1918* [Ethnic Development in the Cities in Slovakia until 1918], ed. Richard Marsina (Martin: Osveta, 1984), 188–206; Jozef Vozár, "Národnostné zápasy v stredoslovenských mestách a slovenské národné povedomie od 16. do polovice 18. storočia" [National Struggles in the Cities in Central Slovakia and the Slovak National Consciousness from the Sixteenth until the Middle of Eighteenth Century], *Historický časopis* 28 (1980): 554–577.

with the Reformation, sensitivity to the needs of linguistically defined communities was nothing exceptional. In the same vein, claims for parity in the representation of Slovak speaking Lutherans within the Church emerged and were clearly formed in order to stabilize the organization of the Evangelicals. Since administrative authorities (seniorates or superintendencies), had been working on the principle of election as early as the first supra-regional synod in Žilina (1610), a model which had already been tried was implemented. This was to fill the mandates of dignitaries according to nationality. This model was used in the Church even after the violent, disruptive process of Re-catholicization (the so-called *Trauerdekade*, 1671),¹⁴ when after they had stabilized the situation, the Church continued to function without adequate organizational structures. The interference of the state into the restoration after 1731 only emphasized a need to return to best practice models, which would remove unproductive tension and threats from the majority in elections. Implementing a compromise in the form of an alternate election of officials within for example the Pre-Tisza District (1743), on the basis of a nationality code combining ethnic and socio-regional factors (German-speaking municipal congregations with less members vs. Slovak-speaking rural congregations with more members), could only support the efforts to justify their own ecclesiastical and political claims by pointing out the cultural past shaped by Hussitism and the Reformation. In this case, it was not yet a matter of an intentional commitment to the ideological concept of shared ethnicity or the fulfilment of the aims of its development program, but the pragmatic use of a well-known construction.

On the other hand, this tradition and the stereotyping which came from it (Slovak Lutherans as preservers of the tradition of Czech Reformation), was a tool for apologetics and a source of pride for the maturity of the whole "Slavic nation." In this way, it was involved in shaping the spiritual life of Europe. The fiction of the Slavic nation was celebrated in this period by several Slavonic intellectuals.¹⁵ In this context, opposing views on the character and qualities of their own ethnicity began to emerge among Slovak-speaking Lutherans. The strong differences between both creeds (Lutherans and Catholics), within a single ethnic unit, affected the development of both the culture and mentality during the entire Early Modern era and foreshadowed the formation of a national movement in the first half of the

14 Briefly by Zoltán Csepregi, "Das königliche Ungarn im Jahrhundert vor der Toleranz (1681–1781)," in *Geheimprotestantismus und evangelische Kirchen in der Habsburgermonarchie und im Erzstift Salzburg (17./18. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Rudolf Leeb, Martin Scheutz, and Dietmar Weigl (Wien – München: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 299–330.

15 The concept of Baroque Slavism emerged among various scholars of Slavonic origin during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In detail see Rudo Brtáň, *Barokový slavizmus* [Baroque Slavism] (Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1939).

nineteenth century.¹⁶ Both faiths were characterized by a strong collective identity and the claim that they represented the entire ethnic community.

3 Diversities in Language and History

Hopes for continuity of the pre-Reformation ecclesiastical and theological ideals and the Reformation itself were not the only important reasons for commemoration among the community of Slovak intellectuals. Of equal importance were confrontations between Lutheran intellectuals and their foreign but not always friendly counterparts either in their homeland or in exile. They were thus forced to contemplate their own views; to explain the situation in the Kingdom of Hungary to a new audience abroad¹⁷ and to protect the identity and culture of their community. Interestingly, these requirements were first manifested at the turn of the eighteenth century – they were linked to the exile (their own experience as well as a reflection of the Czech and Moravian exile); to the creation of new scientific disciplines (especially *Historia litteraria*); and the acceptance of a new Protestant ecclesiastical hierarchy by the Catholic authorities after 1731. As a result, it was necessary and advantageous to introduce characteristics that would call attention to the specific areas occupied by Slovaks (Lutherans) within Hungarian culture, and at the same time broader Slavic or any other cultural environment. This may account for the efforts of Thobias Masnicius to establish Slovaks as a separate entity through a linguistic-ethnic argument and not primarily through a historical one. As he argued, Slovaks essentially did not exist in the eyes of the contemporary intellectual (mostly German) community since the incorporation of Slovak intellectuals into the Hungarian context was essentially seamless (even in the long nineteenth century). It was easy for the elite, or rather the intellectuals reflecting upon the linguistic diversity of the Hungarian population, to communicate, due to their active use of Latin. The character of the state that was personified in the concept of the Hungarian crown was also closely tied to the territory and the aristocratic community, and not to linguistic or ethnic bounds. Just as with other examples of self-identification, in the case of Masnicius, we may also assume that

¹⁶ See Alexander Maxwell, *Choosing Slovakia. Slavic Hungary, the Czechoslovak Language, and Accidental Nationalism* (London – New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009).

¹⁷ Graeme Murdock, “‘They Are Laughing at Us’: Hungarian Travellers and Early Modern European Identity,” in *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe*, ed. Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis (Budapest: CEU Press, 2008), 121–146. For Lutheran Exiles from Hungary see Eva Kowalská, “Confessional Exile from Hungary in 17th Century Europe: the Problem of Mental Borders,” in *Imagining Frontiers, Contesting Identities*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Luďa Klusáková (Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2007), 229–242.

there was a foreign confrontation that cultivated an understanding of the territory from which he went, or was forced to go, into German exile. Only while he was in Wittenberg, the centre of German historiography was he able to study works that described the ethnic relationships and history of the Hungarian territories. As he implicitly remarked, he had discovered that "Slovaks" were not mentioned at all in disputes, dissertations or other books. This notion expressed in the introduction to his treatise on Slovak language was at the same time an impetus for his further work for the emancipation and improvement of the language.¹⁸

Masnicius did not consider the historical impetus in depth, or more specifically the Reformation, for the processes he analysed. The understanding he acquired in exile may have been an important motivation for him – that neither contemporary educated Europe, nor the meticulous experts, knew Slovaks or took them into consideration as they were not even able to name them specifically. His explanation for this exclusion was that the language of the Slovaks, as opposed to that of the Czechs, lacked *cultura*, i.e. cultivation; as only different dialects existed ("*ubique variat*").¹⁹ As stated by Masnicius, none of these dialects had fixed rules, which could have standardized or unified the language and made it possible for a foreigner to learn. Even though Masnicius only defined a program to counter this issue in the introduction to his linguistic work (1696) – publications, the reproduction and reading of books – it started the codification process of a unique, standardized language and the search for, or the construction of, a uniquely Slovak history.

It was these two subjects – language and history – which became the main distinctive features of this community which had started to define itself by its ethnicity. Interestingly enough, it was Daniel Krman, a nephew of Thobias Masnicius, who started the process of "discovery." His arguments in favour of considering the language of the Hungarian Slavs (Pannonians), as *lingua slavico-bohemica* were not supported by a real impulse of the Reformation. Krman stated that the two languages were related but it was not the Reformation spreading the printed word that made that possible. He referred to much older and perhaps more serious cultural actions undertaken by St. Cyril and Methodius, who were the first to establish a standardized Slavic language, finding followers in the nearby Czech territory. Krman's model for justifying establishment of the language by the Saints from Great Moravia, not being the immediate result of the Reformation, became the main narrative for the interpretation of the "story of the nation" and its history. Nonetheless, it was the ongoing circumstances in which the advocates of the Czech

18 Lubomír Ďurovič, "Masniciovo Praefatio" [Praefatio by Masnicius], in Ďurovič, *Prehistória*, 141–142 (Latin original), 139–140 (translation).

19 Ďurovič, "Zpráva písma slowenského," 136.

Reformation appeared, that led Krman to search for their links. Czech Protestants mostly lived in exile and were exposed to an assimilation process of the language of the Slovaks in Hungary. The situation of those in Bohemia who were secretly committed to the Reformation was just as bad because they lacked any organizational structure, and their ability to establish an identity through books was only minimal. Admitting that the two languages were related could therefore bolster their relevance and give Lutheran Slovaks the ability to highlight their role in the past as well as their importance in the present. These different starting points, the “pre-history,” and the process of the Czech and “Slovak-Hungarian” Reformation could have been overcome by emphasizing long standing linguistic relations. In this regard, Krman was quite original and important for the process of mutual cultural exchange. On the other hand, he remained in this mission unique at that time: not even the extensive factual and reliable overview of the history of the Reformation in the Kingdom of Hungary by Johannes Burius mentioned or analysed the importance of St. Cyril and Methodius.²⁰

Understandably, the Catholic interpretation of the history of the Kingdom of Hungary prevailed, but what could be avoided in the classical interpretation through the activities of monarchs and states²¹ could not be concealed in the context of the newly emerging cultural history: certain phenomena were brought into the spotlight, not only through the stories of martyrs but particularly through educational developments, which highlighted the contributions of Protestants. Thus, ecclesiastical history came to be used to compose the narrative of “national” (ethnic-national) history. This specific concept of writing the *historiae litterariae* was introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the first historiographer of literature written in the local Slovak language, Bohuslav Tablic; who expanded upon the “projects” of cultural history (*historia litteraria*) by Johannes Rottarides, Andreas Schmal, Alexius Horányi²² and Paul Walaszky. Tablic had not intended to address those actions in the field of education with specific ethnic connotations; however, he did highlight the ethnic context of the work of the Reformation thinkers. His argument that it was especially the Slovak-speaking believers who were the holders and protectors of the Reformation ideas in the

20 Joannes Burius, *Micae historico-chronologicae Evangelico-Pannonicae, συναρξαπικώς collectae et adumbratae opera vigilanti et diutina Joannis BURII tunc P.G.C. nunc I.C.E. duodecennis Anno vero Christi 1685 et seq. in ordinem redigi coepta* (1685), manuscript preserved in the Slovak National Library in Martin, Literary Archive, sign. MJ 726.

21 It must be noted, however, that in his interpretation of the events of early modern history, Matthias Bel avoided conflicts of a religious nature.

22 Alexius Horányi, *Memoria Hungarorum et Provincialium scriptis editis notorum* (Viennae – Posonii: Antonius Loewe, 1775–77); Alexius Horányi, *Nova memoria Hungarorum et provincialium scriptis editis notorum*, vol. 1 (Pestini: Trattner, 1792).

Kingdom of Hungary was successfully accepted and started to be used in the era when the use of Hungarian for administrative and public communication was becoming more and more common.

At the opposite end of the scale, there is a textbook – paradoxically from the same period – that hitherto has not been analysed. It was used in an elementary school in the relatively remote town of Senica, which was the centre of Lutheranism in Western Slovakia.²³ In the 1801 text, the author emphasized the civilisation-related importance of cultural happenings, especially of the Reformation, on the basis of the as yet unidentified model. He explained to the children of this small town that Luther as an innovator, as well as Columbus, had defined a new era in history that continued up until that day. This line of the development of civilisation had started with him and it continued through Wittenberg, Jena, scientists and the English philosophers, until the new historiography would be established. Through this concept, historiography seemed to secure a more suitable position in history for the Protestants. The book is undeniably lacking in originality, but its interpretation using the cultural history is remarkably interesting. However, its enhancement of the self-esteem of the Lutherans, who had always been forced to defend themselves and to be strongly apologetic when writing their own history, comes even more to the fore. These manuscripts of textbooks were not approved by any official authority and their use was undoubtedly limited to a specific region. Naturally, it is also necessary to question the ability of the pupils to comprehend the interpretations suggested. Equally we have to remember the possibility of rejection by the ecclesiastical community. As the pressure for unification within the Lutheran educational system increased at the beginning of the 19th century the relevance of this and similar texts diminished.

4 Historiography

Despite this, it is interesting that Slovak historiography concerning the above-mentioned problems has not reflected the massive external influences. At the beginning, confessionally biased historians were, in principle, the first ones who were professionally prepared to work on scientific levels; such as Ján Kvačala who held a high reputation among his colleagues worldwide as the father of

²³ *Summownj Spys wsseobecnej aneb Vniwersalnj hystorye k vžjwanj Senicke mladězy sskolske w otazkach a odpovědých zebrany a wytahnuty od Girjho Nagy včiteľa Leta paně 1801 w Senicy Michaelis Holub die 4. Martis* (manuscript), preserved at the Slovak National Library – The Literary Archive, MJ 441.

comeniology.²⁴ He could find a balance for a long time between confessionalism and nationalism historiography, which tried to identify first of all the instances of Slovak national identity in history and the history of Reformation in particular. On the other hand, due to the given polarization based on the existence of various types of national written (normative) languages and on the dichotomy of historical traditions, the historiography of the Reformation tended to be the apology of a persecuted, or at least not beloved, part of society, either national or religious. No surprise then that the first synthesis of the history of the Reformation written by a Slovak author was a survey of martyrs of the late seventeenth century declared to be mostly Slovaks.²⁵ This work was, however, only a compilation or reproduction of previously published sources, and, in principle, served as a tool to separate Slovak historiography from a Hungarian one. As Drobný himself declared, he wanted to focus on the martyrs as primarily *Slovak* Lutherans. This type of historical work thus became a part of the invention of the Slovak narrative and a more complex historiography at the beginning of the twentieth century.

However, a profound and, up until today, fundamental analysis of the Reformation process was published only some years later by the above mentioned Kvačala who had seen this timeline not so much as a history of persecution, but rather as a part of the history of ideas and cultural exchange. In this respect, the issue of national or ethnic adherence did not represent to him a matter that should be overstated. His followers or pupils were able to analyse the consequences of the Reformation from an administrative²⁶ or cultural and liturgical sphere,²⁷ which together has brought new insights into the social implications of the Reformation. Thus, the phenomenon of discipline has been surprisingly rudimentarily studied during the 1950s; but due to tendencies stressed by contemporary authorities

24 *Zwischen Dorpat, Pressburg und Wien. Ján Kvačala und die Anfänge der Jablonski-Forschung in Ostmitteleuropa um 1900*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke and Karl W. Schwarz, Jabloniana – Quellen und Forschungen zur europäischen Kulturgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit 9 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018).

25 Ján P. Drobný, *Evanjelickí slovenskí martýri (mučeníci)* [The Slovak Lutheran Martyrs] (Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1929).

26 Ján Jamnický, *Cirkevnoprávne normy novohradského ev. a. v. kontubernia zo začiatku 17. storočia* [Church-administrative Norms of Lutheran Fraternity in Nograd County from the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century] (Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1946); Ján Jamnický, *Právny zástoj kňazov a svetských údov ev. a. v. cirkvina Slovensku v 16. a 17. storočí* [The Legal Position of the Lutheran Priests and the Lay Persons in Slovakia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries] (Liptovský Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1946).

27 Ján M. Petrík, *Dejiny slovenských evanjelických a. v. služieb Božích* [History of the Slovak Lutheran Worship] (Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1946); Ján M. Petrík, *Chrámové agendy slovenskej evanjelickej a. v. cirkvi* [The Slovak Church Agendas] (Liptovský Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1948).

within the research field, there has not been a broad discussion, or even reception, of this concept within historiography. Similarly, the challenging even provocative remarks on confessionalism within Slovak humanities and politics²⁸ have neither been published *in extenso* in the time they were formulated nor at least discussed among the specialists, despite the fact that the title of the respective book stresses the dialectic nature of this issue.

Therefore, there a lengthy interruption can be observed in the development of the historiography concerning religious history and the Reformation especially. The interpretations based on concepts like confessionalization or cultural transfer theory have not yet been properly reflected in, or approved by, Slovak historiography. Studies inspired by them, however, have started to dominate current historical research. The structural problems of the communities affected by the Reformation, the problems of mental adaptation of the given situation, or just inter-connections among various cultural phenomena like literacy and book culture or language policy, are challenging and encourage further research into the development and impact of the Reformation in Hungary. Unfortunately, there are very few researchers at present who are able to study the theological aspects which are prerequisites for understanding these processes. Therefore, current Slovak historiography stresses the social and cultural aspects of the Reformation movement in Hungary with special attention to these processes in today's Slovakia. In comparison with previous trends, it is a small but important and promising shift.

5 Conclusion

Searching for the marks left by the "Slovak" presence in the process of the Reformation movement is a remarkable issue of historiography. For the Slovak interpretation, it is the definition of "Slovak-ness" and its existence within the complex process of long Reformation in Hungary which deserve a special attention. It also demonstrates that the inputs taken from the Reformation have brought various impulses to the formation of vernacular languages, the search for and the construction of an ethnic identity, or in the long-term effectiveness of their results. Discussions within historiography are interesting to a similar extent due to the long-lasting impact of a confessional division and its political, as well as cultural implications, especially when we take into account the fact that confessional dualism remained accepted as a given in politics and social life, even during the 20th and 21st centuries.

²⁸ Anton A. Baník, *O dialektickej podstate slovenského konfesionalizmu* [On the Dialectic Nature of the Slovak Confessionalism] (Martin: SNK, 2000).

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Understanding Long Reformation in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungarian Puritanism Revisited

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Abstract: With the focus on Calvinist Reformation I propose a case study on Hungarian Puritanism that will allow further extrapolations, projections, and some general remarks regarding the entire process of the Hungarian Reformation. This paper draws on the findings of my research examining the reception of English Puritanism in early modern Royal Hungary and Transylvania. I intend to unearth the problematic aspects of cultural and intellectual transfers in an attempt to decipher the intricacies of how Puritan-Calvinist ideas were accepted and incorporated in the religious culture of Hungarian Calvinists. My concern is primarily related to the receiving Hungarian context and its historical evolution. For both the Hungarian Reformation and Hungarian Puritanism appear to have been newly emerging religious cultures resulting from a mixed tradition consisting of transferred ideas and native components. My contention is that the process of transfers and translations are not mechanical takeovers, borrowings or replacements, but a rather complex hermeneutical process of understanding, explaining and applying ideas to the needs of the receivers. One of the major findings of my article is that the application of the concept of long Reformation to the Hungarian case, in line with the latest developments of the field, will not only provide a more suitable historical framework, but it will put to use a repertoire of methodological novelties nurturing the understanding of the entire process of the Reformation based on the transfers of ideas and their consequent reception.

Keywords: long Reformation, Puritanism, transfer, translation, master narrative, native religious culture, assimilated tradition

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1 Introduction

Envisaging Reformation as a process that supposedly altered or even replaced a former religious culture with a new one, appears to be a dangerously simplifying statement. Yet the claim is not without some merit. For the emergence of any early modern *Reformed religious culture* is unmistakably related to a prior (*late*) *medieval religious culture* testifying to the existence and effects of a process of transformation during which the *native and inherited tradition* was altered or even replaced by a *new* or an *invented tradition*. Moreover, this process of transformations brought about two further alternatives. In some western European cases, such as the Holy Roman Empire, reformers emerged from a native religious culture and acted as primary agents of transformations and changes. Therefore, in these cases the so-called Reformed religious culture came into being as an indigenous or native enterprise. In Eastern Europe, and in particular in late medieval Hungary, one can see a different pattern; as those determinant individuals, who could have transformed or at least controlled the transformation of the indigenous or native religious culture, were missing from the late medieval elite. Without the reforming activities of these agents, Reformation developed as a result of a complex process of cultural encounters followed by transfers and translations. Thus, in this case the so-called Reformed religious culture appears to have emerged as just a partially *indigenous* or *native enterprise*, as it evolved mostly from assimilated external ideas and practices. Finally, this admittedly simplified explanation suggests that both contemporary and the posteriorly articulated historiographic accounts distinguished between two major types of Reformation master narratives. While in Western Europe, as the German case seems to suggest, Reformation has usually been defined as a process of renovation and (re)invention of the extant inherited late medieval native tradition performed by native reformers, in the Eastern part of the continent Reformation became the equivalent of a process of transfers and translations serving the reception of an assimilated tradition only mediated by native reformers.

This latter pattern established itself as the dominant viewpoint of the Hungarian historiography on Reformation, which apparently relied on the possibilities of intellectual history or history of ideas in order to reconstruct how Reformed ideas were transferred to Hungarian culture. In addition, the institution of *peregrinatio academica* received particular attention as the main vehicle for the transfer of ideas. Similarly, the production of translations, very often associated with the attendance of western universities by Hungarian students, along with the acquisition of books, constituted the dominant historical explanation for modelling the reception of Reformed ideas, or even explaining their alleged influence upon Hungarian individuals and communities. However, this approach is undeniably not without its flaws and pitfalls and I intend to identify some questionable aspects of it.

With the focus on Calvinist Reformation I propose a case study on Hungarian Puritanism that will allow further extrapolations, projections and some general remarks regarding the *entire process* of Hungarian Reformation. My intention is to draw on the findings of my research examining the reception of English Puritanism in early modern Royal Hungary and Transylvania during the seventeenth century. I intend to unearth the problematic aspects of cultural and intellectual transfers in an attempt to decipher the intricacies of how Puritan-Calvinist ideas were accepted and incorporated in the religious culture of Hungarian Calvinists. My concern is primarily related to the receiving Hungarian context and its historical evolution from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century in order to delineate the chronologic confines of a long Hungarian Reformation. Both Hungarian Reformation and Hungarian Puritanism appear to have been newly emerging religious cultures resulting from a mixed tradition consisting of transferred ideas and native components. My contention is that the process of transfers and translations are not mechanical takeovers, borrowings or replacements, but a rather complex hermeneutical process of understanding, explaining and applying ideas to the needs of the receivers.

The case of Hungarian Puritanism as a well-documented process of reception allows us a complex analysis on both the macro and micro-level, improving understanding of how early modern transfers and translations of ideas brought about the development of a Puritan-oriented Calvinist religious culture. In a first step I shall briefly assess the findings of the secondary literature on Hungarian Puritanism, then I shall proceed to reflect upon the process of reception described by the scholarship. With the deliberate aim of unfolding the cultural and historical otherness of Hungarian Puritan religious culture, I shall very concisely compare the findings and dominant trends of English and Hungarian scholarship on Puritanism. I shall argue that Hungarian Puritanism, lacking the political agenda and theological diversity of English Puritanism, had a rather different character and as a historical process followed a different course, pace and timing. I will conclude with a proposal urging for further comparative researches. One of the major findings of my article is that the application of the concept of long Reformation¹ to the Hungarian case, in line with the latest developments of the field, will not only provide a more suitable historical framework, but it will put to use a repertoire of methodological novelties nurturing the understanding of the entire process of the Reformation based on transfers and translations of ideas, and their consequent reception.

¹ Secondary literature on long Reformation include: Nicholas Tyacke, ed., *England's Long Reformation 1500–1800* (London: UCL Press, 1998); Peter G. Wallace, *The Long European Reformation: Religion, Political Conflict, and the Search for Conformity, 1350–1750* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); John McCallum, ed., *Scotland's Long Reformation. New Perspectives on Scottish Religion, c. 1500–c. 1660* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, ed., *Lived Religion and the Long Reformation in Northern Europe c. 1300–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

2 Hungarian Puritanism as a Chapter of the Calvinist Reformation

The seventeenth century saw a major shift in Hungarian students attending western universities, as not only German, but more and more Dutch and English institutes enrolled students coming from Royal Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania. The outbreak of the Thirty Years' War and its prolonged duration would firmly establish some clear destinations for Hungarians both in Dutch territories and in England. It was due to this particular context that a pietistic Calvinism, shaped by the influence of William Perkins and William Ames, alongside some other English Puritan divines, such as Lewis Bayly or later on Richard Baxter, impregnated Hungarian Calvinism; and a great number of Latin and even English devotional and theological works were translated and disseminated both in Royal Hungary and Transylvania. It is probably safe to say that Hungarian Puritanism came into existence due to the *peregrinatio academica* and exercised a determining influence upon Hungarian Calvinist spirituality from the early seventeenth until the end of the eighteenth century.

The aim of this section is to dwell on the dominant trends of the historiography of Hungarian Puritanism, in order to formulate some critical remarks concerning the misperception of cultural transfers in the early modern era. Yet, I do not engage in providing a complete survey of the secondary literature, rather I am preoccupied to reconstruct some of the relevant internal and external viewpoints undertaken by experts in Hungarian Puritanism.

2.1 The Internal Account: The Findings of Hungarian Scholarship

As an ecclesiastical historian, Jenő Zoványi² focussed on the partially successful efforts of Hungarian Puritans to alter the established Church structure. He appears to have conceived Hungarian Puritanism as a radical Reformation movement challenging the authority of orthodox Calvinism expressed by the desire to replace the episcopal system with the Presbyterian system of Church organisation, which had not been carried out all over in the Principality of Transylvania. Despite the temporary or short-lived attempts to erect presbyteries, the process was extremely long; for it had been met with consistent resistance from both the high clergy and the nobility, including the entourage of the Prince, George II Rákóczi, who overtly

² Jenő Zoványi, *Puritánus mozgalmak a magyar református egyházban* [Puritan Movements in the Hungarian Reformed Church] (Budapest: Magyar Protestáns Irodalmi Társaság, 1911).

opposed the initiative, too. Zoványi's narrative as an account of ecclesiastical history described Puritanism as a movement demanding reforms within the established structures of the Hungarian Calvinist Church, yet not powerful enough to prevail over the orthodox Calvinist majority.

Although he followed the perspective of ecclesiastical history too, József Bodonhelyi's³ major concern was to unfold the pietistic religiosity of the Hungarian Puritans originating from England in an attempt to reproduce the reception of English Puritanism in Hungarian culture. In addition, he was preoccupied to trace the often-ignored particular evolution of Hungarian Puritan piety nurtured by the transfer of the practical theology of William Perkins (1558–1602) and William Ames (1576–1633). With the focus on the Puritan treatment of such determining concepts as conscience or election vs. reprobation, he was successful to a considerable extent in reconstructing and evaluating the devotional dimensions of Hungarian Puritanism. Unlike Zoványi, Bodonhelyi's efforts were not concentrated on retelling how the Puritans failed to impose the Presbyterian system; rather he strived to unearth the immediate textual patterns that had carved the features of Hungarian Puritan godly spirituality as a religious culture.

The Anglicist Pál Berg⁴ followed a rather different approach as he was neither a student of Calvinist theology, nor an ecclesiastical historian. Still, his endeavour to provide a survey of the Hungarian and English cultural contacts based on the examination of the print corpus of those texts that had presumably English or England-related origins did have a significant impact upon the evolution of the study of Hungarian Puritanism. He identified altogether 48 English titles as sources or potential sources of the Hungarian Puritan devotional literature consisting mostly of full or partial translations and compilations. These texts included not only the three major authorities (William Perkins, William Ames, and Lewis Bayly)⁵ of canonical Puritan literature, but some of the lesser known or less popular Puritans (William Cowper, Daniel Dyke, Dudley Fenner, and Alexander Grosse)⁶ as well. Though he was not a trained theologian, he justly discerned how the English devotional practice of piety had been embraced due to cultural transfers by early modern Hungarian Calvinists. He also detected the essential differences in terms of political agenda and doctrinal radicalism between Hungarian and English Puritanism.⁷

3 József Bodonhelyi, *Az angol puritanizmus lelki élete és magyar hatásai* [The Spirituality of English Puritanism and its Influences on Hungary] (Debrecen: Pannonia, 1942).

4 Pál Berg, *Angol hatások tizenhetedik századi irodalmunkban* [English Influences on Hungarian Literature During the Seventeenth Century] (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Orsz. Széchényi Könyvtára, 1946).

5 Berg, *Angol hatások*, 87–95.

6 Berg, *Angol hatások*, 95–8.

7 Berg, *Angol hatások*, 104.

László Makkai⁸ and Attila Molnár⁹ are two further contributors to this scholarship, yet their achievements are less conclusive. While Makkai advocated a Marxist interpretation drawing on the much-acclaimed thesis of revolution and reaction, Molnár insisted on the application of the Weberian thesis to the case of Hungarian Puritanism. None of these attempts produced remarkable additional knowledge for the field. Finally, István Ágoston¹⁰ deserves a mention too, although his book is mainly a conspectus of the extant secondary literature. One cannot ignore the fact that despite some major political and cultural changes occurring after 1989, students of ecclesiastical history were not able to write a new history of the Hungarian Reformation benefitting from the recent findings of international scholarship. Sadly, the same applies to the ecclesiastical history of Hungarian Puritanism as well. Yet, Hungarian Puritanism is a rather popular research topic and several representatives of related disciplines have been permanently publishing significant findings. In particular, literary historians seem to be resolute in developing researches on Puritanism. Indeed, several fine efforts came out reflecting either single literary oeuvres related to Puritan authors, or examining general particularities of Puritan-oriented devotional culture and literature.¹¹ Clearly, literary historians appear to have a say in the evolution of the scholarship on Hungarian Puritanism.

⁸ László Makkai, *A magyar puritánusok harca a feudalizmus ellen* [The Fight of the Hungarian Puritans against Feudalism] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1952).

⁹ Attila Molnár, *A "protestáns etika" Magyarországon* [The "Protestant Ethic" in Hungary] (Debrecen: Ethnica 1994).

¹⁰ István Ágoston, *A magyarországi puritanizmus gyökerei* [The Roots of Hungarian Puritanism] (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 1997).

¹¹ Zsombor Tóth, *A koronatanú: Bethlen Miklós. Az „Élete leírása magától” és a XVII. századi puritanizmus* [The Memoirs of Count Miklós Bethlen in the Context of Seventeenth Century Hungarian and English Puritanism] (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2007); Gergely Tamás Fazakas and János L. Győri, eds., *Medgyesi Pál redivivus. Tanulmányok a 17. századi puritanizmusról* [Pál Medgyesi Redivivus. Approaches to the Puritanism of the Seventeenth Century] (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem, 2008); Dávid Csorba, *A zászlós bárány nyomában. A magyar kálvinizmus 17. századi világa* [Following the Flag-bearing Lamb. The Hungarian Calvinism of the Seventeenth Century], *Speculum Historiae Debreceniense* 6 (Debrecen and Budapest: Kálvin János Kiadó, 2011); Tibor Szabolcs Péntes, *„Valakik szikrának száma alatt vadnak...” Várad és a puritanizmus II. Rákóczi György idején* [Puritanism under George II Rákóczi, Prince of Transylvania] (Nagyvárad: Partium, 2014); Katalin Luffy, *„Romlás építőinek fognak nevezetni.” Prédikátori szerepek és alkalmi beszédek az Erdélyi Fejedelemség válsága idején* [Puritan Discourses and Performances Reflecting on the Tragic Destiny of the Principality of Transylvania] (Debrecen: University Press, 2015); Zsombor Tóth, “The Importance of Being (In)Tolerant, the Strange Case of Transylvanian Puritanism,” in *Reformed Majorities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Herman Selderhuis et al., *Refo500 Academic Studies* 23 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 89–108.

2.2 The External Account

It is most remarkable that the scholarship on Hungarian Puritanism benefitted to some extent from the external view of those who assessed either the Hungarian Reformation in general or Calvinism in particular. Though none of them dedicated a complete book in particular to Hungarian Puritanism, both of the principal scholars worked on the Hungarian and Transylvanian Reformation, which unavoidably includes Puritanism as well.

Graeme Murdock,¹² relying on the English tradition of Reformation historiography, also described Puritanism through the Presbyterian vs. episcopal antagonism, whereby he also put the emphasis on the disputes over ecclesiastical authority in the Principality of Transylvania. In his view, the transfer of Puritan thought brought about the emergence of mainly Presbyterian and, to a lesser degree, independent initiatives within the Calvinist Church. Murdock's narrative of Hungarian Puritanism, which mainly reiterated the paramount findings of the traditional Hungarian ecclesiastical history, covered the timespan from the 1630s to 1660s.

An advocate of the German *Konfessionalisierung* thesis, István Keul,¹³ provided a simplified and rather superficial account of a multid denominational society and culture, despite the application of the methods of narrative history. Unfortunately, the Puritan episode received disappointingly little attention in his treatment of the Calvinist Reformation, as he did not formulate any remarkable novelty. It appears that Keul imposed some very strict time limits throughout his book, and even constrained himself as a narrator to depict the entire history of the Reformation in a simplified and chronologically progressive account commencing in the 1520s and coming to its conclusion by the 1690s.

It seems that the external viewpoint was much more focused on the *structural* component of the reception of Puritanism; examining and comparing, first of all, how the dispute between the Presbyterian and episcopal parties had broken out and how it came to an end. To have this controversy embedded in the international context of Calvinist ecclesiastical history, or Reformation history in general, is undeniably important; yet the overall view and assessment of Hungarian Puritanism demands that the examination of *pietistic puritan devotion* be construed alongside it.

¹² Graeme Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier 1600–1660: International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³ István Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East Central Europe* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2009).

2.3 General Assessment of the Historiography of the Hungarian Puritanism

Having acknowledged the findings of these internal and external contributions, it is worth pausing over the general conclusions of the scholarship and the resulting overall perception of Hungarian Puritanism. It appears that Hungarian Puritanism emerged as the result of the transfer of certain theological ideas associated with English Puritanism, and mainly originated from the theological and pietistic devotional literature of Elizabethan and Stuart Puritanism. These transfers seem to have been taken place over a relatively short period of time, from the 1630s to the late 1660s, and the main vehicle enabling the spread of ideas was, of course, the institution of *peregrinatio academica*. Moreover, the major impact of these ideas was felt during the debates of the late 1640s and 1650s regarding Church organisation and authority issues as reflected in the Presbyterian vs. episcopal, or to a lesser extent Puritan vs. Orthodox, antagonistic exchanges. In addition, Puritanism also impregnated Hungarian devotional literature and Calvinist education, as numerous influential Puritan texts, some of them Latin, but English ones as well, were translated helping Puritan devotion and culture exercise a determining impact on Hungarian Calvinism which was still in the evolutionary process of development. Yet, one should not ignore the fact that according to scholarship, the main actors of these transfers were exclusively students of theology, who upon their return pursued careers as active members of the Calvinist clergy and remained devoted to an Orthodox Calvinist belief. Furthermore, according to the stance of the scholarship, not one lay person living in the seventeenth century has ever been remembered for having contributed to these transfers or as having been a devout practitioner of Puritan or pietistic religiosity. Apparently, the impact of English Puritanism did not penetrate the religious life and piety of lay people in Hungarian Calvinist culture and society; a bold claim that cannot be sustained anymore and which urges for further critical reflections on various assertions of the scholarship on Hungarian Puritanism.

3 Problematic Aspects of the Historiography of Hungarian Puritanism

It is now clear that the perception of Hungarian Puritanism envisaged by the secondary literature needs further refinements, as some of its claims and findings are often dangerously simplistic or articulated ignoring the possibilities of a complex comparative analysis. Bearing in mind these inconsistencies, the aim of

this section is to pinpoint some of the debatable methodological issues still in use when exploring Hungarian Puritanism. Even the most superficial comparison of the English and Hungarian scholarship of the field reveals some disturbing flaws on the Hungarian side often materialised in some missed research opportunities or unemployed methodologies. One of the most striking is the lack of complex comparison at the *micro* and *macro* levels of Hungarian, English or Dutch Puritanism; which could have ameliorated the possibilities of further contextualization. One of the benefits of this approach could have been a reassessment of the centre vs periphery issue alongside a shift from the prevailing transatlantic perception of Puritanism¹⁴ toward a more Europe-centred one.

Furthermore, it appears that there are a number of unexplored research themes, such as lay people's religiosity in the context of Hungarian Puritan piety, or the impact of Puritanism on the development of a genuine Hungarian Calvinist martyrology during the 1670s. All these issues boil down to the methodological problem of how a *historical explanation* has been articulated by the scholarship when examining Hungarian Puritanism as a historical phenomenon with all its cultural and social implications. Seemingly, the scholarship did not rise to the challenge, as the historical explanation of Hungarian Puritanism follows a rather simplistic methodology borrowed from the field of intellectual history and the history of ideas, which is put to use almost exclusively at the *macro-level*. Thus, researchers have tranquilly capitalized on a quite inchoate descriptive pattern of transfer that has sought to reconstruct the flow of ideas coming from England towards Eastern Europe in a disappointingly rudimentary fashion. Travel to England transformed any early modern individual into an actor and agent of these transfers of ideas. The assimilation of ideas, envisaged by this approach, is even more disappointing, as it consists of the mere enumeration of vague facts, or more often presumptions, about how an individual might have or could have come into contact with a certain book. The main focus has predominantly been put on the texts relevant for ecclesiastical history as discipline, and solely a print corpus has been studied when reconstructing the agents, actors, and circumstances of these

¹⁴ For instance, see Francis J. Bremer, ed., *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1993). The ignorance toward European Puritanism is superbly demonstrated by the fact that in the *Encyclopaedia of Puritanism*, edited by Bremer and Webster, not one single non-English (that is, European: Dutch, German, or Hungarian) Puritan individual was mentioned. See Francis J. Bremer and Tom Webster, eds., *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopaedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006). Alec Ryrie brought to my attention this fortunate exception, which covers the case of Scotland as well: David Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

transfers.¹⁵ Case studies attempting to illuminate at the micro-level how and what early modern individuals had assimilated from Puritan doctrines have almost never been written. Similarly, manuscript sources neither have been searched for nor have been employed as at least complementary sources for a historically valid reconstruction of transfers and receptions of theological ideas and practices.

In order to offer some solutions to these persisting methodological problems, I intend to separately ponder the major issues such as the level of analysis, the concept of transfer and the disputable (mis)use of the sources.

3.1 The Level of Analysis

The use of micro-level approaches could substantially improve identifying individuals, who mediated as agents the transfers of Puritan ideas and religious practices from England to the Hungarian territories. Simply put, micro-level investigations would enable us to answer who qualified as a Puritan within the landscape of early modern Hungarian Calvinism. This is all the more important as during the extraordinary national synod of Szatmár, held on the 10–11th of June 1646, under the supervision and attendance of the Prince of Transylvania, György I. Rákóczi, a most censorious decision was taken. The synod patently condemned what was described “as a sinister affectation of religious piety and purity originating in England, and the name ‘puritan’ was deemed disgraceful, scandalous and hateful, and the synod ordered that it was not to be used in future within the Hungarian Church.”¹⁶

Strangely enough, as of 1646 nobody would or could claim to be a Puritan in Transylvania, let alone the fact that even the most ardent and resolute supporter of Puritan or Presbyterian ideas would refer to himself as an Orthodox Calvinist. In light of this historical fact, it is fairly difficult to accurately pinpoint individuals who would have been rightly considered Puritans. The scholarly discourse often very vaguely refers to those individuals who travelled and studied in England or had been involved in conflicts and debates regarding the establishment of presbyteries. Authors of translations, or compilers of Puritan-inspired English, Latin, or Hungarian texts, are the usual candidates for the role of early modern

¹⁵ For the ways in which manuscript studies and manuscript sources could help improve and innovate the research on Hungarian Reformation, see my article: Zsombor Tóth, “Hosszú reformáció Magyarországon és Erdélyben I.: konfesszionalizációk és irodalmi kultúrák a kora újkorban (1500–1800). Módszertani megjegyzések egy folyamatban lévő kutatáshoz [Long Reformation in Royal Hungary and Transylvania (1500–1800): Methodological Remarks Regarding Early Modern Confessionalization(s) and Literacy],” *ItK* 123 (2019): 719–39.

¹⁶ Murdock, *Calvinism*, 175–76.

Hungarian Puritan. Still, even among these individuals there are some, who, despite their alleged Puritan convictions, insisted on their belonging to Orthodox Calvinism. For instance, when Benedek Nagyari (1611–1663), who was considered to be a Puritan by experts of the field, published his supposedly Puritan treatise about the godly Christian,¹⁷ he preferred to put on the front page as part of the title, and pointing to himself, the rather obvious term of *Orthodoxus Christianus*. This book, although it appears to imitate the genre of the Puritan conduct book, has not one single textual reference to Puritanism or Puritans.

I consider that these contingencies regarding the spiritual profile of those involved in the production of Puritan devotional literature could be efficiently eliminated by case studies operating on micro-level approaches. The detailed reconstruction of the life courses, alongside the examination of the texts and ego-documents, both manuscripts and printed works, could help us in deciphering the theological and spiritual markers of the mental world of the individuals under scrutiny. English experts in Puritanism have constantly been relying on this type of investigation from the 1970s up until the present day.¹⁸ This would also be a safe solution for the cases of the so-called *domidoctus* individuals; those who did not receive their education abroad. One of such people was Matkó Kézdivásárhelyi István (1625–1693), who referred to himself as an Orthodox Calvinist preacher, and who, according to our knowledge, never benefitted from a stay in England. It seems that he never left Transylvania. Still, as a person with excellent linguistic skills, having relied on what he had assimilated in the Reformed College of Alba Iulia, he was able to render a number of English Puritan texts into Hungarian.¹⁹ One of them was also translated into Romanian and published with Cyrillic letters.²⁰ Matkó's case reinforces the idea that soon after the first contact with English Puritanism, native tradition emerged. Therefore, the spread of Puritan devotional culture had undeniably been shaped by influential Hungarian texts as well and thus accommodated to the rather different needs of a Hungarian readership and audience.

17 Benedek Nagyari, *Orthodoxus Christianus, az az igaz vallásu keresztyen...* [Orthodoxus Christianus that is the Godly Christian] (Várad: Szenci Kertész, 1651).

18 Alan MacFarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin; A Seventeenth-Century Clergyman. An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeen-Century London* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985); S Bryn Roberts, *Puritanism and the Pursuit of Happiness, The Ministry and Theology of Ralph Venning* (The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2015).

19 For further details of this case see: Zsombor Tóth, "What do you Read my Lord? Words, Words, Words...": A Case Study on Translations and Cultural Transfers in Early Modern Eastern Europe," in *Transregional Reformations: Crossing Borders in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Violet Soen et al., Refo500 Academic Studies 61 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 187–204.

20 István Kézdivásárhelyi Matkó, *Kegyes cselekedetek Rövid Ösvenykeje* [A Short Path to Godly Deeds] (Szeben: Szenci Ábrahám, 1666).

Theological education had gradually incorporated into the curricula of the Transylvanian Calvinist Colleges the theology of William Ames, together with Petrus Ramus's dialectic,²¹ which remained a most influential corpus of knowledge for Hungarian Calvinists until the first decades of the eighteenth century. Surviving print²² and manuscript²³ sources substantiate this claim and seem to confirm the idea that a *genuine Hungarian Puritanism* developed alongside the recurring waves of transfers from England.

Finally, a micro level approach would help us to find the lay representatives of Hungarian Puritanism. Notwithstanding the one-sided vision of the scholarship suggesting that Puritanism and Puritan devotional culture was an inner affair of Calvinist theologians, there were certainly various lay individuals outside the structure and employment area of the Calvinist Church who not only sympathized with Puritan religiosity, but were devoted practitioners of it. Relying on my own findings I can name at least two individuals, whose life courses, ego-documents, and surviving items of their libraries, including personally annotated Puritan books, testify to their unquestionable godliness. Count Miklós Bethlen (1642–1716), after studying abroad, including in England, and despite his spectacular political career, concluded his life in prison and exile. Yet he had been engaged all his life in practising a pietistic and Puritan religiosity. He qualified as godly man, as he recorded not only in his memoirs, but also in a most remarkable prayer book he wrote which was published in 1858–1860, and revealed a surprisingly intense Puritan devotion nurtured by his readings of Ames and Perkins. An outstanding intellectual of his age, Bethlen would embrace Puritanism and its martyrological discourse in order to fashion a self and an identity fitting his

21 For the Hungarian reception of Ramus's oeuvre see: Gábor Kecskeméti, "The Reception of Ramist Rhetoric in Hungary and Transylvania: Possibilities and Achievements," in *Ramus, Pedagogy and the Liberal Arts: Ramism in Britain and the Wider World*, ed. Steven J. Reid and Emma Annette Wilson (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 205–25; Gábor Kecskeméti, "Hungarian and Transylvanian Ramism," in *The European Contexts of Ramism*, ed. Sarah Knight and Emma Annette Wilson, *Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 285–329.

22 The Latin version of William Ames's *Marrow of Theology* was published in Debrecen during the 1680s: Amesii, Guilielmi, *Medulla Theologica, Editio Novissima. Ab Avthore Ante obitum recognita & variis in locis aucta* (Debrecin: Per Stephanum Töltesi, 1685).

23 Of the many surviving manuscript sources testifying to the assimilation of Amesian theology in Transylvania, it is worth mentioning the handwritten notes of Márton Dési, professor of theology at the Calvinist College of Nagyenyed, during the 1670s. He produced not only an outline of Ames's *Medulla* in 1673 that he would rely on during his lectures, but he also recorded the questions he addressed to his students during examinations from 1671 to 1674. Thus, the whole process of assimilating and teaching Ames's theology can be reconstructed from this remarkable source. (*Theses Theologicae a Clarissimo Viro D. Martinus Dési SS. Theologiae Professore*, Nagyenyed [Aiud], Gábor Bethlen Library, Ms. 146, 261–375).

worldly ordeal, although he was not persecuted for religious reasons, but for exclusively political ones.²⁴

Mihály Cserei (1667–1756), coming from a lower stratum of Transylvanian society, never studied abroad, yet he soundly assimilated Puritan theology, and produced a great number of ego-documents illustrating a permanent concern regarding his own salvation. Apparently, he suffered from religious despair which haunted him throughout almost his entire life. Thus, the tormenting dilemma over whether he was a *homo reprobus* or *homo electus* often escalated into a major devotional crisis that would bring him near to suicidal attempts. Cserei deliberately relied on Hungarian Puritan texts to find comfort and reassurance, as several book entries and annotations of his surviving on the pages of these books clearly prove.²⁵ Furthermore, he was preoccupied to impose a Puritan piety within his family as well. After he had convinced his wife, Ilona Kun, to give up on her Unitarian belief and become a Calvinist in 1715, later on he himself comforted the moribund Ilona reading her passages from the Hungarian translation of Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety* in order that she would die a Calvinist.²⁶

Hungarian scholarship ignored the opportunity of investigating devotional experiences recorded by lay people.²⁷ This is either because these written testimonies, mostly vernacular texts, only emerged at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, or because the concept of transfer as the explanation of the reception was far too rigid to allow access of these texts into the corpus of theological texts conceived in Latin and English. Similarly, religion as a lived experience and its significance from the perspective of the

24 For an account of Bethlen's life and Puritan spirituality see: Zsombor Tóth, "A Man for All Seasons: Exile, Suffering and Martyrdom in the Autobiography of Miklós Bethlen," *Hungarian Studies* 2 (2012): 273–83; Zsombor Tóth, "Greenblatt's Self-Fashioning Revisited: the Problem(s) of Representing a Self in the Reformation Era. Historical Anthropological Remarks," in *Arts, Portraits and Representation in the Reformation Era: Proceedings of the Fourth Reformation Research Consortium Conference*, ed. Patrizio Foresta and Federica Meloni, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 37 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 365–83.

25 For a comprising survey of Cserei's life see: Zsombor Tóth, "From the Cradle to the Grave: Representations of Confessional Identity in Mihály Cserei's Writings (1667–1647)," *Colloquia* 15 (2008): 44–71.

26 For further details, see: Zsombor Tóth, "How to Comfort a Dying Family Member? The Practice of an Early Modern Hungarian Calvinist. A Case Study," in *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead*, ed. Tarald Rasmussen and Jon Øygarden Flæten, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 22 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 265–80.

27 On the significance of the so called lay-experience in puritan devotion see: Kate Narveson, "Resting Assured in Puritan Piety: The Lay Experience," in *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World*, ed. Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 166–92.

history of emotions²⁸ remains a *terra incognita*, as experts of Hungarian Puritanism have never attempted to explore it. One could justly conclude that the reception of English Puritanism conceived in this limited way could not enhance the study of native Hungarian tradition.

3.2 The Concept of Transfer as the Explanatory Pattern of the Process of Reception

Having seen the possibilities for the manifold application of the micro-level approach, it is worth revisiting the macro-level perspective of the reception process conceived as a complex transfer, as there are further problematic issues to reflect upon. The narrativization of these disparate transfers into one synoptic account of Hungarian Puritanism in correspondence with relevant actors, events, and texts implies a certain chronology and periodization. It is this posteriorly designed timing that not only imposes coherence upon the disparate events and actors involved in the transfers, but is, first of all, the result of some biased choices and decisions made by scholars. Hungarian Puritanism, as envisaged by scholarship, seemed to have come to an end by the seventeenth century, as the narrative account displayed by scholars usually concluded the relevant events by the 1660s. It appears that the transfers nurturing the spread of Puritan thoughts ceased to produce any significant impact after this time-limit, and so one would infer that the reception also came to an end. Yet, the sources are telling a rather different story, as after the 1660s there was a consistent growth in publications transmitting Puritan-oriented sermons and pieces of devotional literature. When consulting the surviving manuscript sources, this discrepancy between an ecclesiastical historical account of Puritanism and the reception of Puritan piety through the transfers of texts, is even more striking. Vernacular or Latin manuscripts inspired by Puritan ideas populated the literary landscape as scribal publications well into the eighteenth century. These texts, although rarely published, were read, copied, and intensely circulated amongst literate people. Furthermore, the first Hungarian autobiographical attempts displaying textual, theological and devotional

²⁸ A genuinely promising approach that would help decipher some of the particular features of Hungarian Puritan devotion. Out of the rich literature on this topic I found the following to be truly convincing and useful: Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: University Press, 2013), and the aforementioned Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda, eds., *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

particularities resembling the Puritan tradition of spiritual diary and autobiography²⁹ were almost exclusively written in the early eighteenth century.

No doubt there is a fairly compelling contradiction between an account describing Puritanism first of all through the lens of ecclesiastical history as a transfer concluded by the 1660s; and a multidisciplinary account making use of the print and manuscript sources, insisting on a much longer timespan, pushing the confines of Puritanism as an epoch well into the eighteenth century. This latter alternative is all the more important, as English scholarship on Puritanism also relies on the concept of the long seventeenth century (1580–1720)³⁰ in order to demark a godly devotional literature and culture promoted by Puritans.

Time and chronology cause further problems when the concept of transfer is employed as the *trope* of the master narrative of Hungarian Puritanism. As such, this tends to impose a debatable cause and effect relationship between English and Hungarian Puritanism, whereby the latter is nothing more than the mere effect or the consequence of the former. This not only reinforces the centre vs. periphery pattern, but also bolsters the *primary* character of English puritanism as compared to the *secondary* character of Hungarian Puritanism. Accordingly, Hungarian Puritanism appears to have been just a reduplication of English Puritanism, where the transfer of ideas could have been a simple import of Puritan thoughts and devotional practices. This is rather controversial, first of all, because, as we have seen, there is an emerging genuine Hungarian Puritan tradition that is not at all identical with the assimilated English patterns. Besides, Hungarian Puritanism was influenced by Dutch cultural influences as well, especially when William Ames established himself as professor of theology at the University of Franeker, where he would become one of the great favourites of the Hungarian students.³¹

Finally, when the concept of transfer is employed as a *historical explanation* for the reception of ideas, especially in the context of the *peregrinatio academica*, this tends to oversimplify the process. There is a danger that the lavish dissemination of

29 Previous and recent literature on the significance of writing as a means of articulating a godly self in Puritan devotion include: Tom Webster, "Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journal and Early Modern Spirituality," *The Historical Journal* 1 (1996): 33–56; Tessa Whitehouse, "Structures and processes of English spiritual autobiography from Bunyan to Cowper," in *A History of English Autobiography*, ed. Adam Smyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 103–18; Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, "Never Better: Affliction, Consolation and the Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern England," *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 5 (2018): 1–34, here 22.

30 For instance, see: Andrew Cambers, "Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580–1720," *Journal of British Studies* 46 (2007): 796–825.

31 A remarkable outcome of this sympathy and cooperation was the volume of debates that confuted some of the theses of Bellarmine's theology under the title: *Bellarminus enervatus vel Disputationes anti-Bellarminianae* [...], a Gvilielmo Amesio (Franekerae: Ex Officina Ulderici Balck, 1625).

ideas is reduced to some basic routes between Hungarian and English locations via German or Dutch universities. It appears that Hungarian scholarship has been invariably trusting this standard approach and has not been interested in exploring the plurality and multi-contextual embeddedness of ideas and texts reaching early modern Royal Hungary or Transylvania. Let alone those particular situations occurring well into the eighteenth century when English Puritan texts reached Hungarian readers through German pietistic mediation. John Downname was one of the Puritan authors whose *Contempt of the world* had been translated by Gottfried Heinrich Salmuth, a representative of German Pietism, in 1712; and this version was rendered into Hungarian in 1785.³²

The object of these transfers, the so-called *Puritan* ideas, have not been properly defined. There is a certain fortuity as to the way this term is being used in the research. The term itself, Puritanism, is under permanent reconsideration.³³ While English scholarship has clearly stated that Puritanism denoted a large array of religious and sectarian positions often rather vaguely joined together under the criterion of non-conformity, this complexity has been utterly disregarded in the Hungarian use. Uninterruptedly, Hungarian scholars tend to reduce English Puritanism to a single sided and Calvinism-oriented innocent spiritual awakening, which was not the case of English Puritanism overtly exposing its radical convictions, often characterised as driven by dissenter and non-conformist actions. In light of these considerations, it would be justified to revisit the process of reception in an attempt to explore the meanings and references of Puritanism beyond the Presbyterian and Independent ideas of Church organisation unsuccessfully implemented in the Hungarian Calvinist Church.

³² John Downname, *The second part of The Christian warfare; or the contempt of the world* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1611). The Hungarian rendering is an unpublished manuscript and the work of an unknown translator referring to himself as K. P.: *E világról és világi hiábavalóságokról való elmélkedés (...) Magyarra fordított K. P., 1785*, [A Meditation upon the Futility of this World and all Worldly Matters] Teleki-Bolyai Library, Ms. 269.

³³ I would rather refer only to those efforts that either proposed a definition of Puritanism, or attempted explaining why not having a generally accepted one: Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Peter Lake, "Defining Puritanism – Again?," in *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. Francis J. Bremer (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 3–29; John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–7; Ian Hugh Clary, "Hot Protestants: A Taxonomy of English Puritanism," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 2 (2010): 41–66.

3.3 Sources and their (mis)uses

Some of the deficiencies of the reception pattern can be completed, as we have seen it, by a combined use of micro and macro-level approaches. A further step to improving the accuracy of the reception pattern would be to reconsider the use of sources and rely more on manuscripts. For the narrative of Hungarian Puritanism envisaged as emerging in the 1630s, developing throughout the 1640s and 1650s, and concluding by the 1660s, is seriously challenged by the corpus of manuscripts recently discovered by the representatives of literary history. As early as 1602, there was a clear interest in Puritan theology, as testified by Mihály Orvos Suri's translation of Perkins's *Reformed Catholicke*.³⁴ Similarly, Ames's lasting influence on his Hungarian students is convincingly illustrated by the publication of the *Bellarminus enervatus* (1625). It appears that there was a consistent preoccupation with Perkins, Ames and the Puritan paradigm right from the very beginning of the seventeenth century. At the other extreme, again the estimate of the scholarship is unsustainable, as manuscripts tend to refute the fact that by the 1660s, Hungarian Puritanism had come to an end. Quite the contrary, as we have seen, is that by the 1660s Ames's theology had entered the curricula of almost every Reformed College of Transylvania for good. Furthermore, the aforementioned case of Márton Dési, who was teaching Ames's theology during the 1670s, together with Mihály Cserei's notes on Ramus's dialectic dating from 1684 to 1685,³⁵ convincingly demonstrate that the intellectual elite of the 1670s and 1680s benefitted from a theological training predominantly based on Amesius's *Medulla Theologiae* and Ramus's dialectic. The combination of these two paradigms also resulted in a publication,³⁶ which would later be used as a textbook. It is possible to conclude that this combination of Ames's theology with Ramus's dialectic turned out to be the most influential paradigm of knowledge that would have influenced the lives and spiritual undertakings of several generations of Calvinists still active in the first decades of the eighteenth century. It is likely that the impact of Puritanism, manifesting especially as the combination of Ames's theology with Ramus's dialectic, would have been more determining as the

34 Ágnes Baricz, "Suri Orvos Mihály 1602-es Perkins-fordítása [Orvos Mihály Suri's Translation of Perkins (1602)]," in *Eruditio, virtus et constantia. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Bitskey István tiszteletére*, ed. Mihály Imre et al. (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2011), 447–57.

35 Michael Cserei, *Notationes in Logicam*, Kolozsvár (Cluj), The Library of the Romanian Academy, Special Collections, Unitarian holdings, MS. U. 9.

36 Petrus Ramus, *Dialecticae Libri Duo* (Varadini: apud Abrahamum Szencinum, 1653).

scholarship used to consider it, for it dominated the whole seventeenth century and into the first decades of the next century as well.³⁷

A further perspective worth considering is the development of a genuine Hungarian tradition of homiletics and rhetoric. Pál Medgyesi's *Doce nos orare* was the first ever Hungarian, in fact bilingual Hungarian and Latin, homiletics proposing patterns for writing and saying prayers or sermons. As Medgyesi pointed out, he had followed Ames in order to help the Puritan minister and laity articulate godly sermons and prayers. The impact of this book was immense. While it first of all sustained the development of pietistic godly discourse in orality, it also contributed to the production of devotional texts by lay people, for private use. Miklós Bethlen's aforementioned prayer-book, written from 1704 to 1708 during his imprisonment, concurs with this.

It has become clear by now that after Ames and Ramus had become leading authorities in Hungarian Calvinist education by the 1660s, their influence consistently grew and lastingly nurtured the production of both written and oral texts of Puritan content, some of them authored by lay people during the first decades of the eighteenth century. Therefore, it is fair to suggest that the thesis positing the conclusion of the Hungarian Puritanism as a process of reception by the seventeenth century, despite the shared conviction of Hungarian scholarship, must be reconsidered.

4 Of the Particular Features of an Emerging Native Tradition: Hungarian Puritanism

The previous sections exposed the flaws and shortcomings of Hungarian scholarship, reinforcing the idea that it persists with a far too simplistic understanding and description of how Puritan ideas were received and assimilated through transfers. It is the concept of transfer, I believe, that needs further refinement. As we have seen, the combined application of micro and macro-level approaches, completed by a more inspired use of print and manuscript sources too, would enable the nuancing of our understanding of Hungarian Puritanism as a historical phenomenon. Recent research findings on English Puritanism, if properly applied, would allow a more reliable treatment of the entire reception process, in particular its duration and timing. For instance, taking into account the fact that English Puritanism has often been described within the context of a long seventeenth

³⁷ For instance, Ramist dialectic was only removed from the curricula of the Calvinist College of Debrecen during the 1740s.

century, concluding in the 1720s, it appears to me a good enough reason to allow Hungarian Puritanism a more or less similar timeframe. Furthermore, applying the same thesis, suggesting that Puritanism was a religious culture³⁸ promoting a particular religious literacy, would prove very significant in the Hungarian case as well, as important written responses to Puritan-oriented sermons and conduct-books were almost all produced during the eighteenth century. The significance of the so-called *lay experience*, as demonstrated by Miklós Bethlen's and Mihály Cserei's cases, urges in a similar way a redesign of the master narrative of Hungarian Puritanism incorporating a chapter that covers at least the first half of the eighteenth century.

While the approach with the emphasis on ecclesiastical history of the Presbyterian vs. Orthodox debate failed to recognise the close connection between religious persecution and the emerging protestant martyrological discourses, at the level of manuscripts, or even print sources, it is rather clear that the identity pattern of the Hungarian early modern martyr originated from Puritan traditions. It was the Puritan elite, who were resolute in articulating the theological and political argumentation sustaining a confessor-type martyrdom during the 1670s. Due to the efforts of such persons like István Nagy Szőnyi, exiles, refugees or executed Protestants were defined and regarded as martyrs of religious freedom.³⁹

All in all, there is so much more to Hungarian Puritanism than what has been predominantly associated with it, namely the remembrance of a futile debate between supporters of Presbyterian versus episcopal systems of ecclesiology. My conviction is that a comparative approach, that involves Dutch examples as well, could illuminate the very particular features of Hungarian Puritanism as a historical phenomenon that had a remarkable impact on the culture and society of early modern Royal Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania. One should not ignore the fact that Dutch culture very often had prepared early modern Hungarian students for the Puritan experience, as they first attended the Dutch universities of Franeker, Leiden, Utrecht, Groningen, and Harderwijk before they reached England. Furthermore, a great number of Puritan-oriented Hungarian books had been published in Amsterdam, from János Apáczai's first Hungarian encyclopaedia to the first Hungarian translations of Perkins's treatise on

³⁸ For the definition of Puritanism as a religious culture see: Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 14–15.

³⁹ Zsombor Tóth, "The Homiletics of Political Discourse: Martyrology as a (Re)Invented Tradition in the Paradigm of Early Modern Hungarian Patriotism," in *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi and Márton Zászkaliczky (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 545–68.

conscience.⁴⁰ Finally, early modern Dutch culture, very much under the impact of English Puritanism and its devotion, would also leave a lasting mark on Hungarians residing there for a longer period of time. Hungarian Puritanism may well have evolved from English spiritual origins, yet during the process of developing a native devotional pietistic heritage it would have surely relied on Dutch contributions too, in every possible respect. Therefore, Hungarian Puritanism is not entirely an “import product” and ought not be regarded as a simple reduplication of English Puritanism manifesting in a different time and space. On the contrary, Hungarian Puritanism as part of the Calvinist Reformation allows us to understand how a partially assimilated tradition was transformed into an indigenous Hungarian tradition.

4.1 The Importance of Studying Hungarian Puritanism

One of the most significant outcomes of the criticism exposed in the previous sections is that it has revealed the problematic aspects of the transfer theory as an explanation for the reception of ideas during the Reformation. Furthermore, Hungarian Puritanism as a chapter of the Calvinist Reformation enabled a critical investigation which revealed some of the persisting contingencies of scholarship. First of all, the concept of transfer, with a particular view on the relationship between the assimilated tradition and native tradition needs revision. Furthermore, the lack of interest towards the exploration of lay experiences, or the ignorance of the experts in properly construing the different timing and the very different pace of the transfer processes, are further issues to ponder. Finally, it is worth pausing on the significance of these aforementioned issues, as they are valid for the entire historical phenomenon known as the Hungarian Reformation conceived as a historical process resulting from transfers.

He who engages in describing the spread of Reformed ideas relying on the theory of transfers, will soon find herself or himself struggling with multiple problems and contradictions, for both Royal Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania tolerated no less than four denominations. In these multi-denominational societies, it would be rather difficult to reconstruct the flows of ideas and the particular ways how they had been assimilated and accommodated. Again, the difficult balancing of the extant native tradition, the assimilated new

⁴⁰ Csepregi Turkovics Mihály, *Perkinsus Gullielmus a Lelkiismeretnek akadémikáról írott, drága, szép tanításinak istenes orvoslási [...]* [Some Godly Directions of William Perkins upon the Cases of Conscience] (Amsterdam: Jansonius, 1648).

ideas, and the final outcome of the mixture between these two, is surely a difficult task to achieve.

Furthermore, the ignorance toward the study of lay experience is first of all a major debt, which obstructs a better understanding of the Reformation in general. The lack of microhistories of early modern religious lay individuals points to a typical shortcoming of the scholarship, namely the conviction that the Reformation was primarily an internal affair of the Church. Thus, with no attempt to reconstruct at a micro level the religious experiences of any early modern Hungarian individual, a spectacular research area has been deliberately ignored and forgotten. Finally, the chronological discrepancies in terms of the duration and the pace of certain processes of reception or assimilation of ideas, is one of the central problematic issues of the Hungarian Reformation. There is a spectacular delay, for instance, in terms of martyrological discourse and martyrological culture. While early modern western societies had been experiencing religious persecutions throughout the sixteenth century, bringing about the development of an impressive corpus of multiconfessional martyrologies, in early modern Royal Hungary and Transylvania, no violence was inflicted upon the Reformed population until the 1670s. It was only in the decade of sorrow from 1671 to 1681, that the Habsburg administration commenced religious persecution against the Protestant denominations, yet they never attempted to engage in something similar in Transylvania. The first Hungarian martyrology was only published in 1675, and it was during this decade of sorrow that both Lutherans and Calvinists from Royal Hungary made efforts to articulate a martyrological tradition.⁴¹ As a consequence of the delayed encounter with persecution, vernacular texts giving a narrative account of the history of the Reformed Church were produced only then, and mostly remained in manuscript without being published. The early modern attempts to articulate a master narrative of Hungarian Reformation consisted first of all in a number of Latin texts, supplemented by Hungarian ones written exclusively during the eighteenth century.

41 By the early 1680s, after the ordeals of the decade of sorrow, both Lutheran and Calvinist elite established their martyrological discourses and literary tradition: Zsombor Tóth, "Calvinian Anthropology' and the Early Modern Hungarian Devotion: The Case of István Nagy Szőnyi, the First Hungarian Martyrologist," in *Anthropological Reformations – Anthropology in the Era of Reformation*, ed. Anne Eusterschulte and Hannah Wälzholz, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 28 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 415–28; Zsombor Tóth, "Persecutio decennalis (1671–1681). The Lutheran Contribution to the Emergence of a Protestant Martyrology in Early Modern Hungarian Culture: The Case of Georgius Lani," in *Luther in Calvinism: Image and Reception of Martin Luther in the History and Theology of Calvinism*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis and J. Marius J. Lange van Ravenswaay, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 42 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 335–53.

In order to grasp the particular features of a *native Hungarian Reformed tradition*, I consider that the application of the concept of long Reformation to Hungarian Reformation history would be rather useful. Indeed, a long Reformation operating with a timeframe of 300 years, from 1500 to 1800, would impose a change of scale, as it would allow a longer period of time to fathom the complexities of the processes of transfers, translations, transformations, receptions and assimilations. As such, it would eliminate the impression of delay as compared to the European Reformation, and it would reveal in their entirety those transfers and processes of transformations that were mistakenly truncated by the unfortunate approach of scholarship operating with inadequate time limits. Due to this long Reformation concept, the eighteenth century would function as a post-Reformation era that could finally provide a comprising perspective of the outcome of how the Reformation had been received and assimilated, and what its immediate consequences were, recorded in the textual account of both ecclesiastical and lay people. Thus, so-called *lived religious experiences* could be taken into account when attempting to decipher the Reformation as an experience. It is of paramount significance that in this way female voices of pietistic devotion would also be recorded and assessed on their real historical merits.

5 Conclusion

The main concern of this article has been to reveal the problematic character of the concept of transfer as a historical explanation and as a trope of the master narrative put to use for providing a historically "accurate" account of the Calvinist Reformation in particular and of the Hungarian Reformation in general.

As suggested by the case of Hungarian Puritanism, if this reception theory does not benefit from the findings of a complex comparative analysis, it will function as a rather over-simplified pattern. With the exclusive emphasis on ideas or traditions as novelties that were assimilated, the receiving native religious culture often remained neglected. Yet one should not forget that any transfer or translation presupposes a genuinely hermeneutical process, revolving around *the acts of understanding, explaining and applying*. For instance, the proper assessment of the reception of Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety* requires more than the simple identification of its Hungarian translation and the consecutive editions of this text. One needs to investigate how the Hungarian translation influenced lay people's religiosity and how the text was used to fulfil the needs or functions of early modern pietistic devotion, expected from or added to this text.

The transfer as a trope of the master narrative of the Reformation nurtures the pitfalls and shortcomings of a *progressive linear and chronological narrative*

description, which sometimes imposes an anachronistic order upon the development of events or processes. The complexity of historical reality, especially the turmoil of the Reformation, can hardly be deciphered and described in one single narrative unfolding a single history of several complex transfers with their courses following consecutive acts of reception. Clearly, both the time and the duration of these transfers were surely not linear and progressive as they had been composed of simultaneous and often contradictory episodes with antecedents and consequences that would have often transgressed the Reformation era or the time span of early modernity. Furthermore, it is utterly impossible to incorporate the development and progress of Reformation-related events into one single master narrative; the disparate episodes of Reformations all over Europe can solely be described in different intervals; and most importantly, their progress and consummation *had a different pace*. For instance, despite the efforts of Hungarian scholarship to narrate the history of Hungarian Puritanism in an almost similar timeframe as the concluding chapter of English Puritanism (1630–1660s), it is rather clear that Hungarian Puritanism had a long lasting and determining influence well into the eighteenth century.

Finally, the perspective of a long Reformation has a particular significance, not necessarily just as a new time frame stretching out the limits of the historical process of the Reformation as a set of complex transfers from 1500 to 1800, but also as a methodological invention, proposing a change of scale, and a reassessment of the Reformation from a wider context and over a longer period of time, as denoted by the concept of *longue durée*.⁴² In somehow blurring the far too rigid confines of Reformation – I am referring to the contingent boundaries between late medieval times and the beginnings of the Reformation, and, of course its conclusion and the advent of Enlightenment – there is a good chance to pursue a more detailed and layered understanding of how transfers brought about the emergence of not only Hungarian Puritanism, but the Hungarian Reformation as well.

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42 See Braudel Fernand, "Histoire et Sciences sociales: La longue durée," *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 13 (1958): 725–53.

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