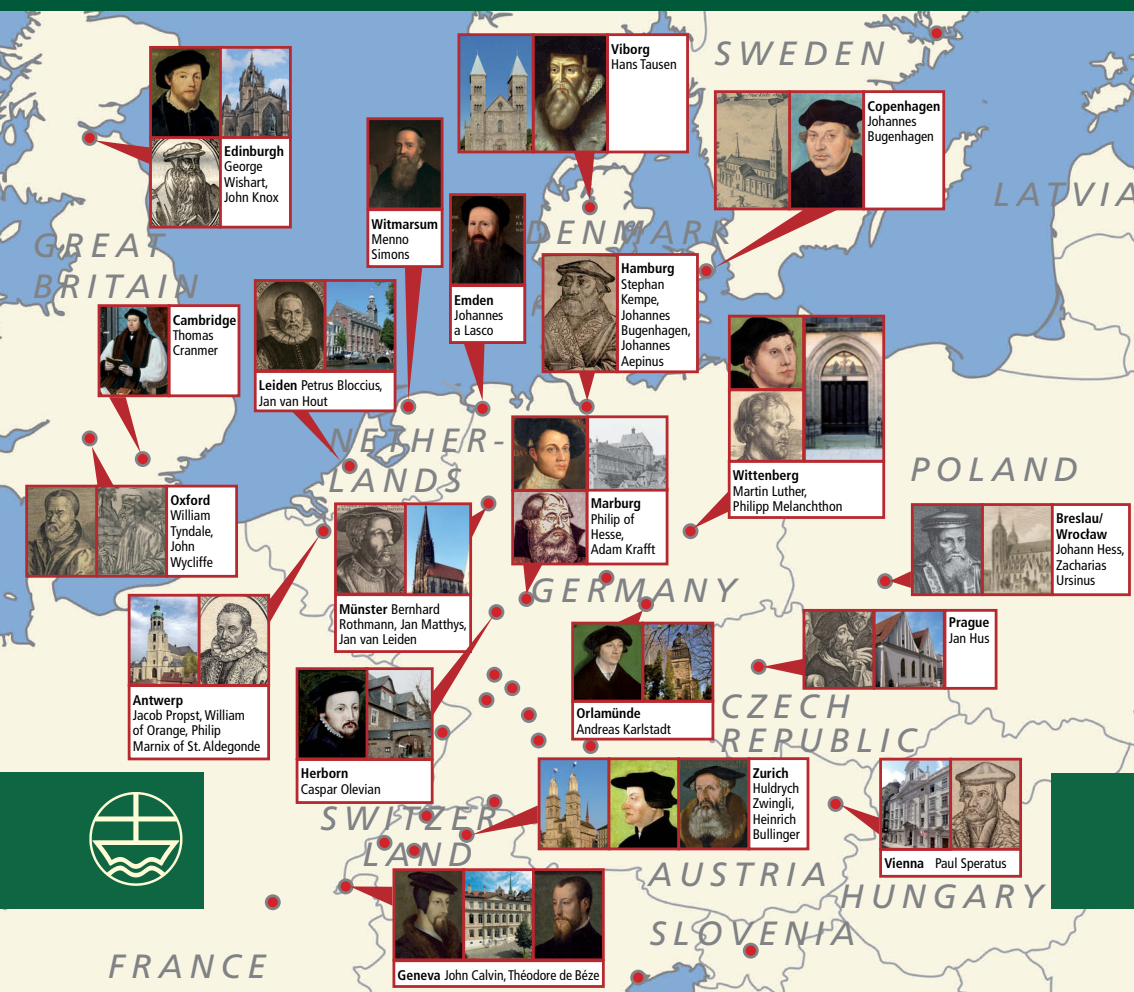


Europa reformatata

1517
2017



EUROPA REFORMATA

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European Reformation Cities
and their Reformers

Edited by

Michael Welker, Michael Beintker and Albert de Lange



EVANGELISCHE VERLAGSANSTALT
Leipzig

In grateful memory of Bishop Prof. Dr. Friedrich Weber (1949–2015)

Bibliographic information from the German National Library

The German National Library has recorded this publication in the German National Bibliography; for detailed bibliographical data see <http://dnb.dnb.de>

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Printed in the EU

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The book was printed on age-resistant paper.

Translation: Douglas Stott et al.
Overall design: Kai Michael Gustmann, Leipzig
Cover and end paper: Kai-Michael Gustmann, based on a model by Alexander Maßmann and Maren Ossenberg-Engels
Printing and binding: GRASPO CZ a.s., Zlín

ISBN 978-3-374-04130-5
www.eva-leipzig.de

Contents

- 9 **Preface**
- 13 **Introduction**
Michael Welker
- 25 **Antwerp** – Jacob Propst, William of Orange
and Philip Marnix of St. Aldegonde
Guido Marnef
- 35 **Augsburg** – Wolfgang Musculus
Andreas Link
- 47 **Basel** – Erasmus of Rotterdam and Johannes Oecolampadius
Christine Christ-von Wedel
- 57 **Béarn** – Marguerite de Navarre, Gérard Roussel, and Jeanne d'Albret
Philippe Chareyre
- 67 **Bern** – Berchtold Haller and Niklaus Manuel
Martin Sallmann
- 77 **Breslau/Wrocław** – Johann Hess and Zacharias Ursinus
Irene Dingel
- 87 **Bretten** – Philipp Melanchthon
Günter Frank
- 97 **Cambridge** – Thomas Cranmer
Charlotte Methuen
- 107 **Constance** – Ambrosius, Margarete and Thomas Blarer
Hermann Ehmer

- 117 **Copenhagen** – Johannes Bugenhagen
Martin Schwarz Lausten
- 125 **Debrecen** – Márton Kálmáncsehi Sánta and Péter Melius Juhász
Béla Levente Baráth
- 135 **Edinburgh** – George Wishart and John Knox
Charlotte Methuen
- 147 **Emden** – John a Lasco
Klaas-Dieter Voß
- 157 **Ferrara** – Renée de France and Olympia Morata
Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi
- 167 **Geneva** – John (Jean) Calvin and Théodore de Bèze
Michel Grandjean
- 177 **Hamburg** – Stephan Kempe, Johannes Bugenhagen
and Johannes Aepinus
Rainer Postel
- 189 **Heidelberg** – Petrus Dathenus and Zacharias Ursinus
Christoph Stroh
- 199 **Herborn** – Caspar Olevian
Tobias Sarx
- 209 **Hermannstadt/Sibiu** – Paul Wiener
Daniel Buda
- 217 **Kronstadt/Braşov** – Johannes Honterus and Valentin Wagner
Andreas Müller
- 227 **Leiden** – Petrus Bloccius and Jan van Hout
Kees de Wildt
- 237 **Ljubljana/Laibach** – Primož Truber
Anton Schindling and Dennis Schmidt

- 245 **Lyon** – Waldes and Pierre Viret
Albert de Lange
- 255 **Marburg** – Philipp of Hesse and Adam Krafft
Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele
- 265 **Memmingen** – Christoph Schappeler
Peter Blickle
- 273 **Mühlhausen in Thuringia** – Thomas Müntzer
Siegfried Bräuer
- 279 **Münster** – Bernhard Rothmann, Jan Matthys and Jan van Leiden
Hubertus Lutterbach
- 291 **Neuchâtel** – William (Guillaume) Farel
Grégoire Oguey
- 301 **Nuremberg** – Lazarus Spengler and Andreas Osiander
Berndt Hamm
- 311 **Orlamünde** – Andreas Karlstadt
Thomas Kaufmann
- 321 **Oxford** – John Wycliffe and William Tyndale
Martin Ohst
- 331 **Prague** – Jan Hus
Martin Wernisch
- 341 **Reval/Tallinn and Dorpat/Tartu** – Hermann Marsow
Matthias Asche
- 351 **Riga** – Andreas Knopken
Ainars Radovics and Ojārs Spārītis
- 361 **Schwäbisch Hall** – Johannes Brenz
Wolfgang Schöllkopf

- 369 **Seville** – Dr. Egidio
Mariano Delgado
- 379 **Speyer** – Michael Diller
Klaus Bümlein
- 389 **Stockholm** – Gustav I Wasa and Olaus Petri
Tarald Rasmussen
- 399 **Strasbourg** – Martin Bucer and Katharina Zell
Matthieu Arnold
- 407 **Turku** – Michael Agricola
Reijo E. Heinonen
- 417 **Ulm** – Sebastian Franck and Caspar von Schwenckfeld
Susanne Schenk
- 427 **Venice** – Bartolomeo Fonzio and Baldassarre Altieri
Federica Ambrosini
- 437 **Viborg** – Hans Tausen
Rasmus H. C. Dreyer and Anna Vind
- 447 **Vienna** – Paul Speratus
Rudolf Leeb
- 457 **Witmarsum** – Menno Simons
Klaas-Dieter Voß
- 467 **Wittenberg** – Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon
Johannes Schilling
- 481 **Worms** – Martin Luther, Hans Denck and Ludwig Hätzer
Ulrich Oelschläger
- 491 **Zurich** – Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger
Judith Engeler and Peter Opitz
- 497 **Photo credits**

Preface

Five hundred years of Reformation – the social, cultural, and religious movement that commenced during the early sixteenth century arose from efforts to renew the church in the light of the gospel. Within a remarkably short period, this resulted in developments the impacts of which continue to be felt globally today – and not just where the Reformation was successful. Even where such success was denied, the movement was still able to shape the very opposition it provoked.

The beginning of the Reformation is inextricably linked to the name of Martin Luther and the debate concerning penitence and indulgences he ignited in Wittenberg during the autumn of 1517. During the following years, no one shaped the drama and dynamics of the Reformation as did Luther, and in this sense he is undeniably of epochal significance. Precursors prepared the ground. Waldes of Lyon, John Wycliffe, and Jan Hus along with the movements they inspired all struggled and suffered on behalf of a comprehensive renewal of the church. But the radical change and departure into a new age came about only with Luther.

Nothing less than world history was now being written. The Reformation spread like wildfire. Under Luther's influence and unmistakably parallel to the events in Wittenberg, new Reformation cells and centers emerged, notably Zurich, Strasbourg, and Geneva. These cities can also be called strongholds, or hubs of the reformational movement. Yet limiting the discussion to them fails to do justice to the multifaceted, polycentric nature of what actually took place. Whether it be Antwerp or Riga, Leiden or Debrecen, Copenhagen or Lyon, Oxford or Venice – almost every place in Europe has its own Reformation story to relate. Although these stories did not always end successfully, with nascent Reformation initiatives often being bloodily suppressed, their stories must not be forgotten, since those who died for their faith shaped these stories no less than those who – as the grand

thinkers and organizers of this renewal – were far more prominent and visible. The Reformation in Europe consisted in a whole array of larger and smaller reformations and as such constituted a phenomenon and a network of genuinely pan-European proportions. Hence our title *Europa reformata*.

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation was a welcome occasion for the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) to draw public attention to the European dimensions of the Reformation. The CPCE has always acknowledged the importance of the sometimes quite different experiences of both its larger and its smaller member churches, originating as it did from the approval of the Leuenberg Agreement (1973). In doing so, the churches that emerged from the sixteenth-century Reformation and their pre-Reformation siblings in faith laid aside their centuries-old ecclesiastical estrangement and began living together in pulpit and table fellowship. To date, 107 European Protestant churches have signed the Leuenberg Agreement, bringing with them at least 107 different Reformation stories. Yet even these 107 Reformation stories could easily be enriched by the Reformation stories attaching to the numerous localities and regions within those individual Protestant churches: a colorful tableau indeed, easily illustrating how selective this present volume has had to be – with its 72 prominent figures and 48 cities associated with the Reformation. In short, it can only hope to give the reader a taste of the multifaceted nature of the Reformation and its resonance within its pan-European setting.

At its seventh general assembly in Florence in 2012, the churches of the CPCE initiated the project *Europa reformata: 500 Years of Reformation in Europe*. The assembly called for cities to apply for the title “European City of the Reformation”. Candidates were to be those towns and cities that had played a special role in the sixteenth-century Reformation. Naturally there were to be historical testimonies to the Reformation period and the cities were to be sufficiently accessible for visitors and tourists. The assembly wanted these cities, located across the entire continent, to commemorate the Reformation over its entire breadth for the European public at large and to inspire dialogue with contemporary culture concerning the social and cultural insights associated with the Reformation.

The response to this initiative surpassed all expectation. Although the editors of this volume could easily have presented 80 Reformation cities, the 48 that were eventually included, along with the Reformers associated with them, offer a commemorative panorama that will enable readers not merely from Europe but from all over the world to participate in an exciting expedition that follows the traces of the Reformation down through history. On this expedition, readers will not only be journeying to Wittenberg, Zurich, Strasbourg, and Geneva, but will also find themselves, perhaps even unexpectedly at times, following the Reformation trail right across the entire European continent.

We would like to thank the authors who contributed to this “travel guide” through European Reformation history. The individual chapters stem from theologians and historians with specialized knowledge of the specific Reformation sites and the prominent figures portrayed. Each author may have a slightly different angle of vision, focusing sometimes on a town’s religious, political, or architectural profile during the Reformation period, and sometimes on the personal and theological profile of individual Reformers, or even on the historical setting. The overall yield of these contributions, however, throws into striking relief the grand contours of the Reformation.

We would also like to thank the numerous churches and church leaders who through subscription have enabled the financing of this ambitious undertaking. We are especially grateful to the Church Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and to the City of Basel for providing printing subsidies. Bishop Prof. Dr. Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh of the Protestant Church in Baden, the executive of the Protestant Church of the Palatinate and Dr. Thies Gundlach, vice-president of the EKD Church Office, supported the English translation. Senior pastor Dr. Younghoon Lee of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul funded the Korean edition (edited by Prof. Dr. Kim Jae Jin).

Church historians Prof. Dr. Berndt Hamm and Prof. Dr. Christoph Strohm provided extensive advice during the preparation of this volume. We are grateful to Dr. Alexander Massmann and Maren Ossenbeng-Engels for preparing the map *Europa reformata*, and to Bettina Höhnen, Corinna Klodt, Irmela Küsell, Simon Layer, Charlotte Reda and Dr. Hanna Reichel for gathering special information concerning the Reformers and for collecting the addresses of church, political, and tourist contact centers. Dr. Albert de Lange has done a great deal of editorial work and presented the numerous illustrations. We would also like to thank Dr. Annette Weidhas of the *Evangelische Verlagsanstalt* for her invaluable assistance.

For the English edition we thank the translators Margaret Lampe (Heidelberg and Nuremberg), Neville Williamson (Emden) and Dr. Douglas Stott, who translated the majority of the remaining essays (six were submitted in English). Endre Iszlai translated the essay on Debrecen from Hungarian into English. Elaine Griffiths edited the entire English manuscript with a mixed international readership in mind.

We dedicate this book to the memory of Bishop Friedrich Weber, who died on 19 January 2015 after a short period of serious illness. Friedrich Weber, executive president of the CPCE Council from 2012, followed and supported the development of this book with passion and commitment from the very outset, and we remember him with profound gratitude.

For the editors: Michael Beintker

Introduction

by Michael Welker

I. The spiritual heart of the Reformation: trust in God's revelation

The Reformation message is characterized by profound trust in God and by fearlessness in the face of human power. The alternatives it articulates are quite clear:

- God's word before human words, if necessary even *against human words*
- Biblical witnesses before human doctrines
- God's truth before human certainties or opinions
- Faith in redemption that cannot be attained through one's own actions, but solely through God, not trusting in indulgences and one's own works (cf. Berndt Hamm's article on Nuremberg)

The Reformation emphasizes that God has turned compassionately toward human beings, and that precisely this action on God's part is revealed in Jesus Christ and grasped in faith (cf. Christoph Strohm's article on Heidelberg). God, God's Word and God's truth draw near to human beings, seeking to comfort, encourage and uplift them.

- God reveals himself in the compassionate, suffering human being Jesus Christ, who was executed on the cross.
- Jesus Christ takes hold of his witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit and draws them into his life and authority – even against the power of pope and emperor.

The Reformation's stirring theological insights and life-changing energy are today associated especially with the towns of Wittenberg (Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon), Zurich (Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger), and Geneva

(John Calvin and Théodore de Bèze), on the one hand, and with the developments commencing after 1517 (Luther posts his theses in Wittenberg), on the other. And yet more than a century earlier than the Reformation in Germany, Switzerland, and other European countries, reform initiatives and the articulation of several key Reformation insights prompted the demand for corresponding reforms, especially from circles near the universities of Oxford (John Wycliffe) and Prague (Jan Hus), and indeed even earlier from Waldes of Lyon and the Waldensians. Such Reformation forerunners were already emphasizing that God's grace alone constitutes the foundation of human salvation, and that the status of Scripture was higher than any church doctrine. For just that reason, they argued, not only should the Bible be made accessible to all people, it should also be preached and its teachings communicated in the country's native language. Emphasis was on human maturity, on human beings having come of age in spiritual matters, and accordingly on the bread and wine in the Eucharist being distributed to all congregation members. Even before later Reformation figures, several of these "pre-Reformers" were publicly executed for having disseminated these liberating, but also heretical notions.

II. The importance of the printing press and education for the Reformation

One simply cannot overestimate the importance of what at the time was the still relatively new technology of moveable-type printing for the success of the Reformation, especially with regard to the production of pamphlets and books in the vernacular. Between 1518 and 1530, no fewer than 457 printings of Luther's writings – with an overall print run of a half million copies! — appeared in Augsburg alone. Publishers and printing shops were enormously successful in Basel, Emden, Hamburg, Herborn, Hermannstadt, Kronstadt, Leiden, Nuremberg, Speyer, Stockholm, Ulm, Urach, Vienna, Worms, and other cities. Pamphlets, often with gripping illustrations, shook people up. Printed sermons and treatises made it possible to disseminate the Reformation message directly among the people. Catechisms summarized the most important elements of faith and were disseminated far and wide — some globally. Translations of the Bible into the language of the people swiftly appeared in many countries. New congregational hymns and even entire hymnals were printed.

Many Reformers distinguished themselves through their extraordinary rhetorical and creative talents. Several, often supported by teams of translators, produced Bible translations that in their own turn determinatively influenced the development of local languages: Martin Luther in Germany, William Tyndale in England, Pierre-Robert Olivétan in France, Casiodoro de Reina in Spain, the Petri

brothers in Sweden, Michael Agricola in Finland, Gáspár Károli in Hungary, and Primož Truber in Slovenia. Johannes Bugenhagen's translation of the Bible into Low German provided the model for the Danish Bible. The list could easily go on.

III. Reformation advocacy of education and liberation

At the time, enthusiasm for the Reformation was borne largely by an educated middle class with a pronounced emancipatory disposition. Yet even before the Reformation, larger towns as centers of both news and communication were already providing the backdrop for educational movements – about forty percent of the population in Nuremberg, for example, could read. In some towns, circles of educated persons met who not only were attracted by the humanist ideals of Erasmus of Rotterdam but were also open to the Reformation. To put it simply: “Without humanism, no Reformation!” (Bernd Moeller). These circles, often with a broad network of correspondents, both disseminated and otherwise promoted Reformation doctrine. But it was not just in larger towns that the Reformation was able to gain a foothold. Devout rulers also joined and began supporting it in their own territories. Ultimately the Reformation spread to every class in the population.

As an educational movement, the Reformation attached great value to founding schools and *Hohe Schulen* (schools of higher learning), and in renewing the educational system from the ground up. The impetus behind this extraordinary commitment was the will to promote universal access to the Bible as the Word of God and, by educating all people – not just the clergy – to promote a sound community in which human freedom could flourish. Portraits of numerous towns in this volume (Debrecen, Ferrara, Ljubljana, Riga, Strasbourg, etc.) vividly illustrate these developments. In Schwäbisch Hall, for example, Johannes Brenz taught in his own writings that children were to be esteemed and respected, and demanded the development of more empathetic pedagogical methods. Just as Luther himself had proposed in his publication *To the Councilors* (1524), Brenz founded German and Latin schools for both boys and girls of all classes. In 1526 in Nuremberg, similarly inspired by Melancthon, a new type of school altogether was created, the *Gymnasium* (secondary school). And finally, in 1541 the Reformer Johannes Honterus founded the first humanist *Gymnasium* in Kronstadt in southeastern Europe.

In 1527 Philipp of Hesse, in Marburg, founded the first Protestant university. The *Hohe Schule* in Herborn was developed as an educational institution not only for theology but also for philosophical and jurisprudential research and teaching. Dynamic young scholars (a notable pioneer in Herborn: Caspar Olevian)

and erudite teachers from other European countries accepted appointments at the various universities, contributing considerably to these institutions' ability to attract students from all over Europe and enhancing their interdisciplinary renown. Through these developments, the Reformation provided an enduring source of energy and inspiration for early modern universities in the fields of theology, philology, historiography, jurisprudence and political science.

This intensified and enhanced educational climate together with the will to support and sustain it similarly contributed to a renewal and fortification of people's self-confidence, which at least over time promoted change with respect to freedom in the political sphere. Members of the clergy enthusiastically embraced the new ecclesiastical and theological freedoms. Legal scholars sensed the potential of political freedom and were keen on putting these theories into actual practice. And even the mercantile upper classes, tradesmen and the guilds participated in emergent Reformation developments, intent in their own turn on helping secure and solidify these newly acquired freedoms. At the same time, such developments often served to strengthen previously existing anticlerical attitudes among the various strata of society, with the clergy's political, economic, and taxation privileges now coming under fire or being eliminated entirely. The message was clear: This yearning for a radical renewal of the church could no longer be repressed.

As was to be expected, especially where the Reformation did not enjoy the protection of a territorial ruler, various forms of opposition against the Reformers and their followers quickly emerged, including persecution and even public executions. Like the pre-Reformation, the Reformation movement proper was from the very outset also a movement of martyrs. Indeed, in some places, especially in southern Europe (e.g. Seville, Valladolid, Venice), Protestants could sustain their faith only as "crypto-Protestants", organizing themselves in secret networks.

IV. Reformation and the sharing of power: the involvement of city councils, guilds and kings

Even prior to the Reformation, secular authorities were becoming increasingly interested in expanding their oversight and control of ecclesiastical spheres and concerns. Indeed, in some cities councils even received papal support or at least tolerance in this regard, the pope granting the council in Bern, for example, the right to appoint ecclesiastical officeholders before the Reformation. In many places, however, politicians simply exploited Reformation successes to expand the scope of their own power. In Augsburg, for example, where ninety percent of the citizens quickly became Protestant, the town council and laypersons took over the

task of appointing ecclesiastical officeholders, adjudicating disputes in matters of faith, and ensuring that sermons adhered to Scripture and were of an acceptably Protestant orientation.

There was cautious maneuvering on the part of some town councils with respect to the uncertainty of their legal status in the empire, e.g. in Augsburg, Speyer, Worms, and also in certain towns in Switzerland (Zurich, Bern) and in Latvia (Riga, Reval). In some instances this was able to promote peaceful and even biconfessional arrangements — situations in which groups and church communities of Protestants could coexist with those of members of the “old faith” — sometimes even for the long term. In other places, a hesitatingly *de facto* emergence of a division of power between church and political authorities (also legal and scholarly bodies) was unfortunately hindered by monarchical actions. In Copenhagen and Stockholm, for example, the king exploited Reformation enthusiasm to rid himself of opponents from among the nobility and upper citizenry, or to have himself consecrated in a quasi-religious fashion and then assume the corresponding authority. In Lyon, Huguenots under the influence of Pierre Viret tried, through violent means, to turn the town into a “second Geneva”. These and similar developments are sometimes adduced — especially among some Roman Catholic authors — to demonstrate how the Reformation utterly disempowered the church and surrendered control to political authorities. However, what in fact emerged was a gradual process of division of power (religion, politics, law, scholarship/education) and a commitment to an ecumenical search for truth that turned out to be quite compatible with a more globally receptive and open piety, on the one hand, and an enhanced focus on freedom and democracy in later developments, on the other.

V. Public theology: the importance of sermons and disputations

The Reformation was “a reading and preaching movement” (Berndt Hamm). Even the worship service was now to serve spiritual, ethical, and political education. Questions of faith and church policy were to be stated and discussed freely and openly. Town councils in many places embraced the Reformation message and accordingly promoted theologically and biblically informed “sermons according to God’s word”. Public reaction to these developments was strong and positive.

“Disputations” played an important role in spreading new Reformation ideas, in which regard the famous Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 can serve as a kind of model. It was through this disputation that Luther, focusing intently and unswervingly on God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, excited and won over numerous future Reformers. Other important disputations included those in Zurich in

1523; Breslau in 1524 (contributing to the adoption of the Reformation there); religious colloquies in Memmingen in 1524 and Nuremberg in 1525; disputations in Hamburg in 1527 and 1528; Stockholm in 1527; Bern in 1528 (the Ten Bernese Theses), as well as a synod there in 1532; and Flensburg in 1529. The missive to the emperor himself issued by the urban diet in Ulm in 1524 represents the first Reformation confession at the imperial level. Of 1865 qualified voters in Ulm in 1530, 1621 voted to adopt the Reformation. “In all public or semi-public disputations during the 1520s, those of the old faith inevitably ended up having to depart in defeat” (Peter Blickle’s article on Memmingen).

VI. Catechisms — church ordinances — innovations in ordinary life

In many cities, adopting the Reformation was accompanied by the emergence of church ordinances (the first, by Johannes Aepinus in Stralsund, appearing in 1525) and catechisms designed to provide reliable orientation in both life and doctrine. Over time, Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms (1528/29), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and Thomas Cranmer’s *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) all became perennial spiritual bestsellers throughout the world. Yet even catechisms that today remain relatively unknown often exerted enormous influence. The most important of the three catechisms by Johannes Brenz from Schwäbisch Hall (1535) went through five hundred printings.

Reformers focused not merely on renewing church life and doctrine in the narrower sense, but also on improving the culture of social services and assistance, for example, of care for the poor, services to the ill, and care of orphans (cf. the alms ordinance of 1522 in Nuremberg). Reformers largely transferred care for the poor from ecclesiastical to secular oversight. In Hamburg and elsewhere, a fund was established to address the needs of the poor and ill, overseen by twelve citizen “deacons”. This reorganization of church institutions, of school systems, and of institutions of social services, e.g. hospitals, was buoyed and sustained by a spirit of Christian fellowship. In Constance, Ambrosius Blarer drafted exemplary ordinances for reorganizing monastic life and implementing worship services that were commensurate with Scripture (1535 and 1536). Whether through the reorganization of existing structures or the adoption of completely new forms, initiatives for concrete aid for the poor emerged in many places, often as a reaction to acute crises, for example, in connection with the demise of the textile industry (Leiden, Memmingen) or after natural disasters (Witmarsum).

VII. Princesses, female Reformers, and young theologians and jurists in leading roles

Theologically and spiritually engaged princesses and educated women from the upper classes of the citizenry made important contributions to the Reformation. Marguerite of Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, and her daughter Jeanne d'Albret, the Duchess of Albret in the principality of Béarn, promoted “simultaneous churches”, that is, churches that opened Roman Catholic church buildings to Protestant preachers. In contact with Reformers in Geneva, they assisted in reforming church institutions and the principality itself as well as in efforts to purify “Roman idol worship”. In cosmopolitan Emden, Countess Anna of East Frisia appointed as senior spiritual administrator the Polish humanist and Reformation theologian John a Lasco, charging him with reorganizing the entire church and its institutions in East Frisia. New synodical leadership committees were created, and in Emden itself leaders organized religious colloquies with those who were still adherents of the “old faith” and with peaceable Anabaptists.

At the court of Ferrara, Renée de France promoted interest in Protestant ideas in a circle of ladies and gentlemen of the nobility. One of the most genteel families in Constance, the Blarers, was captivated by the educational ideals of humanism and inspired by the Protestant spirit. The Blarer siblings, acquainted with both Melanchthon and Luther, endeavored not only to renew the church and school system, but also to improve care for the poor. Margarete Blarer, whom no less a personage than Erasmus of Rotterdam publicly praised, began a correspondence with Martin Bucer and became personally engaged on behalf of impoverished women and orphans as well as in care for the sick.

In 1523 in Strasbourg, Katharina Zell not only became one of the first Protestant clergyman's wives as the wife of the preacher at the Strasbourg cathedral, but also a distinguished Reformation writer. She defended publicly the abolition of celibacy as well as — adducing as support the biblical testimony to the effects of the Holy Spirit — the right of women to speak and play a role in spiritual matters. She became engaged for refugees of faith not only by providing practical assistance, but also through letters of consolation and encouragement. She published a hymnal reflecting the spirituality of the Bohemian Brethren, and defended peaceable Anabaptists against public persecution.

The spirit of the Reformation was, finally, also characterized by the considerable influence exerted by energetic young theologians and jurists who, often immediately after concluding their university studies, assumed key leadership roles in doctrinal matters, proclamation, and church administration and governance. Distinguished examples include, of course, Philipp Melanchthon and John Calvin,

though also numerous other young Reformers, such as Márton Kálmáncsehi Sánta in Debrecen, Johannes Honterus and Valentin Wagner in Kronstadt, Johannes Brenz in Schwäbisch Hall, Michael Diller in Speyer, Michael Agricola in Turku, Hans Tausen in Viborg, and Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich.

VIII. European internationality

The small town of Wittenberg became the “center of the civilized world” from which a new religious culture radiated out in all directions. The only recently founded university (1502), with its renowned teachers Luther and Melancthon, attracted more than forty-seven hundred students from all over Europe between 1535 and 1545, making it the most populous university in the empire. Distinguished artists as well, especially from the school of Lucas Cranach, extended the Reformation’s aura far beyond Germany. Other institutions of higher learning where Reformation doctrine was represented similarly attracted students and scholars from all over Europe. Heidelberg, Marburg, Herborn, and also Cambridge were especially successful in this regard.

Alongside the attraction of theological, jurisprudential, and humanist educational opportunities, however, the persecutions and resultant flood of refugees also contributed across borders to education and exchange, and to the increasingly international connections in daily life. By accepting refugees from other countries, towns such as Emden and Frankfurt am Main, also enhanced their own economic and cosmopolitan aura. Students, teachers and church workers, who because of their beliefs had to flee their country, acquired additional cultural and linguistic skills that enabled them to pass on the new ideas in the most varied contexts. Cosmopolitan towns with a long local tradition and great power, such as the Republic of Venice or Edinburgh — and also places characterized by multiple ethnic groups such as Kronstadt and Turku — were stimulated anew through their often contentious exposure to the Reformation spirit. At the same time, their previous cultivation of tradition and fixed cultural routines underwent constructive tests of endurance.

IX. Thematic conflicts with the Church of Rome

Not surprisingly, copious thematic issues generated conflicts between the Reformation and the Roman Church. Although many people today view the Reformation as having been initiated or set into motion by the sale of indulgences, that theme was but one among many. The central theme prompting this new

religious departure was the Reformation's disagreement with the prevailing speculative and metaphysical theology and its ideas about the remoteness of God. Luther's Heidelberg disputation of 1518 broke completely new ground from which to criticize a theology that did *not* grant absolutely normative status to God's revelation in Jesus Christ and to a focused orientation toward the biblical witnesses. Whereas the new theology, oriented toward Jesus Christ and Scripture, was intent on enabling all people to gain access to the sources of knowledge of God, speculative and metaphysical theology now seemed exposed as a theology exclusively of rulers and of those who sought even more power to rule. The new theology also called into question the powerful practice of confession as well as celibacy.

Another controversial topic during the Reformation was the traditional church's refusal to offer the Eucharist to the congregation in its two forms (bread and wine — *sub utraque*). The Reformation objected that this position clearly contradicts the witness of Scripture. The Reformation similarly rejected other themes as being non-biblical or as exaggerations with little or no direct biblical support, including the cult of Mary and the saints, the transmission of legends of the saints, saying the rosary, and the doctrine of purgatory. It also demanded the abolition of the mass held in Latin, processions, excessive imagery in churches, and the often numerous secondary altars. Such objections and disputes were often particularly vehement precisely where unjustified economic privilege and the obvious cultivation of a double morality were associated with clerical hegemony. Conflicts similarly arose when social problems and poor educational opportunities were attributed to the inadequate leadership of the church itself.

The notion of the priesthood of all believers provided support for those who criticized the questionable authority of the pope, the hierarchical organization of the clergy, and the powerful status of monasteries. Teaching and proclamation that was focused solely on Scripture was to expel all obscurantism from the church. The dominance of church jurisdiction was called into question, and in many areas adjudication by secular authorities replaced canon law and traditional dispensation of justice by the church. Many developments initiated by the Reformation anticipated that a division of power offered a more effective way of promoting individual and societal freedom; people began to see that such freedoms were best served when politics, the administration of justice, science and scholarship, and oversight of church and religious matters were not concentrated in a single entity.

X. Intra-Protestant thematic conflicts

As early as 1520, conflicts arose between Luther and the very man whom, alongside Luther, many between 1518 and 1522 considered one of the most important representatives of Wittenberg's Reformation theology. This was Luther's own doctoral advisor, Andreas Rudolf Bodenstein, called Karlstadt after the Franco-German town of Karlstadt. The initial issue concerned the inviolability of the biblical canon. Luther had questioned the canonical validity of the Letter of James, which in Luther's view advocated "righteousness through works". His colleague Karlstadt sensed here a threat to the authority of Scripture. The two men also came into conflict concerning infant baptism and the appropriate age for baptism, as well as concerning the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Karlstadt, influenced by mystical theology, emphasized more radically than Luther the maturity of the individual Christian and the authority of the congregation — even without the important prerequisite of education and training that was so important for Melanchthon and Luther. Called Brother Andreas in his church community in Orlamünde, he developed a ministry that emphasized the importance of all laypersons.

These and other issues generated intra-Protestant conflicts that, along with social conflicts and the accompanying tensions, exacerbated the contentious arguments. The dispute concerning Christ's presence in the Eucharist turned into one of the central conflicts between Lutherans and Reformed believers. In Marburg in 1529, after a debate that had started in 1526 and been carried on in polemical pamphlets, Philipp of Hesse tried to find a "middle ground between Lutherans and Zwinglians", albeit without success. Although an important step along this path was taken with the Wittenberg Concord of 1536 (Bucer and Melanchthon), intra-Protestant reconciliation in this matter was not achieved until the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973.

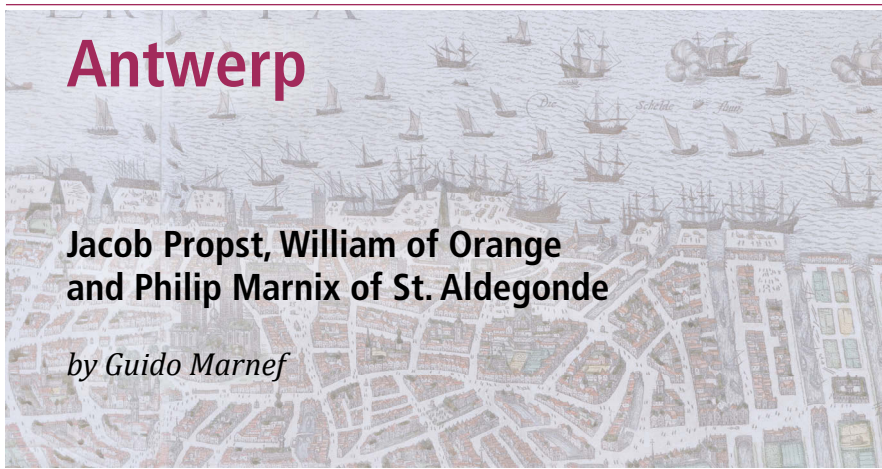
Similarly fierce conflicts arose in connection with spiritualist movements, which appealed to the "inner word of the Spirit" in emphasizing the theological authority of the individual Christian (e.g. Sebastian Franck and Caspar von Schwenckfeld in Ulm) and called into question central tenets of faith such as the doctrine of the Trinity and of Christ's divine nature (cf. the Anti-Trinitarians in Venice, Poland, and Transylvania; and Miguel Servet in Geneva). Conflicts arose in connection with the rejection of infant baptism and the introduction of adult baptism, which not infrequently was accompanied by a willingness to undergo rebaptism (Anabaptism). These conflicts came to a head within the framework of emancipatory and ultimately violent protest movements that also directed their anger toward oppressive economic abuses and situations of acute distress. Mühlhausen, Münster, Memmingen and other cities became centers of such radicalization.

In the spring of 1525, the largest uprising in Europe prior to the French Revolution commenced in Upper Swabia, gravitating around Memmingen. Presumably fifty thousand rebellious peasants demanded in *Twelve Articles* the abolition of serfdom, the right of the congregation to choose its own pastor, and the replacement of the hegemony of the nobility and ecclesiastical princes by a “common government” and the implementation of other freedoms and privileges. Thousands of peasants perished in battles with troops of the nobility. Reformation historian Heiko A. Oberman was inclined to assert that Memmingen in fact represented a “fourth center of the Reformation” — alongside Wittenberg, Zurich and Geneva.

Anabaptist movements also fell prey to extremism, e.g. in Münster, where the tailor Jan van Leiden had himself declared king, thereafter abolishing, among other things, money and imposing the death penalty on those who transgressed against the Ten Commandments, and even arrogating to himself the right to choose the name of every newborn child. Such phenomena remained isolated incidents and were nonetheless able to damage the reputation of the Reformation. To this day, the unsatisfactory engagement with the Anabaptists, the Reformers’ failure to address the misery of the peasants, and the stubborn recurrence of anti-Semitism throughout church history belong to the dark side of the Reformation. The Mennonite strand of the Anabaptist movement was markedly different from the violently inclined peasants and Anabaptists and their equally violently inclined opponents in the sixteenth century. To this day, Mennonite churches continue to embody a rigorous and consistent peace theology and ethics (see Menno Simons in Witmarsum).

Such Reformation highlights include countless other examples of non-violent resistance and efforts on behalf of peaceful ecumenical coexistence. Many towns, after dramatic show trials, public executions and burnings, and even posthumous condemnations with public burnings of coffins (Antwerp, Augsburg, Cambridge, Ferrara, Oxford, among others), became temporary or even permanent places in which refugees of faith from many different countries could find a safe harbor. Protestants in Augsburg, after their churches were confiscated following their impressive initial successes, patiently and peacefully conducted their services for fourteen years out in the open air. Accounts from other towns similarly relate how Protestants had “leave town” to attend worship (e.g. as late as 1649 in an engraving of Hernals Castle near Vienna by Merian). The turbulent emergence of the Reformation was followed in many countries by long periods of hardship and patience — but always on a path ultimately leading to a peaceful ecumenical life enduringly inspired by the Reformation.¹

1 I would like to thank Irene Dingel, Berndt Hamm, Albert de Lange, Jan Stievermann and Christoph Strohm for their careful reading and many fine suggestions.



A tourist visiting present-day Antwerp and seeing the many churches might conclude that the city was always a stronghold of the Catholic Church. At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century Antwerp became indeed a bulwark of the Counter-Reformation and the new churches and convents built in a baroque style still leave their distinct traces in the urban landscape. Yet the baroque splendor conceals the fact that Antwerp was once the big center of Protestantism in the Netherlands.

A cosmopolitan metropolis

It was no coincidence that Antwerp was the first city in the sixteenth-century Netherlands touched by the broad Protestant and the more specific Lutheran reform movement. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Antwerp became the big metropolis of western trade. Merchants coming from Spain, Portugal, the German Empire, England and other parts of Europe came together in Antwerp. The commercial expansion stimulated existing industries and attracted new ones. The population exploded from 40,000 at the end of the fifteenth century to 100,000 in the 1560s. Antwerp's economic boom profoundly affected cultural life. The availability of capital, distribution channels, skilled labor, and a vast reading public turned the city in an international center of book production and book trade. A well-developed school system enhanced the cultural emancipation of the urban middle classes. There are no data about the degree of literacy in sixteenth-century Antwerp but everything seems to indicate that at least half of the population achieved elementary literacy. Three chambers of rhetoric — poetry guilds that

performed like amateur theater companies — reflected in their vernacular poems and plays upon the social and religious problems of the day.

Early support for Luther's reform

As a cosmopolitan trading metropolis with a vibrant cultural life Antwerp was open to new religious and cultural influences. Martin Luther's ideas reached Antwerp at an early stage through German merchants and some Antwerp printers did not hesitate to publish the work of the Reformer from Wittenberg. The most important center of support, however, was the Augustinian monastery. This had been founded in 1513 and was part of the reformed German congregation of Augustinians to which Luther's branch in Wittenberg also belonged. Several Antwerp friars had studied at the University of Wittenberg. Jacob Propst (1486?–1562), who was prior of the Antwerp monastery in 1518–22, was even a close friend of Luther. He supported Luther's theology from the pulpit. In a letter to Luther, Erasmus of Rotterdam called Propst "a genuine Christian, who is most devoted to you and was once your pupil [...]. He is almost the only one who preaches Christ; the others, as a rule, preach the inventions of men or their own advantage".

Propst's sermons found fertile ground in Antwerp. However, the ecclesiastical authorities were alarmed and with the central government started a campaign against the Lutheran influences in the city. Propst was summoned and questioned by an inquisitor and on 9 February 1522 he was forced to abjure his errors in the main church of Brussels. Shortly afterwards he returned to his Lutheran convictions and had to flee to Wittenberg. From 1524 till 1559 he worked as a Lutheran pastor at Bremen.

Yet, the actions of the authorities did not succeed in silencing the Lutheran spirit in the Augustinian monastery. The new prior who succeeded Propst in the summer of 1522, Hendrik van Zutphen (ca. 1488–1524), had also studied at Wittenberg and was an acquaintance of Martin Luther. Van Zutphen, too, preached Lutheran opinions and was arrested on 29 September 1522. The next day, he was liberated by a crowd of angry supporters, mostly women, and he left the city, heading for Wittenberg. In October 1522, Margaret of Austria, the regent of the Netherlands, ordered the arrest of the remaining friars. Three friars refused to recant and two of them, Hendrik Voes and Johann van den Esschen, were burned at the stake at the Brussels Great Market on 1 July 1523. They were immediately hailed as the first martyrs of the Lutheran Reformation. In the meanwhile, Emperor Charles V had ordered that the monastery buildings be demolished. The Augustinian church, however, was spared and turned into a new parish church.



The parish church of St. Andrew. The church building was part of the Augustinian monastery in the early sixteenth century

The rise of Anabaptism and Calvinism

After the dissolution of the Augustinian monastery, the Lutheran reform movement lost its leading institution and centrifugal forces gained influence. The Lutheran minority though kept in close contact with Wittenberg. Small groups met in private houses, reading from Scripture and from Luther's *Postille* (collection of sermons) while others emigrated to German cities where they could practice their faith openly. However, a broad, eclectic Protestant movement set the tone in Antwerp and elsewhere in the Netherlands from the mid-1520s. At secret meetings a variety of new ideas could be heard, stemming from Protestant reformers of different flavor. Several of those present at these meetings had completely broken with the Catholic Church but others still maintained ties with the old Church.

The Lutherans and the supporters of the broad Protestant movement in Antwerp did not form a real church with an appropriate structure. Yet the Anabaptist movement, which came to the fore in the 1530s, developed an elaborate underground organization. While the pragmatic Antwerp city fathers were quite moderate towards Protestants, especially when people of economic weight were involved, they severely persecuted the Anabaptists. Since the seizure of Münster, Anabaptism had been associated with rebellion and disorder. The city government strictly executed the heresy edicts of the central government and condemned eight Anabaptists to death in 1535. Another fifteen followed until 1550. Most of the prosecuted Anabaptists were simple artisans. This prosecution pattern continued during the next decades. In the meanwhile, the pacifist Anabaptism molded by Menno Simons (1491–1561) had thrown off the revolutionary taint of the early movement, but this did not change the policy of the Antwerp city government. The rigorous persecution notwithstanding, the Anabaptists succeeded in building substantial underground communities. The Anabaptist leaders demanded high standards for membership of the “brotherhood” and had to be “without spot or stain”. Adult baptism was only administered when someone was prepared to leave the world of sin and after a conscious process of soul-searching and penance.

The Calvinist church, however, was best equipped to challenge the hostile authorities and the rivalry of other religious communities. In 1554, a Walloon or French-speaking church was established in Antwerp, followed the next year by a Dutch-speaking congregation. From the beginning, both churches were equipped with a strong organization. An extensive and decentralized network of elders, deacons and “messengers” (which informed the members where and when the secret services were taking place) formed a close link between the community's core leadership and the faithful brethren. Furthermore, the Antwerp Calvinist church was integrated in a European network. Preachers from the exile churches



Antwerp; colorized town map from Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *"Civitates orbis terrarum"*, vol. 5, Cologne, 1599

Middle left: Church of Our Lady (no. 1); middle right: Church of St. Andrew (no. 3)