

Newsletter

October 2017

In the park where I usually walk my dog, a young man from an Asian country started talking to me. After some questions and comments about my dog, he asked: 'Are you religious?' I answered: 'Yes, I am a Christian.' He said: 'This is the first time I meet a white person here in London who is a Christian. Most of them say they are atheists.'

His words at first shocked me, but I also realised this is increasingly my own experience as well when I talk to 'white', in particular young, people. Most of them say: 'I am not religious.'

For many people in Europe, 'religion' and Christianity seem irrelevant to their daily life. I talk to people who have a good job, a house and young children, so why would they need God? And then there is the violence related to some forms of 'religion', which makes people think that 'religion causes violence', so it is better not to be religious at all.

On the other hand, I also meet many people from African, Caribbean and Latin American countries who have a strong belief in Jesus Christ and a vivid prayer life. And thanks to them, churches in London grow. Mission reversed...

How do we reach out to all those young people and adults who know hardly anything about God and seem to be indifferent?

I think there are still exciting and challenging opportunities to live out the Good News of Jesus Christ. On the one hand the 'non-religious' people need to 'see' what it means that we are Christians in our daily lives. On the other hand, we need to pray, and pray, and pray... for all those 'lost' people, who desperately need to be reconnected with their Creator to find life's real destiny. And we need to ask for opportunities, through our teaching, writing and speaking, to tell God's Good News, the best news in the world. Behind the unsettling daily news of wars and threats of wars, there is the God who is the King who rules. In his service we work, teach, write and witness.

Dr. Hetty Lalleman, London

IN THIS ISSUE

Introduction (Dr. Hetty Lalleman) 1

The Reformation and Leadership
in the Church
(Rev. Dr. Paul Bernhard Rothen) 2

The Reformation in Hungary
and its relevance for today
(Prof. Dr. Ferenc Szűcs) 10

The Reformation in Scandinavia
and its relevance for today
(Rev. Dr. Rune Imberg) 14

The Reformation in the Czech Lands
of Bohemia and Moravia
(Rev. Dr. Pavel Černý) 21

The Current Issue of the European
Journal of Theology 28

Information and invitation:
FEET Conference 2018
*Christian Identity and Mission
in a Divided Europe* 29

New Book – *The Reformation:
Its Roots and Its Legacy* 30



Dr. Hetty Lalleman

The Reformation and Leadership in the Church

Rev. Dr. Paul Bernhard Rothen, Switzerland

The *primum principium* of all sober theological thinking is the presupposition that Scripture is given by God, therefore clear, and thus an actively radiating light on our path (Ps 119:105).¹ This light refreshes our thoughts and prevents us from being 'shaped by false standards and deceived by false narratives'.² This perspective enables us to explain why it is misleading to talk about 'leadership' in the church. The concept of 'leadership', with its essentially horizontal emphasis, leads us into the temptation of adopting a rationalistic way of thinking. Steering us away from the legacy of Christ, it invites us to embrace the promises of the modern Masterminds.

1. An Unbiblical Term

The reformers Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Bullinger and Bucer did not speak of leadership in the church, because the Holy Scriptures do not speak in such terms. One does find the term in modern English translations of the Bible, however. For example, in the New International Version of Numbers 33:1, it says that the Israelites were 'under the leadership of Moses and Aaron'. The King James Version and the American Standard Version say that Israel was 'under the hand of Moses and Aaron', which is a more literal rendering of the Hebrew text. In Romans 12:8 the New International Version reads: 'If it is leadership, let him govern diligently,' while the King James and American Standard read: 'He that ruleth, with diligence,' which is more faithful to the Greek text. Careful study shows that the original text of the Bible does not legitimize the idea of leadership in the church as it is developed in the modern patterns of understanding human life.

2. Against the Desire of Deity

Looking back to the time of Reformation, we can learn much from the experiences of Luther and his colleagues as they struggled with some of these fundamental questions. At all times the believers are tempted to resort to

themselves, when they have the impression that God is not doing what should be done. The temptation to develop human thoughts and actions in order to force God to do what we think is good has followed the people of God ever since Abraham listened to Sara who 'gave him Hagar as a wife' (Gen 16:1–6) and Aaron complied with the request of those who wanted him to give them a god they could see and feel (Ex 32:1–6).

In the year 1530, the emperor Karl invited all the princes and nobles in Germany to Augsburg.³ He expected them to help unite the church. There was an urgent need as the Empire was under the threat of the Turks and sultan Süleyman was preparing a second siege of Vienna. It was therefore the duty of every Christian to reach a consensus on the questions of faith. But was it really? Would not an agreement reached by betraying the Gospel bring God's wrath on Europe? Luther was banned and could not be part of the Wittenberg delegation, so Melanchthon had to bear the main responsibility. Melanchthon was greatly distressed, feeling that this was too much for him. The only thing Luther could do was to write to him to comfort him. And so he did, constantly warning his friend not to take on tasks that God wanted to keep in his own hands. Luther wrote:

But I write this in vain, for in terms of your philosophy you continue to govern these things by reason, that is, as the writer put it, to rave with reason, and you plague yourself to death and simply do not see that the matter lies beyond your hands and counsel and seeks a decision without your pains. Christ forbid that it should fall to your counsel or hands, as you nevertheless so pertinaciously wish! Then indeed we should publicly and splendidly and suddenly perish. But it says: 'Seek not things too high for you' [Eccl 3:22], and: 'He who examines majesty will be crushed by glory,' or, as the Hebrew text has it: 'He who examines things too weighty will be overburdened' [Prov 25:27]. This applies to you. The Lord Jesus preserve you, that your faith fail not, but grow and win the day, Amen.⁴

¹ Paper presented at the FEET conference in Wittenberg, Germany, August 2016.

² Paul Bernhard Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift*. 2 Volumes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990–1992) 83–95, cf. 222.

³ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther Band 2: Ordnung und Abgrenzung der Reformation: 1521–1532* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1986) 356–376.

⁴ Luther, *WA, Briefe 5*, 412. The translations of the texts of Luther are by the late James W. Leitch.

Luther writes gently, fraternally and mildly to his friend Melanchthon, but against Müntzer his thunder is loud and unrestrained. He condemns the leader of the peasants because he „allowed himself to fancy that the church could not exist without him, that he must uphold and rule it‘.⁵ Yet the reproach is the same in both cases: human reason, with its attempts at conceptual mediation and its overwhelming prophetic force, threatens God’s sovereignty in the church. Self-appointed leaders want to co-operate with God and help him, but God repeatedly takes his cause out of their hands. He has no wish to work through their diplomacy or their personal influence. He governs through the Word which he upholds *extra nos*. This word is not at the disposal of human purposes, but calls for the response of *faith alone*.

According to Luther it is the Lord, Jesus Christ himself, who rules the church. He alone knows the goal, the eternal goal, the house with the many mansions, where he is preparing a place for his followers. He not only knows the way, he is the way (John 14:1–4). He alone is able to avoid the present dangers, to define the necessary measures to keep believers from evil, and to ensure the life of his church. To simply maintain the true preaching and teaching of the Word is hard enough. No human beings should take upon themselves the task of leading the church safely through changing times. Seeking to set Melanchthon free from this temptation, Luther writes to him regarding his responsibility in the church:

God has set it in a certain public place that you do not find in your rhetoric or your philosophy: this place is called faith, in which there are things not seen and not appearing [Heb 11:1, 3], and anyone who tries to make these visible, apparent and comprehensible as you do, will have cares and tears for the reward of his labors as you have, while we all object in vain. The Lord has promised to dwell in a cloud [1 Kgs 8:1] and has appointed darkness to be his pavilion [Ps 18:11; 97:2]. Do otherwise who will! If Moses had sought to understand the end, and how he was to evade Pharaoh’s host, Israel would perhaps still be in Egypt today.⁶

In a letter to their common friend Justus Jonas, Luther explains that Melanchthon’s anxiety about the church has much deeper sources and is more dangerous than any human being can imagine. „His philosophy does not believe, except after experience,‘ he writes.⁷ Luther



Rev. Dr. Paul Bernhard Rothen

is worried because Melanchthon softens the *sola fide*. Melanchthon desires experience to be the ground of faith, or at least a means to strengthen his faith. Therefore, Luther adds, Melanchthon should constantly be urged not to become God, but to combat the desire for deity that is inborn in us and was implanted into us by the devil in paradise, for it is not good for us. It drove Adam out of paradise, and is the one and only thing that casts us out too and forces us away from peace. We are to be men and not God. This is the upshot; there is surely no other way, or else eternal grief and disquiet is our reward.⁸

Luther himself had no idea how the church should be organized and led to a better future. Rather, he was convinced that the last days were near. Christ would appear and all human concerns about his church would be resolved. Therefore Luther was not interested to find the old, true form of the church in the Holy Scriptures. He considered it his duty to renovate the liturgy and the teaching in the church: he gave new forms to the daily prayers of common believers; he was constantly involved in local debates concerning the income of the clergy; he offered his advice as to what could and should be done against adultery and usury; and after long and very complicated negotiations he ordained a bishop in Naumburg – according to the practice of the ordination

⁵ Ibid., 477; written in 1539.

⁶ Ibid., 406.

⁷ Ibid., 496.

⁸ Ibid., 415, to Spalatin.

of pastors set up in Wittenberg.⁹ But Luther did not seek to read out of the Bible a new and true vision of the organization of the church, nor did he define the order of its ministries.

This approach represents a strength as well as weakness in Luther's work. As a consequence, he relied on the secular rulers. It has even been said that Luther handed the church over to the princes, kings and nobles of his time. But we should not overlook the fact that political and spiritual powers have often been mutually dependent throughout the history of the church.

3. Church Rulers?

Some reformers went beyond Luther and endeavoured to find in the New Testament a model for the different church ministries. *Heinrich Bullinger* collated all the titles and functions in the New Testament Epistles and tried to organize the church in Zürich accordingly. We find the result of his efforts in Article 18 of the Second Helvetic Confession,¹⁰ which is not very convincing. Bullinger wanted to bring his church in perfect harmony with the church of the apostles, but with regards to the offices in the church in Zürich, that was apparently not the case.

Martin Bucer's approach was more practical. While seeking to implement the New Testament church pattern in Strasbourg, he retained only two offices: the *preacher* and the elder.¹¹ Bucer thus drew a picture of the church ministries that is still largely practiced in the Reformed churches today.

Calvin, a gifted lawyer, developed Bucer's insights. In his *Institution* he presents his famous doctrine of the four — or better, two and two — offices in the church of Christ.¹² His discussion of this subject refers to Ephesians 4:11: 'He [God] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers'. Calvin argues that the apostles, prophets, and evangelists were given only for special times, whereas the church at all times needs pastors and teachers. With regards to Ephesians 4, he maintains

that only the offices concerning the ministry of the word are mentioned. In the letters to the Romans and to the Corinthians Paul speaks of two others offices: the elders or 'rulers', and the deacons.

Calvin's view of the four ministries makes the Bible clearer than it actually is, and defines an order which he considers necessary for the church at all times and in every place, since it is revealed by God. In theory, Calvin's definition avoids making *one* office dominant and calls to mind that different categories of power and forms of authority work together in order to keep a community strong and well. His view has inspired the understanding of church order in many ways, but it has two problems:

Firstly, Calvin himself could not implement his understanding of church order in Geneva. The local authorities did not allow the church in Geneva to become an autonomous institution with the freedom to define the electoral rules and the profiles of the offices. The authorities had no interest in a powerful clergy within the walls of their city. As a consequence, Calvin's church ended up being part of the civil government of Geneva, similarly to Luther's church in Wittenberg.¹³

Secondly, it is only because Calvin distinguishes between the temporary and permanent ministries that he can establish his view of the four church offices. But as he himself concedes, this interpretation is not convincing.

4. Weak Doctrine of the Church

In the last century Eduard Schweizer, following in the footsteps of Calvin, dedicated a large part of his life to an attempt to free the churches from state influence. He saw clearly that time was running out for the big protestant churches in Europe, the 'Landeskirchen'. The era when they were part of the state apparatus and governed by the civil laws was coming to an end. What would happen next? Should the churches set up their own organizations, regulations and leadership? With the help of modern scholarship Schweizer sought to discover

⁹ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther Band 3: Die Erhaltung der Kirche: 1532–1546* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1987) 296–303.

¹⁰ Heinrich Bullinger, *Das Zweite Helvetische Bekenntnis*, edited by Walter Hildebrandt and Rudolf Zimmermann (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1966) 90.

¹¹ Martin Bucer, *Von der waren Seelsorge und dem rechten Hirtendienst* [1538], in Robert Stupperich (ed.), *Martin Bucers Deutsche Schriften Volume 7* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1964) (67–245) 112; cf. Gerhard Rau, *Pastoraltheologie* (München: Kaiser, 1970) 81.

¹² Johannes Calvin, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion* [*Institutio Christianae Religionis*], edited by Otto Weber (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1938) IV/3, 4–9, 62–70; cf. Paul Bernhard Rothen, *Das Pfarramt. Ein gefährdeter Pfeiler der europäischen Kultur* (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2009) 155.

¹³ Alister E. McGrath, *Johann Calvin. Eine Biographie. 1990* (Zürich: Benziger, 1991) 133–134; cf. Rothen, *Pfarramt*, 296.

what Scripture teaches on this vital subject. In my opinion, his results were rather weak: the congregation of Christ is in need of order; services are given by God, through the Holy Spirit, to ensure and foster the life of the church. But Scripture does not give a clear view of the precise offices given by God, of the church order to uphold, or of formal changes to introduce that are legitimate and sound.¹⁴ While Scripture is clear on the fact that there must be order and offices in the church of Christ, it does not define them in detail!

A short review shows that the New Testament contains different titles to identify and name authorities in church: ‚elders‘, ‚stewards‘ and ‚bishops‘ (1 Th 5:12, 1 Tim 5:17, Tit 1:5.7, 1 Cor 4:1). But we do not find a catalogue of their rights and duties, nor a presentation of the processes by which people should be entrusted with such a position. There is some connection between these offices and the ‚laying of hands‘ (1 Th 4:14, 5:22), but nobody can say exactly what happened when this rite was exercised, for what purpose, and what its consequences were.¹⁵ In his First Epistle, Peter mentions the task of the ‚elders‘: to shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet 5). Notice the link between their office and that of a good shepherd (John 10:11). This connection opens the door to the idea that there have to be ‚pastors‘ in the church, but who is to be a pastor and how does a person become one?

Even a child knows that the church is the flock of the good Shephard¹⁶ but for theological scholars and lawyers the term ‚church‘ is an ‚obscure word‘.¹⁷ We do not really know what the correct course of action is with regards to the appointment of authorities in the church. That is why I am arguing — to answer Andrew McGowan¹⁸ — that we need a *strong-weak* doctrine of the church, a doctrine which acknowledges that we have only weak arguments when we set forth a God-given church order. In other words, there seems to be a gap in Holy Scripture. And since what it says about the

church seems insufficient, people seek to compensate this deficiency by introducing the notion of ‚leadership‘.

But when we proceed in this way, we should not forget the Roman Catholic doctrine of the church. Solid and well-built, it has been widely tested over many centuries. It constitutes the basis of all church ministries, the rights and duties of the different offices, as well as the spiritual authority and competence of those who exercise them. The liturgical forms which enabled believers to practice their faith in late mediaeval times, and especially the structured authority of the church set forth to counter the reformers and the movement they inspired, were the product of a long and sophisticated process by which scholars over many generations sought to supplement what the Holy Scriptures has not clearly defined. The Roman Catholic Church with its bishops, cardinals and pope attempts to accomplish the task of Holy Scripture better than it does itself.

5. A Protestant Bishop for Switzerland?

At the time when Paul wrote his Letters to Timothy and Titus, the title of ‚bishop‘ was used to mark an authority in secular life. The title was quite formal, describing a rather empty form of authority.¹⁹ In the church it soon took on a new spiritual dimension and came to have sacramental significance with a much wider and richer connotation. Today many scholars claim that the church would not have survived the gnostic challenges or the confusions when the Roman Empire collapsed, if it had not implemented a strong and stable episcopate.²⁰

This may be the reason why many contemporary protestant church officials in Switzerland are flirting with the idea of establishing a Swiss Reformed bishop.²¹ The idea is simple and compelling: in a postmodern society with its confused and confusing sets of contradictory values and goals, it would be helpful to have a flesh-and-blood

¹⁴ Eduard Schweizer, *Gemeinde und Gemeindeordnung im Neuen Testament* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1959) 25, 188–190.

¹⁵ Martin Hauser, *Prophet und Bischof. Huldrych Zwinglis Amtsverständnis im Rahmen der Zürcher Reformation* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1994) 125.

¹⁶ Luther, WA 50, 329.

¹⁷ Ibid., 625.

¹⁸ Andrew McGowan, ‚The Reformation and the Questions of Authority and Truth,‘ in Pierre Berthoud and Pieter J. Lalleman (eds), *The Reformation. Its Roots and Its Legacy* (Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2017) 118–119.

¹⁹ Jürgen Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*. Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar (Zürich: Benziger, 1988) 150, 168.

²⁰ Ernst Käsemann, ‚Amt und Gemeinde im Neuen Testament,‘ in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen 1* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) 198, 203.

²¹ Lukas Kundert, *Die evangelisch-reformierte Kirche* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2014) 125–126.

person identified as a common point of reference and significance. But in my opinion the idea is ridiculous and does not stand a chance of actually happening. It suggests that we, as intelligent human beings, can analyse our present plight, recognize what needs to be done, and therefore come to an agreement as to how we want to proceed in order to fulfill our common aims. In actual fact, human beings have never been able to determine autonomously the nature of the tasks at hand and to successfully accomplish them. Luther makes a significant point when he says that the people of Israel would still be slaves in Egypt, if they had sought for an independent solution.²²

6. Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx: The Myths of Modern Time

The conviction that humankind is able to analyse its present predicament, to determine the causes of its major problems, and to agree solutions that will assure the common good, is not limited to some Swiss church leaders. It is in fact the founding assumption of modern society.

Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Contract social* both argued (in different ways) that they could disclose the problem of humanity (the danger of civil war for Hobbes, the loss of freedom for Rousseau) and show how the challenge could be overcome. Both were not so naïve as to think that humans would ever reach a consensus. Rather, they claimed to be the leaders, the enlightened thinkers who could free humanity from prejudice. They did not picture modern society as the product of a real historical process, but as a congregation of rational beings, an 'ideal-typical' model, that could provide legitimation to modern political power, and first and foremost to themselves as the Masterminds. To put it simply, they were the storytellers of modern times.

Karl Marx, following in the footsteps of Hobbes and Rousseau, drew a different picture of a society based on his own analysis of its fundamental problem. As a consequence, he offered a distinct understanding of the common good. Though the result is different, the approach is the same: humankind has a problem; we can grasp it, and therefore take the measures to solve it.

This perspective made it possible to sever the ties of all the old bondages and to turn to the future in seemingly total freedom. Humanity could now feel free from every God-given law, from every natural law, from all traditions, from every link that prevented them from imagining and choosing a functional, efficient and powerful solution for social life. Only conservative people, defending their privileges and therefore fearing any change, could be interested in preserving bondages to forms of heritage that pretended to be God-given.

The French philosopher André Glucksmann argues that this programmatic turn to the future was responsible for the major atrocities of modern times. The simple model of the Master Thinkers freed human activity from all religious and moral obstructions. Justifying the most cruel political programs and actions, they thus opened the door to the horrors committed by tyrants such as Stalin and Hitler.²³

Sad to say, Glucksmann's explanation is true not only in modern secular society, but also in the churches. Many generations of scholars and pastors, and more and more church managers, builders and leaders have adopted this modern turn towards the future. They replaced traditions with utopias, inherited forms with processes generating new identity, listening to God's word with dialogue, and the claim to truth with the measure of success.

7. Unique Form of Power

The implementation of this turn to the future is helped by two factors: the secularization of pastoral care and incorrect Bible translations. The first of these is caused by the fact that, as Andrew McGowan explains, present-day authorities in the Reformed church are seeking inspiration from before the time of Luther for their redesigned model of the future.²⁴ In order to establish a concept of ecclesiastical power that is not founded on Holy Scripture they teach truths which contradict all that our Jewish and Christian ancestors held to. These authorities thus bind the consciences by what they consider and declare to be necessary to the realization of the mission of the church of Christ. But in my view, in this church all that Christ has accomplished and offers loses its weight in favor of what we are taught to expect from the coming utopian Christ.

²² Luther, WA, *Briefe* 5, 406.

²³ André Glucksmann, *Die Meisterdenker* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1978) 161–182.

²⁴ McGowan, 'Questions of Authority and Truth', 102–120.

In 1977 the French philosopher Michel Foucault lectured at the *Collège de France* in Paris to the liberal intelligentsia. He began by sharing with his enthusiastic audience the results of his recent research, which described a totally different form of power from what he had known before. It was a form of power, not inspired by the old empires of Egypt, China, Athens and Rome, but which originated, was exemplified, and enacted in Israel. This form of power was born in a stable in Bethlehem and that birth had been prepared by the prophets of Israel. Eventually this concept of authority had become the common standard in the mediaeval church.²⁵ It is the power of a good shepherd, Foucault argued, not the power of the networkers in Athens.²⁶ Reading the transcript of these lectures, one can still feel how surprising these discoveries were. In the next address, Foucault promised not to return to the theme of the good shepherd,²⁷ but in actual fact he spent four of the thirteen lectures on the topic.

The philosopher Foucault had discovered the power of the good shepherd which the prophets ascribed to the faithful priests and kings in Israel and which Jesus enacted during his ministry. It is the power which Gregory the Great describes in the booklet that became one of the most read programs of western Christianity, the *Regula pastoralis*.²⁸ Whoever has a higher position is called to use it in order to feed, watch over, care for and lead the flock of Christ on the way to eternal life. A shepherd must indeed lead the flock! But above all he must feed and heal his flock, as well as preserve it from harm. Not only must he give good and healthy food to the sheep, but be careful to ascertain that there is enough food for all times including the harder moments of life. He must separate the weak from the strong, so that the former are not overpowered and the latter can develop their gifts and serve the others in the flock. The shepherd must defend the sheep against its enemies, even if this means giving up his life for them! This was the understanding of a good, Christian use of power that shaped the Christian culture and nourished what we nowadays call western individualization.²⁹ The Re-

formation re-discovered that this power is mainly practiced through the teaching and preaching of the Word, not by exercises of piety, and even less by the decadent form of godliness according to which sins can be forgiven by means of indulgences.

The fact that Foucault has worked out how this pastoral care had been transformed and progressively secularized, as from the Enlightenment through the French Revolution and beyond, is of the highest importance. We cannot understand the situation of the churches in Europe today without considering this major change. The modern state has taken on the duties of the good shepherd, ensuring that every citizen receives what is necessary for their existence from birth to death.³⁰ The modern state also feeds its population with entertainment and recreational and cultural activities, thus protecting people from being disturbed by messages beyond human control. It goes so far as to claim that all have what is necessary for this life and even for the life to come, supposing such a reality exists! The modern state — with its educational systems and its health care plans — is in fact the good shepherd for its people, feeding them with a variety of material and spiritual goods and guarding them from all harm. If we do not understand that the modern state has become a powerful competitor of the church of Christ, we lack a realistic understanding of our present cultural environment.

8. When the Light of Scripture is Lost

When the words of the Holy Scriptures are stretched so far that the modern models of leadership can be read into them, the God-given light of the Scriptures is lost. These models obscure the precise meaning of the biblical text because some significant insights are not taken to consideration. This is — at least partly — the result of the replacement of the formal equivalence of the classic translations of the Holy Scripture by the dynamic equivalence of many modern versions, which are supposedly better adapted and understood by contemporary readers.³¹

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Geschichte der Gouvernementalität*, Volume 1, edited by Michel Sennelart (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004) 194.

²⁶ Foucault, *Gouvernementalität*, 214–215.

²⁷ Foucault, *Gouvernementalität*, 269, 314.

²⁸ Peter Brown, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Europa* (München: Beck, 1999) 168–171.

²⁹ Larry Siedentop, *Die Erfindung des Individuums* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2015) 199.

³⁰ Foucault, *Gouvernementalität*, 331–319.

³¹ Stefan Felber, 'Das verführerische Versprechen der Verständlichkeit. Kritische Anfragen an moderne Bibelübersetzungen' at <https://www.google.co.uk/#safe=strict&q=StefanFelber%2C+Johannes.+Kommunikative+Bibel%C3%BCbersetzung.+Stuttgart>.

8.1 *Kybernēsis*:³² A Gift of the Holy Spirit and its Modern Reception

In modern thinking, the Greek word *kybernētikē* gave its name to the so-called ‘Cybernetics’, the art of governance, guiding and leading. Originally the word referred to the art of guiding a machine, a technical process, and eventually to the healing of a hurt human body. But soon this art was transferred from the sciences to the humanities, with different models of sociology claiming to provide the knowledge that enables humankind to guide societies through dangerous times to a secure harbour.³³

In Greek, *kybernētikē* originally describes the task of steering a ship. In pagan thinking it was popular to compare this task with the duty of guiding a human community through troubled times. But for the pagan mind-set it was clear that only the gods could fulfil this task!³⁴ Human life is complex and varied, the future remains largely unknown, situations change rapidly, and the forces involved cannot all be foreseen. Therefore no human being can claim to govern a city or a nation as a skipper guiding his ship through stormy waters.

In the New Testament Paul uses the related word *kubernhsij* to point out the spiritual gift of ‘leading’ (1 Cor 12:28). For Paul it is not one of the most important gifts. Most likely it involves the ability and skill of turning a meeting in a good direction. When the believers are together, it often happens that rivalries break out, boring speeches provoke loss of attention, discussions are focused on minor issues... but then someone makes a joke, or starts to sing, or gives an earnest admonition, leading the meeting to take a better course. Anybody can have this precious gift, but of course it is helpful if the leader of an assembly has received it. Let us remember, as the word says, it is a *gift* and *not an office*!

So when the modern day Masterminds claim the right and the duty of cybernetics, they assert that which the pagans reserved for the gods and which Paul describes as a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a gift which has

a good and helpful effect from time to time, whenever it is needed, and which is not attributed to single person in a specific office.

The transfer of the ‘cybernetics’ approach and methodology from the area of technology to anthropology and theology leads to the loss of a fundamental biblical emphasis: the creation narratives tell that human beings are called (and equipped) ‘to subdue the earth’ and ‘to exercise dominion’ over both the animal and the vegetable world (Gen 1:28; 2:15), but humans are neither summoned, nor equipped with the necessary knowledge, to rule over each other. It is the privilege of God to take humanity in his hands and to govern their hearts.

8.2 Conservative and Modern Dynamic Claims

Scholars who argue that the church is to give special honour to specific persons usually refer to two Bible passages. Chrysostom quotes 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13:³⁵ ‘But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work’. Both Thomas Aquinas³⁶ and Huldrych Zwingli³⁷ mention 1 Timothy 5:17: ‘Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine’. These two texts are obviously parallel to 1 Corinthians 16:15–16.

In these verses the congregations are asked to show respect and even love to a special circle of men. In 1 Timothy their title is ‘*presbyteroi*’, elders but in 1 Thessalonians they are not given a title. Both passages give two reasons why these persons should be honoured: they work hard, preach and teach; and they ‘are over you’, they rule. Such are the reasons that commend authority and respect even until the present time. The first is labour, work, performance, output, service, functionality. These men are honoured because they are useful and produce something good. This resembles

³² Meaning ‘governance’, ‘all that is pertinent to *kybernaō*’, ‘to steer, navigate or govern’, hence *kybernēsis* can mean ‘government’ while *kybernētēs* means governor or captain. Cf. note 33.

³³ This crossing of boundaries was part of the programme of cybernetics from the beginning. In 1960 Norbert Wiener stressed that cybernetics is the science of control and information, *no matter* whether living beings or machines are concerned; see Hans Joachim Flechtner, *Grundbegriffe der Kybernetik* (Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1969) 9.

³⁴ Hermann W. Beyer, ‘*kubernēsis*’ in *Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 1035–1036.

³⁵ Chrysostom, IV/8, 278.

³⁶ Aquinas, *Summa* II/II, quaestio 184,6, ad.1, 42 and quaestio 185,1, 61.

³⁷ Hauser, *Prophet und Bischof*, 88.

the modern way of honouring men: their engagement is profitable to many. The second is overseeing: they have special positions, they are ‚over you‘, or, as the Greek specifies, they stand in front, they have a prominent position (*proistamenous* in 1 Thessalonians; *proestōtes* in 1 Timothy). This is the more traditional reason for honouring men, and it was the pattern of the social order in the mediaeval and baroque eras: everyone held a position, providing him with authority, that was given by an established hierarchy.

The words of the apostle bring these two perspectives together. The congregation is to honour those who ‚stand in front‘ of them *and* to work at producing faith and love as they admonish, teach and preach. This double emphasis invites us not to be one-sided in our understanding of the social implications of this notion, but to take into consideration both aspects in the church. There are two different ways to uphold and argue in favour of a specific authority. On the one hand, we are to acknowledge the recognized historical church order. We are to honour those who have been called to occupy a special position within a congregation.

But this conservative approach is not the whole story. When it becomes too dominant, church life is stifled and becomes self-centred. On the other hand therefore, we are to acknowledge the significance of work, service and outreach. But this aspect also needs be balanced. When this aspect is unilaterally emphasized, church life becomes restless and loses its inner strength and patience. Ratschow points out that no-one can achieve anything unless he understands that being precedes doing.³⁸ In the church we should acknowledge that the traditional formulation of being and status has just as much right to be upheld than the modern way of thinking with its emphasis on action, performance and impact. In fact — the English translations tend to blur this point — those who deserve honour are called ‚standing‘ (*pro-istamenous*). They are in front, leading the community, promoting a movement and inspiring transformation.

Human concepts of authority and leadership are systematically questioned by the Bible. Again and again the people of God do not get into trouble because they

are weak, stay in the same place, show little creativity, or lack the energy to move forward. They rather get into trouble because of their unfaithfulness as they abandon God for other gods, and develop their own religious ideas and activities that overwhelm the weak and the poor. The Bible continually invites us to stand up and hold on to what God has given us, to keep and preserve his gifts and to trust in Christ. His grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9)! Isaiah and Jeremiah do not blame Judah for its lack of motivation to move forward and work. They warn the people because of their unfaithful behaviour: the rich betray the poor, the sophisticated elite calls ‚evil good, and good evil‘ (Is 5:21), and political diplomacy has no regard for God’s covenant with his people. Judah is compared to ‚a restless camel running here and there a wild ass ... in her heat sniffing the wind‘ (Jer 2:23–24). In opposition to these autonomous human activities Christ, in his farewell speech to his disciples, pronounces the *cantus firmus* ‚abide in me‘ (John 15:5–11). In the Garden of Eden the loss of paradise was not due to conservative behaviour or attempts to preserve the heritage and to warn against temptation, but to a toxic fruit, the progressive desire to gain a new insights and potentials (Gen 3:5–7). What is worthy of honour is not a leadership guiding the church to new unknown places, but the abiding strength to hold fast to the precious divine deposit. In other words, Holy Scripture prevents us from walking in the dark and offers us its light so we can see the reality that surrounds us more clearly than the children of our changing times.

9. Conclusion

I want to emphasize that in the church people are diversely and actively involved in the Lord’s work. There are elders, stewards, pastors, preachers, teachers, as well as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But there are no ‚leaders‘ in the modern sense of the concept. When we talk of ‚leadership‘ in the church, it is because we have ‚conformed to this world‘ (Rom 12:2) and are following the big myth of modern times: the self-salvation of humankind or, even worse, the self-salvation of the church. This mind-set and behaviour represents a strong temptation. Christ alone feeds and leads his flock.

³⁸ *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Volume 2, 608.

The Reformation in Hungary and its relevance for today

Prof. Dr. Ferenc Szűcs



An orthodox minority remained even after the schism (1054) and we can see this double origin of Hungarian Christianity in the religious vocabulary where terminology comes from both sides. According to the *Hartvik Legend*, the Hungarian kings could be called *apostolic kings* which implied their right to appoint and remove high clergy; they also had a veto regarding the elections of the popes.² As Hungary became part of Western Christianity, the borders of historic Hungary also became the eastern end of the 16th century Reformation. The Orthodox Church and theology had little sensitivity to *justification by faith alone*, the central subject of the Reformation.³ Western Christianity preserved more of the juristic terminology of the Roman Empire, while Eastern Orthodoxy emphasized the ‘sin – illness, grace – health’ paradigm.

In medieval Hungary we find almost all the European trends of the age, such as pre-reformation movements like the Hussites, which spread through students studying at Prague University. The earliest Bible translation from Latin into Hungarian was the work of two Hussite priests, Tamás and Bálint (Thomas and Valentine).⁴

1. Some preliminaries on the history of Hungary

The Western form of Christianity was adopted in Hungary at the turn of the 11th century, but the Hungarians had also come to know Eastern Christianity before.¹ In spite of the significant Byzantine mission, the church structure was developed on the basis of the rules of King Stephen (997–1038), who got the crown from the Roman pope and was crowned in 1000. The king was educated in the spirit of the *Cluny reforms* and he and other members of his dynasty were later canonized as saints. These roots are still decisive factors of our national identity today.

2. The early signs of the Lutheran Reformation

As Hungary was situated on the merchant route between the West and the East, Luther’s ideas came to Hungary as early as 1520. Queen Mary, the wife of the king Louis II, was won over to the Reformation and corresponded with Luther.⁵ Through her influence persons like Simon Grynaeus (1493–1541), Johannes Henckel (1481–1539) and Konrad Kordatus (1475–1546) were invited either to the Academy of Buda (Ofen) or to the church of the royal family.⁶ But the gospel also rapidly spread among the German settlers in Hungary through

¹ Berki Feriz, ‘Az ortodox kánonjog’ (‘The orthodox canon law’) in Rác Lajos (ed.), *Felekezeti egyházjog* (HVG ORAC, Budapest, 2001) 118.

² Dienes Dénes, *A keresztyénség Magyarországon 1526 előtt* (*Christianity in Hungary before 1526*) (SRKTA, Sárospatak, 2001) 14–18.

³ I cannot here discuss curiosities such as the story of Cyrill Lukaris, the ‘Reformed Patriarch’ of Constantinople, who was deeply influenced by Calvin’s teaching and who published a *Calvinist Catechism*. See Juhász István, *Hitvallás és türelem* (*Confession and Patience*) (Kolozsvár, 1996) 49–50.

⁴ E. Révész, J. S. Kovács and L. Ravasz (eds), *Hungarian Protestantism, Its Past, Present and Future* (Bethlen Gábor L.P.H. Budapest, 1927) 2.

⁵ S. Szabó József (szerk), *A protestantizmus Magyarországon* (*Protestantism in Hungary*) (Bethlen Gábor Szövetség, Budapest, 1928) 16.

⁶ Mihály Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn 1521–1978*, VI (Hermann Böhlau, Wien-Köln-Graz, 1977) 42–43.

merchants who brought pamphlets from Germany which explained the essence of Reformation at a popular level. In the cities there was no language barrier to get into contact directly with the German literature. The territories most affected were the cities in upper northern Hungary and the Saxons in Transylvania (now Rumania).

The signs of the resistance of the Roman Church and the Counter Reformation could already be seen in these early years. The Diet, held in Buda, passed an act against the Lutherans in 1523 and one of the earliest disciples of Luther, Matthias Dévai Bíró, was sentenced to prison and was called before the Vienna Inquisition. Surely, the sympathy of the royal family could hinder these severe actions.

3. New situation after 1526

The year 1526 is considered a dividing line both in the history of Hungary and in the spread of the Reformation. In August 1526, the Hungarian army was defeated by the Ottoman Turks on the battlefield of Mohács (southern Hungary) and a 150-year long invasion started in the central part of the country. King Louis II and others members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy died in the battle. Later the Hungarian state split into three parts: the Western part belonged to Royal Hungary, ruled by the House of Habsburgs; the middle part remained under Turkish rule; the Principality of Transylvania in the East experienced a certain autonomy although they paid heavy taxes to the Turks. Later the princes of Transylvania became the strongest defenders of the Protestant faith.⁷

In this context, the Reformation spread rapidly. The central power was too weak to respond, and in the occupied territories there was some tolerance towards the new faith, partly because of their distancing from the Habsburg kings, partly because their simple and purified church buildings were more acceptable for Muslims, so that the Protestants gained some sympathy from them. We must not overestimate this situation, however, because the people were severely oppressed and sometimes pastors were captured, so that a huge amount of ransom could be demanded, as in the case of István Szegedi Kis, one of the most famous preachers and theologians of this time.⁸

The first preachers of the gospel came mainly from the Franciscan order. They wandered the countryside, preaching the comforting gospel to the distressed people. Their message was simple: they drew a parallel between the situation of Hungary and Old Testament Israel. As in the Old Testament times, God was punishing his people for their idolatry and moral sins. They urged for repentance and conversion, insisting on the renewal of both church and society.

A special, rather unique method was used by Mihály Sztáray, who composed popular hymns and performed them accompanied by his own violin playing. He also wrote plays about Old Testament stories, showing the difference between true and false religion, which were performed by schoolboys. He himself founded 120 new congregations in southern Hungary.⁹

In addition to the preaching in Hungarian, the printing houses also helped the communication of the gospel. (In the 16th century there were thirty presses active in Hungary and about 500 books and pamphlets were issued, mostly written by Protestant authors.)¹⁰ The New Testament was translated by János Sylvester and published in 1541, the complete Bible translation made by Gáspár Károli was published in 1590. The translation had huge influence on the Hungarian literary language and culture, and the revised Károli translation is still used today by many Bible readers and pastors. The ideas of Reformation became very popular among the so-called 'border castle soldiers' who tried to repel the Ottoman expansion. They were convinced that they were also the defenders of Western Christianity. In a contemporary hymn, their position was compared to that of the young David who fought against Goliath. Thus the spiritual fight for the true faith and the war against the Turks became almost synonymous in the theology of the 16th century. According to certain sources, at the end of the 16th century almost 90% of the Hungarian population were Protestants, mostly Calvinists.

In spite of the difficult historic circumstances, the Reformation kept Hungary in the European spiritual blood circulation. Many scholars and students peregrinated to leading western Protestant universities, among which Wittenberg played a leading role. 'Melancthon favoured the founding of the Hungarian bourse, or

⁷ Bucsay, 46–48.

⁸ Bíró-Szilágyi (eds), *A Magyar Református Egyház története (The History of the Hungarian Reformed Church)* (Sárospatak, 1995) 40–41.

⁹ Bíró-Szilágyi, *Magyar Református*, 37.

¹⁰ Révész, Kováts and Ravasz, 15.

coetus, in Wittenberg by George Kokas and 16 students in 1555... Until it was closed in 1613, it was a purely Magyar (Hungarian) organization.¹¹ Later, after the dogmatic split between the Lutheran and Helvetic confessions, reformed students visited Heidelberg and the Dutch universities of Utrecht, Leiden and Franeker. (For Franeker we know the names of 1200 Hungarian students.)¹² The significance of these scholarly connections became enormous during the decades of the Counter Reformation. Famous colleges like Debrecen, Pápa, Sárospatak and Nagyenyed, and the lower school-system connected to them, received a great replacement in the form of returning scholars and students.

4. Spread of the Helvetic Reformation

By the end of the 16th century, Calvinism became the major denomination among the Protestants. This was not the result of direct personal contact with John Calvin, rather the influence of a close corresponding connection of Hungarian pastors and theologians with Heinrich Bullinger and the Swiss Reformation. The popularity of the Heidelberg Catechism can also be one of the reasons. The centre of the Helvetic line was in Debrecen (eastern Hungary) and its leader was Péter Mélius Juhász, who wrote the first Hungarian Reformed confession of faith (1559). In 1567 the first synod was held in Debrecen, which adopted *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), drawn up by Bullinger. But the Hungarian reformers tried to preserve their independence from any direct foreign influence. None of them slavishly copied any authorities; they usually referred directly to the Holy Scripture as final authority and we can discover only veiled references in their texts.¹³

Why did Calvin's theology spread so early in Hungary? This has been one of the great riddles, especially among Marxist historians, because they regarded Calvinism as the ideology of the bourgeoisie, whereas the Hungarian

society was fully feudal at that time. A possible answer is that the teaching of the *providential liberator*¹⁴ played a great role, because it could directly be applied to the leaders of the struggles for independence and freedom of religion. Prince Bocskay, e.g., was called the *Moses of the Hungarians*, and his statue stands in the *Reformation Wall* in Geneva.¹⁵

Calvin's theology was also useful in the anti-Trinitarian debates which began in Transylvania in 1566. They ended with a different result than the case of Servet in Geneva, because the Diet in Torda issued an edict of tolerance for all Protestant denominations including Unitarians.¹⁶ This edict was the first law of religious freedom in Europe.

The best explanation for the popularity of Calvin's theology is probably his teaching that human destiny and history are governed by God's sovereign will. This was very important for the people during the Ottoman occupation. The personal comfort expressed in the confession became existentially important and gave certainty: 'With body and soul, both in life and death, I am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ' and without the will of God 'not a hair can fall from my head'.¹⁷ These sentences were confessed in the reformed congregations. The 16th century confessions of faith played a greater role in the Hungarian Protestant churches than in most European sister churches. Until the middle of the 20th century, e.g., the Heidelberg Catechism was used as guideline for the continuous education of the Reformed congregations on Sunday afternoons. (Nowadays it is more difficult to have two Sunday worship services, so many congregations use the Book of Confessions in Bible study groups instead. Yet both at the Lutheran and the Reformed theological faculties, *Knowledge of Confessions* is an obligatory part of the curriculum.)

As for culture, Calvinism was based on the teaching of common grace. It changed the medieval parallelism of the two realms of nature and grace, saying that God's

¹¹ Rober Kolb, *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture 1550–1675* (Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2008) 476.

¹² Révész, Kováts and Ravasz, 35.

¹³ Révész, Kováts and Ravasz, 56.

¹⁴ *Institutes* IV.20.30.

¹⁵ Benda Kálmán, *A nemzeti hivatástudat nyomában (About the National Sense of Vocation)* (Mundus, Budapest, 2004) 54–55. Bocskay fought successfully for the freedom of Protestants and wrote the following message to the Emperor: 'In this the Almighty God has acted through me. Thy grace should look upon my present state as an act coming from the Almighty God's secret counsel.' Benda Kálmán, *A kálvinizmus és magyarságtudat kölcsönhatása történelmünkben (The interrelationship between Calvinism and national identity in our history)* *Confessio*, 1986. 2.7.

¹⁶ Bucsay, 136.

¹⁷ *Heidelberg Catechism* Q.A. 1.

providence preserves morality and culture even in the sinful world. The Holy Spirit works not only in the Church but also inspires arts and science. This was a kind of liberation of science and art but also a strengthening of the educational system.

5. Further developments and fights of Protestantism

The 17th and 18th century were the period of the heavy Counter Reformation. Its peak was from 1671 to 1681, which was called the *decade of mourning*.¹⁸ Many churches and schools were closed and all 700 Protestant preachers and teachers were summoned to appear before the court of Pozsony in 1674. Some 400 of them appeared (except from the occupied territories and the Transtibiscan district). Those who chose exile or resigned from the ministry would be free – only 33 responded. The others were sentenced to death or lifelong imprisonment. In 1675, 41 of them were deported as galley slaves. In 1676 the Dutch Admiral Michiel de Ruyter liberated 26 surviving pastors.¹⁹ Protestantism became a minority religion. Only the Edict of Tolerance of emperor Josef II (1781) brought an end to the oppression. It is understandable that Protestants were in the frontline of the anti-Habsburg rebellions; the fight for freedom and public acceptance of their religion went hand in hand with the fight for the independence of the country.

In the past centuries, all the universal European spiritual movements have appeared in Hungarian culture and in its church life. Besides Protestant orthodoxy and the spirit of the Enlightenment (rationalism and liberalism), we can mention renewal movements like the English Puritanism and the German Pietism along with the neo-Protestant free churches such as Baptists, Methodists, Adventists and Pentecostals in the nineteenth century.²⁰ They awakened the spirit of both inner and foreign missions in the main-line churches on the one hand, but provoked these older sisters to make use of political authorities against these young free churches on the other hand. The Lutheran and Reformed churches gained equal rights with the Roman Catholics in the 19th century, but they then started to behave like their Counter Reformation enemies had done previously.

6. Legacy and relevance of the Reformation today

The most important message of the Reformation can be summarized in the Latin sentence: *ecclesia reformata est semper reformanda* – the Reformed church should always be a church to be reformed. The 16th century Reformation was not an end but a beginning. *Communio viatorum* means being on the way, being pilgrims through history (Hebrews 11:13 *xenos* and *parepidemos*). The permanent temptation of the church is to replace God with history.

It was deification of history²¹ when the so-called *narrow way theology* and the *penance theology* tried to identify God's will with the communist regime in the Hungarian churches in the 1950s. This formally followed the 16th century Protestant theology which explained the Turkish occupation as God's punishment for our sins. But the application became one-sided because it referred only to the sins of the past regime without mentioning the present time. E.g., it omitted sympathy towards the many oppressed members of the church. The 'narrow way' was used for the full acceptance of the limitations and restrictions of church life.²² But the same temptation was the identification of the political change in 1989 with the spiritual renewal of the church. For some of church leaders the change was equal to the restoration of the past or a direct continuation of what was interrupted in 1948.

The main legacy of the Reformation is the conviction that the only source of orientation for the church is the Word of God given to us in the Bible and preached as the *viva vox Dei* – God's living word. It was not given once for all in the 16th century, but every generation has the task to 'prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Romans 12:2). This approval means a clear hermeneutic as it is clearly stated, e.g., in the second chapter of the Second Helvetic Confession. The theology of the Reformation is not a redaction or selection, but a concentration on the ONE as it is expressed in the *particulae exclusivae* 'solus- sola'. The heritage of Reformation teaches us to concentrate on the *one thing to do* (Phil 3:14) among our many tasks and problems.

¹⁸ Bucsay, 139–150.

¹⁹ Bíró-Szilágyi, 110–119.

²⁰ A. M. Kool, *God moves in a mysterious way* (Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, 1993) 27–29, 63–126.

²¹ The expression comes from Dietrich Rietschl, 'Gott als Kritiker der Geschichte', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 9.1 (1996) 155.

²² Bogárdi Szabó István, 'Egyházvezetés és teológia a Magyarországi Református Egyházban 1948 és 1989 között' ('Church leadership and theology in the Hungarian Reformed Church between 1948 and 1989') *Societas et Ecclesia* 3 (1995).

The Reformation in Scandinavia and its relevance for today

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Rev. Dr. Rune Imberg, Lutheran School of Theology, Gothenburg



Let us start with two questions. We will then try to find some answers which will assist us in understanding the Reformation in Scandinavia and its relevance for today:

- The Reformation process in Scandinavia started approximately in 1520. How does it come that it ended in Denmark (and Norway), in **1536** – but in Sweden not until **1593**?
- The Nordic countries are among the most prosperous in the world today, but also among the most secularized.¹ Is that *despite* their Lutheran history, or *because of it*?

Before we enter the theological issues, we need to start with some basic facts of geography and history.

Geographical perspectives

The Nordic area of Europe in the early 16th century (including parts of the Baltic area) consisted of three countries, comprising roughly 3 million square kilometres and all put together having less than 4 million inhabitants.

This area consisted of three kingdoms: *Denmark* and *Norway* were a united kingdom (incl. Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands), while *Sweden* (incl. modern Finland, parts of modern Russia and parts of the northern Baltic area) was a separate nation.

Since then a number of major *border changes* have taken place, involving all three countries. Some areas have become *independent nations* (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Iceland) or received a more *independent status* (Greenland, Faroe Islands).

Important historical facts

The Nordic Church Province was created by the Pope in 1103–1104 with an *Archbishop* residing in *Lund* (then located in Denmark, now Sweden). He had a superior position to the *Archbishops of Trondheim* / Norway (est. 1153) and Uppsala in Sweden (est. 1164).

Denmark and Norway was a *united kingdom* 1375–1814, sharing the same king / queen, and was ruled from Copenhagen.²

The *Union of Calmar* (consisting of the three countries) was created in 1397 by Queen Margareta of Denmark-Norway. Sweden belonged to the union on and off up to 1521, when the Swedish people rebelled and the union ceased to function.

From 1376 to today, *Denmark* has been ruled by 23 kings and 2 queens, all rulers except the 7 latest shared with Norway. In the union period, 1389–1521, *Sweden* had approx. 22 rulers / ruling groups, while there have been 22 kings and 2 ruling queens since 1521!³

¹ Cf. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSCContents.jsp> (read Aug. 12, 2016).

² The later union between Sweden and Norway, 1814–1905, had a totally different character, having one king but two parliaments and two separate governments.

³ Cf. *Nationalencyklopedin* (the Swedish national encyclopaedia), 4:399, 17:533.

The situation in the Nordic countries in the early 16th century – a period of crises⁴

- A very complicated *political situation* with the Calmar Union in a crisis.
- *Military conflicts* between Denmark-Norway and Sweden were common, often involving the (northern) German Hansa league, politically and especially financially.
- Denmark and Sweden had close *cultural* and *economic* connections with Germany.
- Europe: Emerging *national states* / changing *social structures* since the Black Death.
- The *Roman Catholic Church in Europe* met a number of challenges:
 - new *universities* / *printing presses* / *Renaissance culture*,
 - *lax Christianity* involving many lay Christians but also the clergy,
 - corrupt *papacy* (Avignon papacy, the Great Schism, Renaissance influence),
 - on top of that: a *confused episcopal leadership* in Northern Europe, especially after the bloodbath of Stockholm in 1520.

The Reformation process starts in Northern Europe

Due to the close connection between Scandinavia and Germany, the Reformation rapidly reached northern Europe. Cities like Copenhagen and Malmö (Denmark) and Stockholm (Sweden) were reached almost immediately, also Bergen in Norway.⁵

A majority of the Reformation leaders in Denmark and Sweden were influenced by the German development, especially by Luther and his co-workers, less by Zwingli, Calvin and others. Some even had a personal connection to Wittenberg and Luther.⁶

Three different theological positions were important in the 1520s, and to a large extent their success depended on the political development in Copenhagen / Stockholm. (It was not until the 1560s, with a new king, that the Reformed position became influential in Sweden.)

These three were Lutherans, Reform Catholics (Bible humanism) and (traditional) Roman Catholics.

The bloodbath of Stockholm 1520 – a turning point

One important reason why the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) lost control over the development in Northern Europe seems to have been the *Bloodbath of Stockholm* in 1520.

- King Christian II of Denmark *executed had more than 80 persons in Sweden*, mostly belonging to the nobility, on rather flimsy reasons ('heresy').
- That *two Swedish bishops* were among these 80, was a clear violation of canon law.
- Acting as an evil genius in this event, influencing the Danish king, was Gustav Trolle, the archbishop of Uppsala.
- One effect of the Swedish uprising was that the *Calmar Union* was dissolved for ever.
- The leader of the Swedish uprising, *Gustav Vasa*, was in 1521 elected ruler of Sweden; in 1523 he became king, ruling till his death in 1560 and succeeded by his sons.
- King *Christian II* was in 1523 deposed by his uncle, Duke Fredrik (King) *Fredrik I*. The coronation service of this *Danish* king was held by the *Swedish* archbishop Trolle!
- When Fredrik had died, his son *Christian (III)* managed to become king after a civil war (1534–1536). In 1536 he completed the Reformation process in Denmark and rapidly implemented it in Norway.

The development in Sweden

The Roman curia made a grave mistake: By not reacting on this bloodbath in Stockholm, it lost control over the development in Sweden, Denmark and, consequently, Norway.

When Gustav Vasa seized power in Sweden in 1521, the ecclesiastical situation was confused, giving him a chance to try to take political control over the Swedish Church Province.⁷ The moral indifference of the popes meant that the two most important church provinces

⁴ See Åke Andrén, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*.3 (1999) 18ff, 41.

⁵ P. G. Lindhardt, 'Reformationen i Norden i komparativ belysning', in: Carl-Gustaf Andrén (ed.), *Reformationen i Norden* (1973) 9–27; Åke Andrén, 27ff; Martin Schwartz Lausten, *A Church History of Denmark* (2002) 88ff, Carl Fr. Wislöff, *Norsk Kirkehistorie*, I, xxx.

⁶ Both of the Petri brothers (Sweden) had studied in Germany. Olaus took his master's degree in Wittenberg 1518, while his brother *Laurentius* studied in Wittenberg 1527–1530; see Åke Andrén, 28, 72.

⁷ Cf. Åke Andrén, 23f. See also a statement concerning similar problems in Denmark; Schwartz Lausten, 90: 'It was in this fashion that the leadership of the church in Rome contributed to the breakdown of the Roman Catholic church in Denmark many years before the victory of the Lutheran Reformation.'

in northern Europe, Lund and Uppsala, had a lack of leadership at a critical time.⁸

- Bishops *Vincent of Skara* and *Mattias of Strängnäs* in Sweden were beheaded in 1520.
- Christian II appointed *Didrik Slagheck* ('Battlehawk') and *Jens Andersen Belde-nack* (the 'Bald') as their successors, but they soon had to flee from Sweden.
- Archbishop *Gustav Trolle, Uppsala*, who was deeply involved in the bloodbath, fled from Sweden when his troops (!) were defeated by Gustav Vasa. He refused to resign from office and was not dismissed by the Pope until 1533.⁹
- Bishop *Arvid Kurk* of Åbo drowned when fleeing from the troops of Christian II.
- Bishop *Otto of Västerås* fled from Gustav Vasa and died in 1522.
- Out of seven bishops, only two remained in service, *Hans Brask* of Linköping and the sick and elderly *Ingemar of Växjö*.

The future of the Roman Catholic Church Province of Sweden rested, to a large extent, on one single bishop, Brask, who was no match for the new king.

The Swedish Reformers

From the very beginning, 1521, Gustav Vasa took the chance to influence the *appointments of bishops*. After a while all bishops were forbidden to have contacts with Rome. The break became final when Laurentius Petri became archbishop in 1531. For a short period there were *three* archbishops of Uppsala at the same time: Gustav Trolle who refused to resign and remained in Denmark, Johannes Magnus who was *electus* since 1523 but couldn't be consecrated until the Pope had dismissed Trolle (which happened in 1533) and Laurentius, who was nominated by the Swedish clergy, rapidly appointed by the king and then consecrated.

Of the three Reformation leaders in Sweden, only one had a strong formal position. *Laurentius Andrae*

(born in the 1470s, died 1552) was the first cleric to support the Lutheran reformation, but he was only archdeacon of Strängnäs. More important were the *Petri brothers*: first *Olaus* (1493–1552), for many years Deacon in Stockholm and later Private secretary to the King. In the late 1530s, Gustavus Vasa destroyed the ecclesiastical position of these two through a court case where they were condemned to death (though later pardoned). Olaus' younger brother, *Laurentius* (1499–1573), however, managed to survive as archbishop for 42 years, from 1531 up to his death.

From the 1540s King Gustav refused to appoint any new bishops. Increasingly more and more influenced by the German development, he decided only appoint to superintendents, who had a weaker ecclesiastical position than the bishops.¹⁰

The Lutheran reformation in Northern Europe – important elements

The *basic theological elements* in the Reformation process in Sweden and Denmark are, mainly, the same as in Germany. However, it is important to note that they are *not identical*, nor are they identical with the German development. In general, it seems that *Luther as a person* had stronger influence on the development in Denmark (e.g. when Christian III in 1536 sacked the sitting Danish bishops and appointed new ones, getting them consecrated by Bugenhagen, a close co-worker to Luther), while the development in Sweden was more *independently Lutheran* (with a stress on both words). Due to the influence of especially archbishop Laurentius Petri and his *Church Order of 1571*, the Church of Sweden got more of a High Church character (e.g. concerning the ministry, perhaps also the Holy Communion service) than Denmark-Norway, a trait remaining even today.

- In *matters of doctrine*, both Denmark-Norway and Sweden were committed to a mainstream Lutheran position, although different nuances can be found.¹¹

⁸ The Norwegian Archbishop, Olav Engelbrektsson, did what he could to suppress the reformation in Norway, but with very little success; Wislöff, I, xxx.

⁹ In 1523 Johannes Magnus was elected as Archbishop of Uppsala, with the consent of Gustav Vasa, but the Pope did not consent to his consecration until 1533; by this he could not return to Sweden. Archbishop Trolle died in Denmark in 1535 after participating in a battle where he was wounded. Åke Andrén, 70f, 77, 82.

¹⁰ Sven-Erik Brodd, 'Superintendenturen som ersättning för och komplement till biskopsämbetet i Svenska kyrkan 1539–1631', in Ingmar Brohed, *Reformationens konsolidering i de nordiska länderna 1540–1610* (1990), 198ff, and Brodd, 'Kyrkans ämbete under reformationstiden', in Andrén, 271ff.

¹¹ Note, e.g., the issue of private confession, Andrén, 30, Holy Communion Service, 128, 164.

- The *Bible translations* were very important from the very beginning (Danish: 1524/1550, Swedish 1526/1541, Finnish 1548/1642; in Norway the Danish translation was used).¹² In all main Nordic languages, perhaps except Norway, the old Bible translations have had a tremendous influence on the *linguistic* development.¹³
- The printed Nordic *Bible editions* closely followed the order of Bible books in Luther's German Bible, an order which was a novelty when compared with the structure used by Jewish / the Septuagint / Vulgate Bible editions. Even more importantly, they agreed with his distinction between canonical and apocryphal books in the Old Testament, going with the Jews and Jerome against the position of Augustine.¹⁴
- The *Lutheran liturgy* was rapidly introduced in Denmark and Sweden, a bit later in Norway. Thus the medieval Roman Latin liturgy was retained but modified according to Lutheran principles and a vernacular version was created already in the 1520s.
- Luther seldom gets credit for his enormous contribution to *church music* (lyrics and tunes).¹⁵ His hymns were a novelty in Germany in the 1520s and rapidly spread to northern Europe. Small booklets with hymns in the vernacular, often translations of Luther's own hymns, were soon printed in Denmark and Sweden.
- The *enforced clerical celibacy* had never really succeeded in Northern Europe, especially not in Iceland,¹⁶ and was discarded at an early stage. The Swedish reformer Olaus Petri, being a deacon, married in January 1525, i.e. several months before Luther himself. Laurentius Petri was archbishop when he entered into matrimony, his wife-to-be was in fact a close relative to the king.
- The reformation led to a new social phenomenon, *pastors' families*. They have had a tremendous social

and cultural importance from the reformation until today. (Just two Swedish examples: Carl von Linné and Ingmar Bergman.)

- Sweden also got a number of *bishops' dynasties* (approx. 20), which have been important up to recent times (the family of archbishop *Nathan Söderblom*). Three men who became the successors of archbishop *Laurentius Petri* (1574–1599) took different theological positions but had one thing in common – they were all married to his daughters! In the period 1687–1811 not less than 18 bishops belonged to the dynasty of archbishop Eric Benzeliu.¹⁷

Important documents

- The Augsburg confession, presented by Melanchthon to the Emperor in 1530, was almost immediately well-known and read in Northern Europe.
- The Danish *Church Ordinance* published with royal authorization in 1537/1539.
- Sweden: *The Church Order of Laurentius Petri*, 1571
 - It was basically written in the 1530s by Petri, and widely used but not authorized for many years. It was finally endorsed in 1571 by Johan III, and has a semi-official status even today.
- A few years later the king himself, Johan III, personally produced two documents influenced by his personal Reform Catholic position:
 - A new church order, *Nova Ordinantia* 1575 (repealing the Church Order of 1571), and a new liturgy, *The Red Book* 1577 (repealing all Lutheran liturgies).
- *The Diet of Uppsala decision 1593* (Lutheran), referring back to the German *Augsburg Confession* (Lutheran) and re-conforming the Church Order of 1571, meant that Sweden had finally become a Lutheran nation.

¹² *Nordisk Teologisk Uppslagsbok* (Lund/Copenhagen 1952) vol. I, col. 376–382.

¹³ The Norwegian language in written form, *bokmål*, has been heavily dependent on (written) Danish. But the first Norwegian Bible translation came in the 19th century! Before that, the Danish one was used.

¹⁴ (Beckwith, 1985?), Bokedal 2014, 339ff.

¹⁵ [Editor: But see the essay by Walter Hilbrands in *The Reformation*, edited by Pierre Berthoud and Pieter J. Lalleman (Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2017).]

¹⁶ Before the Reformation, even bishops could be married in Iceland; Carl Henrik Martling, *De nordiska nationalkyrkorna* (1997) 56.

¹⁷ Concerning episcopal dynasties, see Rune Imberg, 'Biskopssläkter i Svenska kyrkan', in Anders Jarlert (ed.): *Arkiv – fakultet – kyrka. Festskrift till Ingmar Brohed* (2004) 53–75.

A Lutheran reformation – in Denmark and Norway influenced by the kings, in Sweden finally successful, despite the kings

The Reformation period on Denmark is a bit confusing but rather short. It lasted some 15 years. The Reformation period in Norway is even shorter – in Sweden we often say, jokingly, that the Norwegians went to sleep one evening in October 1536 as Roman Catholics and rose the next morning as Lutherans. In Sweden, the Reformation process took more than 80 years!

The first king of the *Vasa* dynasty, Gustav Vasa (I), supported the Lutheran position, but tried to control the development, increasingly successful from 1538. He was more and more influenced by the development in Germany and tried to control the Reformation process in Sweden, using German ‘torpedoes’ to control the Swedes: *Conrad von Pyhy* as ‘chancellor’ (Olavus Petri, one of the Reformers, had previously had that position but been dismissed) and *Georg Norman* as ‘superintendent’, demoting the position of archbishop Laurentius Petri.

- The three sons of Gustav Vasa had different theological positions, and each tried to influence the developments. *Erik XIV* (king 1560, deposed 1568) and *Charles IX* (regent 1599, king 1604–1611) were both leaning towards a *Reformed position*. Erik was influenced by the situation in England, while Charles got more inspiration from Germany. Their brother, *John III* (king 1568–1592), had a Reform Catholic position, using Patristic theology against the Lutherans but also against traditional Roman Catholic practices. Many of his ideals and arguments have since resurfaced – in the 20th century!
- Sigismund, the Roman Catholic son of John III and ruling king of Poland, decided in 1593 to commit perjury in order to be recognized as king of Sweden.¹⁸ He publicly stated that he would respect the Lutheran identity of Sweden, while secretly trying to re-catholicise Sweden. He was deposed in 1599 after a brief civil war and succeeded by his uncle, Duke Charles (later Karl IX) – cf. the situation in Denmark in the 1520s!

- This means that Sweden got its first committed Lutheran king in 1611, when *Gustavus Adolfus II* ascended the throne (the son of Karl IX, cousin to Sigismund).

Consequently, we can see that the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (Augsburg 1555) was applied in Denmark and especially in Norway, but never fully in Sweden.¹⁹ Sweden started to get a Lutheran identity in the 1520s and the process came to an end in 1593, despite strong efforts by especially two kings, John III and his son Sigismund, to halt the development.

In fact, King Johan III had long and detailed discussions with the curia in Rome. If the Pope permitted three concessions to the Swedish king, he believed that the Church in Sweden could be reunited with the Roman Catholic Church. The three concessions were to be:

- Reading mass in the vernacular (Swedish) and reading the words of consecration aloud
- Holy Communion: Giving laymen the chalice and not only the bread
- Allowing the clergy to be married

The Pope gave a flat refusal to all three requests, which made the king say with resignation in his voice (as the tradition renders the story): ‘If everything is not given to me, I can do nothing.’²⁰

Even the king understood that he couldn’t break the Lutheran identity of the Swedish Church, and when dying in 1592 he understood that his reunion efforts had failed.

We have now got an answer to the first question, why the Reformation process was so short in Denmark (and Norway), and why it took so long time in Sweden.

Let us now concentrate on the second question, dealing with modern Scandinavia.

Weak elements of the Lutheran Reformation in Northern Europe

All theologians have, of course, ‘blind spots’ in their thinking. In the case of Luther and the Lutheran Reformation (but less so in the Radical Reformation,

¹⁸ Åke Andrén, 223ff, esp. 226.

¹⁹ When Queen Christina of Sweden was considering to become a Roman Catholic, she understood that she could never succeed in remaining as Queen. Consequently, she abdicated in 1654.

²⁰ Åke Andrén, 190.

among Anabaptists and others), one problem was the *Constantinian synthesis* (the Church-State relationship, going back to the Emperor Constantin the Great, died 337). Just as in Germany, the Lutheran reformers in Denmark and Sweden presupposed that the king had the right to influence the development. They hardly questioned it. They were, in fact, in most cases in favour of it.²¹

To a large extent, we can today recognize that the Lutheran national Churches lost their autonomy at the reformation, gradually becoming 'lazy state churches' (terminology by Rodney Stark).²²

- The Church leaders did not recognize the basic problems of the Constantinian synthesis
- For different reasons, the Nordic Churches have been rather defenceless against rationalist / liberal theology. One reason might be that the state universities have had a monopoly on the training of pastors.²³
- Appointment of bishops and higher clergy has been a prerogative of the Crown.
- The kings and, later, political authorities pushed their own agenda; bishops and pastors were 'punished' or promoted because of their stand.²⁴
- Revival movements, most of them with some kind of pietistic background, were often persecuted (but not always – cf. Denmark!), but have been very important for invigorating the national church and creating important independent organizations.

Let me give a rough model of (modern) Lutheran Churches. I like to divide them into three main groups, each of them with two or three subgroups. Their 'starting point' varies, but also many of the major influences which have been involved in shaping them:

- Europe – National Churches: *Enlightenment, Rationalism / Liberal theology*:
 - *The fragmented Germany*: Roman Catholic / Lutherans / Reformed – majority / minority (united).
 - *Majority Lutheran state churches*: Denmark-Norway, Sweden (Finland, Iceland).
 - *Minority churches*: Poland, Hungary, Rumania.

- N/S America, Australia – Immigrant churches: *Enlightenment, Rationalism / Liberal theology*:
 - USA, Canada.
 - South America (minority position).
- Africa, Asia – Mission churches: *Missionaries, esp. Pietists – modern Western culture*:
 - Africa – many of them big and rapidly expanding (Ethiopia, Tanzania, Namibia, Madagascar).
 - Asia – minority situation (suppressed by Islam, communism, totalitarian governments)".

Scandinavian development – today

The Lutheran Reformation was, initially, victorious in the 16th and 17th century. The countries became, to a very large extent, religiously homogenous, and the 'persecution' of non-Lutherans was mild when compared with other European nations (Spain, England, the Netherlands). How many Roman Catholics were, e.g., ever executed in Sweden or Denmark? Our history doesn't have anything resembling the *St. Bartholomew's day massacre* in France (1572), or personalities like the Duke of Alba in the Netherlands, or Mary Tudor of England.

Gradually all the Nordic countries became influenced by Lutheran Orthodoxy in the 17th century. But since then the changes have come rapidly and now all these countries can be described as post-Lutheran, a development with rather strange characteristics.²⁵

Dogmatically all Nordic countries are heavily secularized with a democratic / parliamentary structure. Officially all countries are more or less religiously 'neutral' in relation to the citizens, although some kind of state church structure remains.

Ethically, however, the Lutheran identity is much stronger, at least in certain areas – not when talking of sexuality and abortion, but very much when dealing with social / diaconal issues. The interest in having a 'strong' social service (among the 'strongest' in the world), social equality, stressing refugee issues, the eagerness to give aid to developing countries – these characteristics are found in most of the Nordic nations and most of the political parties.

²¹ Luther was *supported* by his princes while the Swedish Reformers had to *struggle against* all the kings, using whatever opportunity and space they could find. The Danish situation was more of a *middle one*.

²² Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity* (HarperOne 2012) 376–379.

²³ 'Liberal theology' can be defined in many ways. The theological method of F.C. Baur in Tübingen, e.g., was very influential in Germany and, hence, in Swedish universities. Cf. Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School* (1975).

²⁴ For Swedish examples, cf. Rune Imberg, *Biskops- och domprostutnämningar i Svenska Kyrkan 1866–1989* (1991) 40ff.

²⁵ For a rather personal perspective, see Rune Imberg, <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/ImbergLightShiningInDarkPlace.pdf>, read Aug 19, 2016.

One example is the international aid – given through SIDA / Norad / Danida / Finnida etc. – which to a large extent can be understood as a *secular, modern version of the mission work* which involved so many churches and mission organizations by AD 1900.²⁶ When the Boxing Rebellion took place in China, 20% of the missionaries killed were Swedish... Who would believe that today? Or that the Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia, rapidly becoming the largest Lutheran Church in the world, has its origin in a rather small Swedish revival organization?

I would therefore like to conclude by saying: Many ‘old’ Lutheran Churches, especially in Europe, are struggling with their identity and future, very much so when the end of the Constantinian synthesis makes them crumble.²⁷ Liberal academic theology has also had a very destructive influence. The ‘young’ Lutheran churches, especially in Africa, show the strength of the Lutheran theology and ethics when it is not chained to a (crumbling) national church, and less affected by Liberal theology.

Additional issues – episcopal succession and Lutheran identity

As we have seen concerning Denmark: In 1536, the king deposed all Roman Catholic bishops. New bishops were appointed by him and consecrated 1536 by Bugenhagen (Luther’s co-worker with a Danish-German background). The succession line was broken, not by mistake but as it seems: rather willingly.

In Sweden, the consecration line has never been broken. All bishops were consecrated with at least one of the consecrators himself being a consecrated bishop. Hence Sweden has got a succession line which seems to be unbroken despite all the ecclesiastical confusion in the 16th century. The increasing contacts with the Anglican Church in the late 19th century mean that since then the issue of *apostolic succession* has been on the table, both internally in Sweden and ecumenically, abroad.²⁸

Many of the ecumenical actions undertaken by the Church of Sweden, not least by archbishop Nathan

Söderblom, can be understood from this background.²⁹

It can also be noted, in several ways and for various reason, that the Church of Sweden historically but also today seems to be more *High Church* than the Churches of Denmark and Norway. The ‘conservative line’ in Sweden, going back to the 16th century, seems to have been stronger, retaining more of the traditions and structures from the medieval church than in the other two Churches. The Church of Sweden has also had more of an independent status towards the king and the state than in Denmark and Norway (at least up to the 1950s).³⁰

Some of the reasons might be historical, e.g. that the Swedish Reformers for decades had to struggle against the kings. That also means that when the *Church Order of 1571* was accepted by a Reform Catholic King, Johan III, many elements were retained which had been eliminated in Denmark because of the close connection between the king and Luther and his associates.

But there might even be other explanations. It is well known that Luther to a large extent supported the Danish Reformation.³¹ The Reformers in Sweden seem to have been more independent than the Danish ones, *inspired by Luther* but otherwise creating a Swedish version of the Lutheran Reformation, but also being rather eclectic – sometimes choosing to be that, in other cases forced to it by royal pressure.

It must also be noted that Sweden (and consequently Finland) recognized the full *Book of Concord* (1580), the main Lutheran confession book, consisting of ten documents (three from the early Church, seven from the Reformation period in Germany). This gives the book an official status in Sweden, together with the Diet of Uppsala’s decision (1593). In Denmark and Norway only two Lutheran documents within the Book of Concord are recognized, *Luther’s Small Catechism* (1529) and Melancthon’s *Augsburg Confession* (1530).

This means that officially, or at least nominally, the Churches of Sweden and Finland have a slightly different confessional status (connected with the emerging Orthodoxy) than the Churches of Denmark and Norway.

²⁶ For a very interesting (political) perspective by the Swedish journalist Chris Forsne, see <http://ledarsidorna.se/2016/08/ga-ut-och-gor-alla-folk-till-larjungar-2/>, read Aug. 19, 2016.

²⁷ However, it must also be noted that the only continent where Christianity managed to survive is Europe; Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity* (HarperOne 2014) 3. Had there been a ‘Christian Europe’ without Constantine the Great and had it managed to survive into our days without Charles the Great?

²⁸ See Bengt Stolt, *Svenska biskopsvigningar. Från reformationen till våra dagar* (1972); Carl-Henrik Lyttkens, *The growth of Swedish-Anglican intercommunion between 1833 and 1922* (1970).

²⁹ Cf. Tore Furberg, *Ett ekumeniskt tecken: svenska kyrkans biskopsämbete i mission och ekumenik under första hälften av 1900-talet* (2004).

³⁰ Cf. Imberg, *Biskops- och domprostutnämningar i Svenska Kyrkan 1866–1989*, 80ff.

³¹ Swartz Lausten, 116, 119.

The Reformation in the Czech Lands of Bohemia and Moravia

Rev. Dr. Pavel Černý, Evangelical Theological Seminary, Prague



After the collapse of Communism in 1989 we were flooded with visitors from the U.S.A. and Western Europe. Many were Christian missionaries who arrived offering aid to the remnant of Christians scattered throughout the Czech Republic. We were often asked about our church affiliation. We were bombarded with questions such as:

"Are you Lutherans?" „Not really."

"Are you Calvinist?" „Well, yes and no."

"Then who are you?" „We are brethren."

"Would that be Plymouth Brethren?" „No, it is the legacy of the Czech Reformation which makes us brethren."

There are four Protestant denominations in our country that have the word "Brethren" in their name. Even the Baptist Church in our country is called „The Brethren Unity of Baptists". The same is with the Presbyterians, Free Evangelical and Moravians.

The Reformation started in Bohemia, the land of Hus and Comenius (Komenský), more than one hundred years before it began in the other countries

of Europe. The symbol of these early beginnings of the Czech Reformation is the Bethlehem Chapel, which was founded circa 1391 in medieval Prague, then the seat of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV.

When the chapel was founded, its express purpose was to serve a Reformation by preaching God's word in the language of the people. The very origin of the idea of a people's sanctuary needs to be sought in the Christian revival movement whose spokesman was Milíč of Kroměříž (died 1374). He was convinced of the vital necessity for preaching the Word. He sought new and effective means and he founded a school for preachers and a social institution for fallen women, which was called in eschatological anticipation „New Jerusalem". Subsequently, he sought new and effective means and founded a school for laymen who desired to preach the Word of God.

His pupil and Master of Paris University, Matej Janov (died 1393), developed the spiritual movement with his scholarly biblical work. When Milíč's New Jerusalem was destroyed (srovnán se zemí), his followers joined in the endeavour to build a new temple of Bethlehem where there would be sufficient room for preaching.

The **Valdensian movement** was a long-term influence on missions through the public preaching of God's Word. By 1170 Peter Valdo had gathered a large number of followers who were referred to as the *Poor of Lyons*, the *Poor of Lombardy*.

Some persecuted Valdensian preachers came to the Czech Kingdom continuing their mission, some settled down in Bohemian region. Czech students coming back from their studies in Oxford brought along writings of the foremost English thinker, **John Wycliffe**. Wycliffe's writings influenced Jan Hus and other professors at the Prague University. There was contact and communication between the Lollards and the Hussites.

The **Bethlehem Chapel** rapidly became the centre for Reformation activity. Here the first Czech translation of the Bible was written. From 1402 on, Master Jan Hus (John Huss) worked in Prague, preaching in the Bethlehem Chapel in the Czech language.¹

¹ See LIGUS, Jan, „Master Jan Hus – Obedience or Resistance' in *European Journal of Theology* 24.1 (2015) 49–56.

Hus was a leading figure of the Reformation. The second edition of the first translation of the Czech Bible was written by him while he was at the Bethlehem Chapel from 1406 through 1413. He had supporters and followers at the Prague University (founded in 1348 by Charles IV) who struggled to reform the church.

In 1415 Jan Hus was burned at the stake in Constance. The 600th anniversary of this event was in 2015. His martyrdom – sanctioned by the medieval papal anathema and excommunication – was the signal for a stormy revolt against the existing clerical church.² The revolution made four central demands in 1419, expressing the endeavours which had been followed from the first foundation of Bethlehem Chapel. Prof. Amedeo Molnár observes:

The eschatological intention of the founders of the Bethlehem Chapel is clearly evident: The Word of God is not bound, they proclaimed. It must be spread freely in the language of the people and prepare the way for the realization of the divine promises. Here is the germ of a thought which I would describe as missionary. This conviction included that Christian people should renew their faith listening to the Word. The reform of the Church itself must be a mission that was to be realised not so much by a reducing and concentration movement of the eschatological remnant which the missionary Church of Christ crucified really is.³

It was a brave step – taken after several centuries – to return the chalice to all laymen: In 1414 four churches in Prague celebrated the Eucharist once again in the two kinds (*sub utraque specie*) of bread and wine.

The Four Prague Articles

1. The Word of God in the Kingdom of Bohemia shall be freely proclaimed and preached without impediment.
2. The sacrament of the body and blood of Christ shall in the two kinds – *sub utraque specie* (that is in bread and wine) – be freely administered to all the faithful according to the order and teachings of Christ.
3. All worldly rule is to be taken away from the priests, and the Church returned to its apostolic poverty and thus to its special mission of giving testimony to the Gospel.
4. All mortal sins, particularly those that are public, as well as loose living, are to be prosecuted and punished, whoever may be guilty, whether master or servant.

These four Prague Articles expressed the main endeavour of the Hussite movement. Fierce but victorious battles and wars were waged in the years 1420 to 1430 to defend and carry out this programme, against Crusaders who tried to drown the Reformation in blood. The Crusaders did not even succeed when later the most radical wing of the Hussites – the Taborites – were defeated through diplomatic trickery. The decisive programme and aim of the Reformation was revived again in the *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of the Brethren).

In place of the tough warriors appeared the “people without a sword”. *Unitas Fratrum* was the most noteworthy outcome of the endeavours of the Czech Reformation, as the glorious echo of the Hussite Revolution, although without its position of power. Seen from the standpoint of the history of dogma, the *Unitas Fratrum* is a radicalization in theology of the Taborite teaching, a radicalization which was presaged by the protest of the profound thinker from the south of Bohemia, **Peter Chelčický**, against the church’s worldliness.

From its very beginning the *Unitas Fratrum*, founded 1457, had all the distinguishing marks of a Reformation church, even though it did not yet express the soteriological content of the Holy Scripture as clearly as the Reformation of Luther and Calvin. The Unity of Brethren was concerned with a radicalization of the Utraquist church by returning to the original concepts of Hussitism. From its inception until it declined in the storms of the Thirty Years’ War, the *Unitas Fratrum* maintained its well-defined Confession of Faith but at the same time included a broad ecumenical spirit. The Unity welcomed the Reformation as co-fighter in other countries without relinquishing the *Unitas’* individual character. They maintained order and discipline in congregations which were led into the 16th century by the strong figure of **Lukáš of Prague** (1458–1528).

The religious conditions in Bohemia and Moravia were confused in the 16th century. The largest church, the Utraquist, took a position of compromise halfway between the Hussite and Roman Catholic theology and practices. The Unity of Brethren was outlawed; it tried to obtain equal legal rights on the basis of its Confession of Faith formulated in 1535. Luther’s and Zwingli’s

² SOUKUP, Pavel. *Jan Hus: Život a smrt kazatele*. Nakl. Lidové noviny. Praha, 2015, p. 129.

³ MOLNÁR, Amedeo. The Czech Reformation and Missions. In: *History’s Lessons for Tomorrow’s Mission*. Geneva, 1960, p. 129.

Reformations aroused sympathy in some circles and then later increasingly the Calvinist way. In 1575 the Unity of Brethren and the Utraquists who had been radicalized under the influence of the European Reformation, joined in the Bohemian Confession of Faith (*Confessio Bohemica*).

By the beginnings of the 17th century the Czech Protestants had achieved a certain liberty. But this hopeful development was forcibly disrupted by the Roman Catholic Church's seizure of power. After the fateful battle on the White Mountain in 1620 a ruthless and severe counter-Reformation and re-Catholization of the Czech began. The harshest oppression was unleashed on the Unity of Brethren, but at the same time the other Protestants were also hard pressed. The last bishop of the Unity of Brethren, the bishop and scholar **Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius, 1592–1670)**, went into exile with thousands of others. This was the most difficult period of Czech Protestantism, lasting a full 160 years and almost bringing complete destruction. Before the severe re-Catholization the population was 90% Protestants and 10% Roman-Catholics. After 150 years of executions, persecutions and exile it was the opposite – 90% Catholic and only 10% of Protestant.

Jan Hus and Martin Luther

Martin Luther went through certain transformation of his opinions with regards to Jan Hus and the Czech Reformation. He recalled his first impression:

When I was studying in Erfurt, I found in a library of the convent a book entitled *Sermons of Jan Hus*. I was seized with curiosity to know what doctrines this heretic had taught. Reading his writings filled me with incredible surprise. I could not comprehend why they should have burned so great man and one who explained Scripture with so much discernment and wisdom.⁴

The next big step in Luther's change would seem to be the Leipzig debate of July 1519. Luther was confronted by an extremely skilful adversary, Dr Johann Eck, who succeeded in drawing the admission from Luther that some of Hus' views which were condemned

by the Council of Constance were actually good and solidly Christian. Eck accused Luther that, "The eminent Doctor has just called my attention to the articles of Wycliffe and Jan Hus. He has also spoken of Boniface, who condemned them. I reply as before that I neither want to nor am in a position to defend that Bohemian schism." But Luther added almost immediately: "Secondly, it is also certain that many articles of Jan Hus and the Bohemians are plainly most Christian and evangelical."⁵ He said:

I am being misunderstood by the people. I assert that a council has sometimes erred and may sometimes err. Nor has a council authority to establish new articles of faith. A council cannot make divine right out of that which by nature is not divine right. Councils have contradicted each other, for the recent Lateran Council has reversed the claim of the councils of Constance and Basel that a council is above a pope. A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it. As for the pope's decretal on indulgences I say that neither the Church nor the pope can establish articles of faith. These must come from Scripture. For the sake of Scripture we should reject pope and councils.⁶

Eck immediately accused him: "But this is the Bohemian virus, to attach more weight to one's own interpretation of Scripture than to that of the popes and councils, the doctors and the universities. You do nothing but renew the errors of Wycliffe and Hus."⁷

Luther clarified his position in the Worms Debate of 1521. He argues that if there is union with the Hussites, they must not be "compelled to abandon taking the sacrament in both kinds (bread and wine) for that practice is neither unchristian nor heretical".⁸ Soon Luther was to become completely clear as to his close agreement with Hus. At about this time some Hussite followers sent him a copy of the book *The Church* by Hus. On the basis of this book Hus had been condemned by the Council in Constance. After reading that Luther said:

Not some but all the articles of John Hus were condemned by the Antichrist and his apostles in

⁴ Quoted in GILLET, E. H.: *The Life and Times of Master John Hus*. Boston, 1863, reprinted AMS Press, New York, 1978. (2 vol.), p. 81–82.

⁵ HILLERBRAND, Hans J. (ed.), *The Reformation. A Narrative History related by contemporary observers and participants*. Baker, Michigan, 1978, p. 67. Cf. BAINTON, (1950), p. 115–116.

⁶ BAINTON, Roland. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York/Nashville 1950, renewed 1977, p. 116–117.

⁷ BAINTON, Roland (1950). p. 117.

⁸ DILLENBERGER, John (ed.), *Martin Luther. Selections from his writings*. Anchor Books, New York, 1961, p. 266.

the synagogue of Satan. And to your face, most holy vicar of God, I say freely that all the condemned articles of Jan Hus were evangelical and Christian, and yours are downright impious and diabolical.⁹

From this position Luther was never swayed. In fact, his enthusiasm for Hus deepened and grew. He went on to write to Georg Spalatin of Wittenberg University (1520): “Shamelessly, I both taught and held the teaching of Hus. In short we were all Hussites without knowing it.”¹⁰ and “Behold the horrible misery which came upon us because we did not accept the Bohemian doctor as our leader.”¹¹ Luther used similar words writing to Melancthon (1530).

In 1537 Luther supplied a preface to some letters of Hus and took the opportunity not just to express doctrinal agreement but also voice the warmth of his affections. He did so powerfully:

If he, who in the agony of death, invoked Jesus, the Son of God, who suffered on our behalf, and gave himself up to the flames with such faith and constancy for Christ’s cause – if he did not show himself a brave and worthy martyr of Christ – than may scarcely anyone be saved.¹²

„Oh, that my name were worthy to be associated with such a man,” Luther exclaimed in one of his letters.¹³

The Theology of the Unity of Brethren (*Unitas Fratrum*)

The first members were peaceful followers of the Hussite movement. The first church independent of Rome was established in 1457. In 1467 by drawing lots they selected and ordained their first priests. By doing so they showed their spiritual understanding of the apostolic succession. The chalice shared by all participants during the Eucharist was for them a symbol of the priesthood of all believers.

The Brethren’s effort for independence was not merely a manifestation of a desire to preserve historically the social formation of the Unity. Rather, they were above all in an obedient faithfulness to the summons of the Gospel which the Brethren heard and could not avoid, and about which they did not choose

to keep quiet. In this faithfulness, **the Unity introduced into the theological struggles of the classical age of Reformation the legacy of the First Reformation.**¹⁴

The essential oneness of the Reformation was for the Brethren an article of faith but they did not close their eyes to the historical reality of its diversity. The late Prof. Amedeo Molnár, who taught church history at the Charles University of Prague and was one of the best experts on the Middle Ages, underlines that for simplicity we may talk of two Reformations.

By the First Reformation Molnár means the rather broad influence of efforts for renewal which either operated within the humanly organized church or withdrew from it from the twelfth through the end of the sixteenth century. The power of this movement lent its weight to renewal of the church leaders and members. The Reformed Church received its classical expressions and European influence partly from the Waldensians, partly from the Hussite revolutionary movement, and in an appreciable measure from the Czech Brethren.

If we compare this First Reformation, which in matters of form was still a Medieval Reformation, with the Second Reformation of the sixteenth century, even at first glance several of its distinctive features, if not its basic principles, are antithetical to the Second Reformation, though they may be an anticipation of it. Its principle of authority has its centre in the Gospel tradition, principally in the Sermon on the Mount and with a hopeful look to the final consummation of Christ’s Kingdom on earth. The conception of the Gospel as a rule of life critically intensifies a strict view of the validity of priestly sacramental acts. However, while impatiently looking for the end of time nevertheless makes the legality of the Gospel relative, it nourishes an inclination to its prophetic vision and a readiness to accept a revelation of the Holy Spirit directly, sometimes without regard for the witness of Scripture.

In contrast to this, the Second Reformation consistently recognized the entire message of the Holy Scripture as authority over the whole church. For this the church finds strong support in Scripture from the letters of Paul. Here the legalism of the Gospel retreated before its grace and the gift of Christian freedom. Hope in the

⁹ BAINTON, Roland. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. p. 128.

¹⁰ SCHAFF, David S. *John Huss*. Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1915, p. 304.

¹¹ BROADBENT, E. H. *The Pilgrim Church*. Pickering and Inglis, London, 1963, p. 132.

¹² Schaff (1915), p. 295.

¹³ Quoted in: HUS, John. *The Ecclesia. The Church*. (Translated with notes and introduction by David Schaff), Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut. 1954, p. XXXVI.

¹⁴ ŘÍČAN Rudolf and MOLNÁR, Amedeo. *Dějiny Jednoty bratrské*. Praha, Kalich, 1957, p. 409–442.

final victory of Christ narrowed into a contemplation of personal eternal life and lost its ethical and social import. On the other hand, it makes impossible, or at least restricts by the critical rule of Scripture, any uncontrolled growth of religious visionary fancy.

The difference between the two Reformation movements is thus not only one of time. It is above all a difference in their social repercussions. The First Reformation was “popular” in the widest sense. It united adherents who in great majority were from the lowest ranks of society. It was socially disturbing, at times revolutionary. The Second Reformation received its greatest acceptance in the circle of the burgeoning middle class at a time when the disintegration of feudalism was beginning and continuing. Socially it was conservative.

The rise of the Second Reformation falls at the beginning of the sixteenth century; the First Reformation keeps its company during this time. The two Reformations met and for a short time went hand in hand, then separated again. During the classical Reformation period (16th century) various groups of Baptists manifested themselves, with varying degrees of clarity, owing to the fact that the First Reformation began so long before. A direct line of witness certainly leads from the Waldensians and Taborites (Hussites) to the left-wing streams of the sixteenth century.

The theology of the Czech Brethren, rooted in the First Reformation, refused to separate itself from the Second Reformation. The Unity of Brethren presented itself as compatible with the Second Reformation. This was by no means, however, to be seen as ceasing to believe in or denying its own First Reformation. On the contrary, it acted thus because it gratefully recognized how this Second Reformation could biblically purify the Unity’s current confessional position. In the theology of the Brethren, both Reformations dialogue together and jointly desire to submit themselves to the truth, which is Christ. (It is very interesting to read correspondence between leaders of the Unity of Brethren and Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Martin Bucer and others.)

Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius), the last Bishop of the Unity of the Brethren,¹⁵ set to work on the improvement

of methods of human instruction and education not as an educator but as a theologian. Continuity in the Brethren’s line is not sufficient to explain fully Komenský’s stature. He lived in a time when Protestant Orthodoxy on all sides undertook a noteworthy attempt to defend Reformation heritage in dialogue with current thought. It did so for the most part in a conservative way.

In Komenský’s will for harmonious synthesis, he attempted to solve the questions which faced him by juxtaposition of God’s revelation in Scripture, reason and emotion. In the Unity of Brethren he saw the indirect continuation of the Waldensian Reformation and the direct continuation of the reformation of Hus. The Brethren had advanced beyond the Hussites in that they undertook their work of creating a church without the aid of a worldly power base and with great emphasis on an independent order of discipline. Komenský praises the Unity for exactly this emphasis.

Komenský was critical of the Second Reformation because on theological grounds **he was unable to accept the fragmentation of Protestantism**. His theology did not permit any period of church history to be made the standard for all time. In Komenský’s thought, **only the age to come in God and Christ could have the nature of a paradigm**. Komenský wanted human society to be the society of education where everything is done *sub specie educationis*.¹⁶ That is why there has been no church as a complete expression of Christ’s bride for others. He was looking ahead to see the picture of the redeemed Church in heaven.

The Brethren professed that while Scripture speaks first of all *in* the church, it also speaks *to* the church. The church, although it is necessarily the interpreter and communicator of the scriptural witness, is measured by Holy Scripture and subjected to its critical form. The church must dare to interpret Scripture in obedience to the apostolic interpretation, that is, it is to make use of the Old Testament in the light of the New.

The Judge of Cheb¹⁷

In the document Soudce Chebský (Judge of Cheb) of 1432, to which Rokycana adhered, the First Reformation

¹⁵ See also HABL, Jan, „Reformation and Education. Jan Amos Comenius’s ‚Becoming Truly Human‘ and his Reformation of Human Affairs“ in Pierre BERTHOUD and Pieter J. LALLEMAN (eds), *The Reformation. Its Roots and Legacy* (Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2017) pp. 19–32.

¹⁶ WERNISCH, Martin (ed.). *Unitas Fratrum 1457–2007: Jednota bratrská jako kulturní a duchovní fenomén*. Studie a texty ETF UK, Vol. 15, 2/2009, p. 106.

¹⁷ DAVID, Zdeněk V. *Finding the Middle Way: The Utraquists’ Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

specified its authoritative principle, and the Unity of Brethren retained its essential elements. Under the Cheb agreements between the agents of the Hussite and the Council of Basel, the authority of Scripture is understood in its Christological dimension as a witness concerning the contents of the Confessions and rules of life of the early church. This *ecclesia primitiva* has a normative significance for the church of all ages because it is temporally and materially uniquely near to its founder. The Basel Council (1431) wanted the Hussites to accept the authority of the Holy Spirit speaking through the representatives of the church but the Hussites said “No”. The highest authority in the Church must be the Holy Scripture.

The Distinction between the Essential, Ministrative and Incidental

The distinction of things essential to salvation from those which are ministrative to salvation and those which are merely appropriate may be called the formal principle of the Brethren’s theology. The essential things of Christianity are faith, love and hope; out of these come good works and a virtuous life. The discernment of the distinction between essential, ministrative and incidental things, and the understanding of the theological significance of their mutual relation, as well as their inability to be mixed together, was considered by the Brethren almost throughout the whole of their existence as a special manifestation of God’s grace which was granted to them. The delineation of these distinctions was for them a most precious principle and in its consequences, was also a most revolutionary one, even though it represented a remarkable point of departure towards a more conciliatory ecumenical outlook.¹⁸

The Brethren already formulated this principle clearly in their first generation as they took aim against the dogmatic and ceremonial innovations of late Catholicism. For example, in 1470 they said:

The basic matters of salvation are set forth by the apostles by word and deed in the Holy Spirit, and all believing Christians must make use of them, preserve them for the sake of their salvation, and in no way, alter them. They must make use of ministrative things so far as time and place permit

for confirmation of salvation, but in case this is impossible they can dispense with them without loss of salvation. Finally, incidental things may be amended according to contemporary convenience, and may be instituted and discontinued without diminution of saving truth.¹⁹

Ecumenical heritage

There is only one church (essential and ministrative), but there are many “unities”, for example the Roman Unity, the Lutheran Unity, the Czech Utraquist Unity and of course the Unity of Brethren. The word “church” is reserved just for the universal entity of Christ’s body. Komenský was ready to cooperate even with Jesuits (the leaders of the Counter-Reformation) if this would be important for sake of evangelism.

Sacraments

Brother Lukáš Pražský (Luke of Prague) defines a sacrament as a visible sign of an invisible grace and truth, founded in Christ and given by him as a gift. Never, however, is the sacrament itself identical with truth, with the *res* (matter) of the sacrament. Therefore, it is necessary in matters which concern the sacraments “to think things through soberly” (1493). The Brethren rejected any notion of an automatic operation of the sacraments (*per opus operatum; ex opere operato*). Nevertheless, for the Brethren a sacrament was never merely a symbol, and Lukáš wrote in this sense against Zwinglianism. A sacrament has its own particular sacramental value.²⁰

Also, baptism does not have a magical effect. The justification and new birth worked by God himself must precede baptism, and on a person’s part faith and confession of faith must precede it. The administration of baptism has a twofold intention. On the one hand, it seeks to bear witness to the righteousness which comes from faith and to the certainty of salvation; on the other hand, it incorporates the one baptized into the spiritual body of the church.

We still consider the legacy of the Reformation as very important and it is inspiring our churches in the present time. We thank God for both Reformations

¹⁸ ŘÍČAN Rudolf and MOLNÁR, Amedeo (1957), p. 424–425.

¹⁹ ŘÍČAN Rudolf and MOLNÁR, Amedeo (1957), p. 426.

²⁰ ŘÍČAN Rudolf and MOLNÁR, Amedeo (1957), p. 438–439.

which tried to apply what is biblical and cross-culturally acceptable. In the time of enormous decline of Christianity in Europe, some of our evangelical churches experience certain growth. We strive to develop more of our public theology for this age. Our evangelism must be incarnational and we learn how to develop our social ministry. As a Czech Reformation heritage, we keep up our ecumenical cooperation with other churches. Until now, most of our Protestant Churches in the Czech Republic preserve and use elements from our Reformation legacy.

I believe it can help our contemporary quest and struggle for the renewed and missional church in these days. It can inspire and stimulate the contemporary search for the unity of the church and deep cooperation ecumenically and internationally.

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(paper delivered at the Conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians, Wittenberg, Germany, August 2016)

European Journal of Theology Europäische Theologische Zeitschrift Journal Européen de Théologie

The October issue of our Journal (issue 26.2) begins with a long editorial by Dr Christoph Stenschke, which forms an excellent preparation for the FEET conference in Prague next year. For this editorial article alone the issue of EJT is worth obtaining! The conference will, among other things, address the issue of migration and the response of the Church. Chris Stenschke asks some very relevant and penetrating questions about it.

Three articles mention the human tendency to form an in-group and to demonise people outside that group. Christoph Stenschke's article on Acts hints at the presence of this mechanism in the earliest church; Johannes Reimer signals the same in many contemporary churches, not least in churches formed by Russian migrants to Germany; and Bård Norheim discusses this tendency in relation to youth ministry. Like the editorial, each of these articles should also be read in preparation for the FEET conference in August 2018 which will deal with the issue of 'Christian Identity and Mission in a divided Europe'.

Another – unsurprising – theme in the current issue is the Reformation. We are able to offer an article by the great Jacques Ellul which had never been published in English. Bård Norheim applies an element of Luther's theology to the topic of fear of terrorism and migrants.

Two articles deal with the Bible: David Allen studies Paul's use of Deuteronomy 32 in Philippians and Sergii Sannikov introduces the recently-published Slavic Bible Commentary to a wider audience. This last essay is particularly appropriate in our European journal, and so is the brief article on the so-called Salzburg Declaration about ethics. Both contributions are positive but not uncritical in tone.

Finally, the number of book reviews is larger than usual and here too some books discussed are specifically relevant for our journal.

The subscription to EJT is part of the membership of FEET; subscriptions can be ordered via <http://www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology/index.html>



INFORMATION AND INVITATION

Dear friends and co-workers,

Greetings from the city of Prague where our next FEET Biennial Theological Conference will take place in the Summer of 2018. Prague is a very beautiful spot in the centre of Europe. You can get here easily by airplane, train and car. Prague attracts not only tourists with its historical sites, but recently became one of the leading congress cities in Europe.

FEET would like to invite theologians, pastors, theology students and other interested people to reserve the dates for this conference in their diaries, **August 24–28, 2018**.

FEET Conference 2018 will be held at the Congress Hotel Olšanka on a theme which is important for all Christian Churches:

Christian Identity and Mission in a Divided Europe

This theological conference is interdenominational and sponsored by the Czech Fellowship of Evangelical Theologians (SET) and by the European Evangelical Alliance (EEA). From February 2018 you will be able to register for the Conference and pay at the special website of ESTEC – official partner of FEET Prague 2018: www.feetprague2018.b2bonline.estec.cz (website available from February 1, 2018).

You are warmly invited to the FEET Conference 2018 and you are encouraged to spend some extra nights before or after the conference in Prague (see the Conference website).

Pavel Černý, President of the Czech Fellowship of the European Theologians

<http://www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology/conference-2018-introduction>



NEW BOOK

The Reformation: Its Roots and Its Legacy

FEET would like to announce that our new book on Reformation and its legacy has been published in the anniversary year of the Reformation. You will find interesting and challenging chapters in it written by FEET members and other European theologians.

Book Details:

Berthoud, Pierre

Lalleman, Pieter J.

The Reformation: Its Roots and Its Legacy

Pickwick Publications

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