

Michael Welker

THE EUROPEAN REFORMATION: ADVOCACY OF EDUCATION AND LIBERATION

Over the last years 47 international Reformation scholars explored the profiles of 48 European Reformation cities and their Reformers in order to produce a richly illustrated book under the title: *Europa Reformata: European Reformation Cities and their Reformers*.¹

Many of the insights that were gained are, of course, familiar, at least to many educated Christians. But we also gained sharper and more illuminating views on crucial issues of the Reformation. The following chapter presents some of these insights.²

I. A Revolution in Education: The Importance of the Printing Press for the Reformation

One simply cannot overestimate the enormous cultural impact of what at the time was the still relatively new technology of

¹ Ed. Michael Welker, Michael Beintker and Albert de Lange, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2016; (German edition: *Europa Reformata: Europäische Reformationsstädte und ihre Reformatoren*, 2016, 2nd ed. 2017.)

² Many of the following insights are drawn from my introduction into this book.

moveable-type printing for the success of the Reformation, especially with regard to the production of pamphlets and books in the vernacular. Between 1518 and 1530, no fewer than 457 printings of Luther's writings – with an overall print run of a half million copies! – appeared in Augsburg alone.³ Publishers and printing shops were enormously successful in many, many cities: Basel, Emden, Hamburg, Herborn, Hermannstadt (Sibiu), Kronstadt, Leiden, Nuremberg, Speyer, Stockholm, Ulm, Urach, Vienna, Worms, and other locales.⁴

Pamphlets, often with gripping illustrations, shook people up. Printed sermons and tractates made it possible to disseminate the Reformation message directly among the people. Catechisms summarized the most important elements of faith and were disseminated far and wide – in part even globally. Translations of the Bible into the language of the people swiftly appeared in many countries. New congregational hymns and even entire hymnals were printed.

A great number of Reformers distinguished themselves through their extraordinary rhetorical and creative talents. Several, often

³ Cf. Andreas Link, Augsburg: Wolfgang Musculus, *Europa Reformata*, 35-46, 38.

⁴ Thomas Kaufmann, „Die Reformation – ein historischer Überblick“, in: Udo Di Fabio and Johannes Schilling (ed.s), *Die Weltwirkung der Reformation: Wie der Protestantismus unsere Welt verändert hat*, Beck München 2017, 13-66, 25-27. Thomas Maissen, *Geschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, Beck, München 2013, 22, points out that by 1500 there are already 250 places of printing in Europe.

supported by teams of translators, produced Bible translations that in their own turn determinatively influenced the development of local languages: Martin Luther in Germany, William Tyndale in England, Pierre-Robert Olivétan in France, Casiodoro de Reina in Spain, the Petri brothers in Sweden, Michael Agricola in Finland, Gáspár Károli in Hungary, and Primož Truber in Slovenia.

Johannes Bugenhagen's translation of the Bible into Low German provided the model for the Danish Bible. The list of such linguistically seminal accomplishments could easily go on.⁵

II. Improving the Institutionalized Education

The enthusiasm for the Reformation was borne largely by an educated middle class with a pronounced emancipatory disposition. Yet even before the Reformation, larger towns as centers of both news and communication were already providing the backdrop for educational movements – ca. forty percent of the population in Nuremberg, for example, could read.⁶ In some towns, circles of educated persons met who not only were attracted by the humanist ideals of Erasmus of Rotterdam, but were also open to the Reformation. As the Goettingen historian Bernd

⁵ Cf. Thomas Söding, *Leuchtfeuer der Reformation – Luthers Bibelübersetzung*, in: *Die Weltwirkung der Reformation*, 73-80, 79.

⁶ Berndt Hamm, *Nuremberg – Lazarus Spengler and Andreas Osiander*, *Europa Reformata*, 301-310, 302.

Moeller put it: "Without Humanism, no Reformation!" These circles, often with a broad network of correspondents, both disseminated and otherwise promoted Reformation doctrine. But it was not just in larger towns that the Reformation was able to gain a foothold. Devout rulers also joined and began supporting it in their own territories. Ultimately the Reformation spread to every class in the population.

As an educational movement, the Reformation put great value in founding schools and *Hohe Schulen* (schools of higher learning), and in renewing the educational system in the broader sense from the ground up. The impetus behind this extraordinary commitment was the will to promote universal access to the Bible as the word of God and, by educating all people – not just the clergy – to promote a sound community in which human freedom could flourish. Portraits of numerous towns vividly illustrate these developments. In Schwäbisch Hall, for example, Johannes Brenz taught in his own writings that children were to be esteemed and respected, and demanded the development of more empathetic pedagogical methods. Just as Luther himself had proposed in his publication "To the Councilors" (1524), Brenz founded German and Latin schools for both boys and girls of all classes.⁷ In 1526 in

⁷ Wolfgang Schöllkopf, Schwäbisch Hall – Johannes Brenz, *Europa Reformata*, 361-368, 366.

Nuremberg, similarly inspired by Melanchthon, a new type of school altogether was created, the *Gymnasium* (secondary school). And finally, in 1541 the Reformer Johannes Honterus founded the first humanist *Gymnasium* in southeastern Europe.⁸

In 1527 Philipp of Hesse, in Marburg, founded the first Protestant university. The *Hohe Schule* in Herborn was developed as an educational institution not only for theology, but also for philosophical and jurisprudential research and teaching.⁹ Dynamic young scholars and erudite teachers from other European countries accepted appointments at the various universities, contributing not inconsiderably to these institutions' ability to attract students from all over Europe and enhancing their interdisciplinary renown. Through these developments, the Reformation provided an enduring source of energy and inspiration for early modern universities in the fields of theology, philology, historiography, jurisprudence, and political science.

This intensified and enhanced educational climate together with the will to support and sustain it similarly contributed to a fortification of people's self-consciousness in the broader sense,

⁸ Andreas Müller, Kronstadt/Brasov – Johannes Honterus and Valentin Wagner, *Europa Reformata*, 217-226.

⁹ Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele, Marburg – Philipp of Hesse and Adam Kraft, Tobias Sarx, Herborn – Caspar Olevian, in: *Europa Reformata*, 255-264 and 199-208.

which at least over time promoted change with respect to freedom in the political sphere.

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

The new technical means of printing and disseminating ideas and the enthusiasm for education and freedom among many people alone, however, do not explain the vigor and the glory of the Reformation. There are spiritual and theological messages and insights that ignited the fire of the Spirit in Europe.

III. The Spiritual Basis of the Reformation: Trust in God and God's Revelation

The most famous and most beloved Hymn of the Reformation, created by Martin Luther, follows Psalm 46. One of more than 70 translations into English¹⁰ reads:

*A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.*

The Reformation message is characterized by profound trust in God – the reality of God, not just a God-thought or a God idea or a religious feeling. God and God's might allow for fearlessness in the face of human power. The alternatives the Reformation articulates are quite clear:

¹⁰ By Frederick H. Hedge, 1853.

- God's word before human words, if necessary even *against* human words!
- Biblical witnesses before human doctrines!
- God's truth before human certainties or opinions!
- Faith in redemption that cannot be attained through one's own actions, but rather solely through God, against trust in indulgences and one's own works.¹¹

IV. Trust in the Mighty and Merciful Presence of Jesus Christ and His Reign

The famous Reformation hymn continues:

*Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth, his name,*

¹¹ Cf. Berndt Hamm FN 6 and Christoph Strohm, Heidelberg – Petrus Dathenus and Zacharias Ursinus, Europa Reformata, 189-198,

*from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.*

The Reformation emphasizes that God has turned compassionately toward human beings, and that precisely this action on God's part is what is revealed in Jesus Christ and grasped in faith God, God's word, and God's truth draw near to human beings, seeking to comfort, uplift, and ennoble them.

- God reveals himself in the compassionate, suffering human being Jesus Christ, who was executed on the cross.
- Jesus Christ seizes his witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit and enables them to partake in his life and authority – even against the power of pope and emperor.¹²

V. Sharp Reactions Against the Disturbing of the Reformation

As was to be expected, especially where the Reformation did not enjoy the protection of a territorial ruler, various forms of opposition against the Reformation and its followers quickly emerged, including persecution and even public executions. The

¹² Cf. Michael Welker, *God the Revealed: Christology*, Eerdmans Grand Rapids 2013, 144-151 and 209-216.

Reformation movement proper was from the very outset also a movement of martyrs. Indeed, in some locales, especially in southern Europe (e.g., Seville, Valladolid, Venice), Protestants could sustain their faith only as "crypto-Protestants," that is, as underground Protestants, organizing themselves in secrets networks.

The Reformation's stirring theological insights and life-changing energy are today associated especially with the towns of **Wittenberg** (Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon), **Zurich** (Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger), and **Geneva** (John Calvin and Theodor Beza), and with the developments commencing **after 1517** (Luther posts or sends out his theses in Wittenberg).

And yet more than a century earlier than the Reformation in Germany, Switzerland, and other European countries, reform initiatives and the articulation of several key Reformation insights prompted the demand for corresponding reforms, especially in broader sphere of the universities at Oxford (esp. from John Wycliffe) and Prague (from Jan Hus), and indeed even earlier from Petrus Waldes from Lyon and the Waldenses.¹³

¹³ See Albert de Lange, Lyon – Waldes and Pierre Viret, Martin Ohst, Oxford – John Wycliffe and William Tyndale, Martin Wernisch, Prague – Jan Hus, in: *Europa Reformata*, 245-254, 321-330 and 331-340.

Such Reformation forerunners – many claim today that they should be seen much more in their own rights – were already emphasizing that God's grace alone constitutes the foundation of human salvation, and that the status of the Holy Scriptures was higher than any church doctrine. For just that reason, they argued, not only should the Bible be made accessible to *all* people, it should also be preached and its teachings communicated in the country's native language. Emphasis was on human maturity, on human beings having come of age in spiritual matters, and it was demanded that the Eucharist be distributed accordingly on the bread and wine to *all* congregation members. Even before later Reformation figures, several of these Reformers were publicly executed for having disseminated these notions which were (indeed) liberating, but considered heretical.

VI. Reformation and the Sharing of Power

Even prior to the Reformation, secular authorities were becoming increasingly interested in expanding their oversight and control of ecclesiastical spheres and concerns. Indeed, in some locales councils even received papal support or at least tolerance in this regard, the pope even granting the council in Bern, for example, the right to appoint ecclesiastical officeholders even before the

Reformation. In many locales, politicians used Reformation successes to expand the scope of their own power. In Augsburg, for example, where ninety percent of the citizens quickly became Protestant, the town council and laypersons took over the task of appointing ecclesiastical officeholders, adjudicating disputes in matters of faith, and ensuring that sermons adhered to scripture and were of a Protestant orientation.

Cautious maneuvering on the part of some town councils with respect to the uncertainty of their legal status in the empire (e.g., in Augsburg, Speyer, Worms, though also in certain Swiss towns [Zurich, Bern] and Latvia [Riga, Reval/Tallinn]) was in some instances able to promote peaceful and even biconfessional arrangements – situations in which groups and church communities of Protestants could coexist with those of members of the "old faith" – sometimes even for the long term. In other places, a hesitatingly *de facto* emergence of a division of power between church and political authorities (though also legal and scholarly bodies) was unfortunately hindered by monarchical actions. In Copenhagen and Stockholm, for example, the king exploited Reformation enthusiasm to rid himself of opponents from among the nobility and upper citizenry, or to have himself consecrated in a

quasi-religious fashion and then arrogate to himself the corresponding authority.

In Lyon, Huguenots under the influence of Pierre Viret tried, through the use of violence, to turn the town into a "second Geneva." Especially among some Roman Catholic authors, such developments fuel the view that the Reformation utterly disempowered the church and surrendered control to political authorities. What in fact emerged, however, was a gradual process of division of power (religion, politics, law, scholarship/education) and a commitment to an ecumenical search for truth that turned out to be quite compatible with a more globally receptive and open piety, on the one hand, and an enhanced focus on freedom and democracy in later developments, on the other.¹⁴

VII. Public Theology: The Import of Sermons and Disputations

The Reformation was a "reading and preaching movement".¹⁵ Even the worship service was now to serve spiritual, ethical, and political education. Questions of faith and ecclesiastical-political circumstances were to be stated and discussed freely and openly.

¹⁴ This is also emphasized by the sociologist Detlef Pollack, *Protestantismus und Moderne*, and the jurist Udo Di Fabio, *Die Dialektik der Neuzeit im Geist der Reformation*, in: *Die Weltwirkung der Reformation*, 81-118 and 146-169;

¹⁵ Cf. Berndt Hamm, FN 6., 304

Town councils in many locales embraced the Reformation message and accordingly promoted theologically and biblically informed "sermons according to God's word." Public reaction to these developments was strong and positive.

"Disputations" played an important role in spreading new Reformation ideas, in which regard Luther's famous Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 can serve as a kind of model. It was through this disputation that Luther, focusing intently and unswervingly on God's revelation in Jesus Christ, excited and won over numerous future Reformers. Other important disputations in the 1520s included those in Zurich, Breslau, Memmingen, Nuremberg, Hamburg, Stockholm, Bern, Flensburg and Ulm. "In all public or semi-public disputations during the 1520s, defenders of the old faith inevitably ended up having to withdraw in defeat" (Peter Blickle, on Memmingen).

VIII. Catechisms – Church Ordinances – Innovations in Ordinary Life

In many locales, adoption of the Reformation was accompanied by the emergence of church ordinances and catechisms designed to provide reliable orientation in both life and doctrine. Over time,

Luther's Small and Large Catechisms (1528/29) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), though certainly also Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), all became perennial spiritual bestsellers throughout the world. Yet even catechisms that today remain relatively unknown often exerted enormous influence. The most important of the three catechisms by Johannes Brenz from Schwäbisch Hall (1535) went through five hundred printings.

Reformers focused not merely on renewing church life and doctrine in the narrower sense, but also on improving the culture of social services and assistance, e.g., of care for the poor, services to the ill, and care of orphans. Reformers largely transferred care for the poor from ecclesiastical to secular oversight. In Hamburg and elsewhere, a fund was established to address the needs of the poor and ill, overseen by twelve citizen "deacons." This reorganization of church institutions, of school systems, and of institutions of social services, e.g., hospitals, was buoyed and sustained by a spirit of Christian fellowship. In Constance, Ambrosius Blarer drafted exemplary ordinances for reorganizing monastic life and implementing worship services that were commensurate with scripture.¹⁶ Whether through the reorganization of existing

¹⁶ Hermann Ehmer, Constance – Ambrosius, Margarete and Thomas Blarer, *Europa Reformata*, 107-116.

structures or the adoption of completely new forms, initiatives for concrete aid for the poor emerged in many locales, often as a reaction to acute crises, for example, in connection with the demise of the textile industry (Leiden, Memmingen) or after storm surges (Witmarsum).

IX. Female Reformers, and Young Theologians and Jurists in Leadership Roles

Engaged princesses and educated women from the upper classes of the citizenry made important contributions to the Reformation. The Queen of Navarre, Margarete of Angoulême, and her daughter, the Duchess of Albret in the principality of Béarn (Pau), Jeanne d'Albret, promoted "simultaneous churches," that is, churches that opened Roman Catholic church buildings to Protestant preachers. In contact with Reformers in Geneva, they assisted in reforming church institutions and the principality itself as well as in efforts to purify "Roman idol worship." In cosmopolitan Emden, Countess Anna of East Friesland appointed as senior spiritual administrator the Polish humanist and Reformation theologian Johannes a Lasco, charging him with reorganizing the entire church and its institutions in East Friesland. New synodical leadership committees were created, and in Emden itself leaders organized

religious colloquies with those who were still adherents of the "old faith" and with peaceable Anabaptists.

At the court of Ferrara, Renée de France promoted interest in Protestant ideas in a circle of ladies and gentlemen of the nobility. One of the most genteel families in Constance, the Blarer family, was captivated by the educational ideals of humanism and inspired by the Protestant spirit. The Blarer siblings, acquainted with both Melanchthon and Luther, endeavored not only to renew the church and school system, but also to improve care for the poor.

Margarete Blarer, whom no less a personage than Erasmus of Rotterdam publicly praised, began a correspondence with Martin Bucer and became personally engaged on behalf of impoverished women and orphans as well as in care for the sick.

In 1523 in Strasbourg, Katharina Zell not only became one of the first Protestant clergyman's wives as the wife of the preacher at the Strasbourg cathedral, but also a distinguished Reformation writer. She defended publicly the abolition of celibacy as well as – adducing as support the biblical testimony to the effects of the Holy Spirit – the right of women to speak and play a determinative role in spiritual matters. She became engaged for refugees of faith not only by providing practical assistance, but also through letters

of consolation and encouragement. She published a hymnal reflecting the spirituality of the Bohemian Brethren, and defended peaceable Anabaptists against public persecution.¹⁷

The spirit of the Reformation was, finally, also characterized by the considerable influence exerted by energetic young theologians and jurists¹⁸ who, often immediately after concluding their university studies, assumed key leadership roles in doctrinal matters, proclamation, and church administration and governance. Distinguished examples include, of course, Philipp Melanchthon and John Calvin, though also numerous other young Reformers, such as Márton Kálmáncsehi Sánta in Debrecen, Johannes Honterus and Valentin Wagner in Kronstadt, Johannes Brenz in Schwäbisch Hall, Michael Diller in Speyer, Michael Agricola in Turku, Hans Tausen in Viborg, and Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich.

X. European Internationality

¹⁷ Matthieu Arnold, Strasbourg – Martin Bucer and Katharina Zell, *Europa Reformata*, 399-408.

¹⁸ See John Witte, *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007 and 2010.

The small town of Wittenberg became the "center of the civilized world"¹⁹ from which a new religious culture radiated out in all directions. The only recently founded university (1502), with its renowned teachers Luther and Melanchthon, attracted more than forty-seven hundred students from all over Europe between 1535 and 1545, making it the most populous university in the empire. Distinguished artists as well, however, especially from the school of Lucas Cranach, similarly extended the Reformation's aura far beyond merely Germany. Other institutions of higher learning where Reformation doctrine was represented similarly attracted students and scholars from all over Europe. Heidelberg, Marburg, and Herborn, though also Cambridge were especially successful in this regard.

Alongside the attraction of theological, jurisprudential, and humanist educational opportunities, however, it was also the persecutions and resultant floods of refugees that contributed across borders to education and exchange and to the increasingly international interconnectedness of life. Towns such as Emden and Frankfurt am Main, by accepting refugees from other countries, thereby also enhanced their own economic and cosmopolitan aura. Students and teachers, though also persons serving the church who

¹⁹ Johannes Schilling, Wittenberg – Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon, *Europa Reformata*, 467-480, 467f.

because of issues of faith had to leave their country and flee, acquired cultural and linguistic skills that similarly enabled them to pass along the new ideas in the most varied contexts.

Cosmopolitan towns with a long local tradition and great power, such as the Republic of Venice or Edinburgh, though also locales characterized by multiple ethnic groups such as Kronstadt and Turku, were stimulated anew through their often contentious exposure to the Reformation spirit, which at once also subjected their previous cultivation of tradition and fixed cultural routines to constructive endurance tests.

XI. Thematic Conflicts with the Roman Church

Not surprisingly, copious thematic issues generated conflicts between the Reformation and the Roman Church. Although many people today view the Reformation as having been initiated or set into motion by the sale of indulgences, that particular theme was but one among many. The central theme prompting this new religious embarkation was the Reformation's disagreements with regnant speculative and metaphysical theology and its concomitant understanding of a detached, abstract God. Luther's Heidelberg disputation of 1518 broke completely new ground from which to criticize a theology that did *not* grant absolutely normative status to

God's revelation in Jesus Christ and to a focused orientation toward the biblical witnesses. Whereas the new theology, oriented now toward Jesus Christ and on the Holy Scriptures, was intent on enabling all people to gain access to the sources of knowledge of God, speculative and metaphysical theology now seemed exposed as a theology exclusively of those who ruled and who sought even more power to rule. The new theology also severely called into question the powerful practice of confession as well as celibacy.

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

similarly arose when social problems and poor educational opportunities were attributed to the inadequate leadership of the church itself.

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

XII. Inner-Protestant Thematic Conflicts

As early as 1520, conflicts arose between Luther and the very man whom alongside Luther many between 1518 and 1522 considered one of the most important representatives of Wittenberg's Reformation theology, namely, Luther's own doctoral advisor, Andreas Rudolf Bodenstein, known as Karlstadt, from the Franconian town of Karlstadt. The initial issue concerned the inviolability of the biblical canon. Luther had questioned the canonical validity of the Letter of James, which in Luther's view advocated "righteousness through works." His colleague Karlstadt sensed here a threat to the authority of the Holy Scriptures. The two men also came into conflict concerning infant baptism and the appropriate age for baptism, though also concerning the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Karlstadt, influenced by mystical theology, emphasized more radically than Luther the maturity of the individual Christian and the authority of the congregation – even without the crucial prerequisite of education and training that was so important for Melanchthon and Luther. In his church community in Orlamünde, as "Brother Andreas" he developed a ministry that emphasized the importance of all laypersons for all ecclesial activities.²⁰

²⁰ Thomas Kaufmann, Orlamünde – Andreas Karlstadt, *Europa Reformata*, 311-320.

These and other themes generated inner-Protestant conflicts that, along with social conflicts and the accompanying tensions, aggravated and exacerbated the contentious arguments. The dispute concerning Christ's presence in the Eucharist turned into one of the central conflicts between Lutherans and Reformed. In Marburg in 1529, after a debate that had started in 1526 and been carried on in polemic pamphlets, Philipp of Hesse tried to find a "middle ground between Lutherans and Zwinglians," albeit without success. Although an important step along this path was achieved with the Wittenberg Concord of 1536 (Bucer and Melanchthon), it was not until the Leuenberg Concord of 1573 that inner-Protestant reconciliation in this matter was achieved.

Similarly contentious conflicts arose in connection with spiritualist movements, which referenced the "inner word of the Spirit" in emphasizing the theological authority of the individual Christian (e.g., Sebastian Franck and Caspar von Schwenckfeld in Ulm), and called into question central tenets of faith (e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity and of Christ's divine nature; cf. esp. the Anti-Trinitarians in Venice, Poland, and Transylvania; and Michael Servet in Geneva). Conflicts similarly arose in connection with the rejection of infant baptism and the performance of the rite of baptism of adults, which not infrequently was accompanied by a willingness

to undergo Anabaptism. These conflicts came to a head within the framework of emancipatory and ultimately violent protest movements that also directed their anger toward oppressive economic and existential abuses and situations of acute distress. Mühlhausen, Münster, Memmingen, and other locales became centers of such radicalization.

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

Radical Anabaptist movements – e.g., in Münster, where the tailor Jan van Leiden had himself declared king, thereafter abolishing, among other things, money and imposing the death penalty on

those who transgressed against the Ten Commandments, and even arrogating to himself the right to choose the name of every newborn child – such movements remained isolated incidents and yet were nonetheless able to damage the reputation of the Reformation. Indeed, even today, the unresolved relationship with Anabaptists, the Reformation's failure in connection with the peasants, though also the stubborn recurrence of Anti-Semitism all belong to the darker side of the Reformation.²¹ A movement that is markedly different from the violently inclined peasants and their equally violently inclined opponents is represented by the Mennonites, who even today continue to embody a rigorous and consistent theology and ethics of peace (cf. Menno Simons in Witmarsum).²²

Such Reformation highlights include countless other examples of non-violent resistance and efforts on behalf of peaceful ecumenical coexistence. Many locales, after dramatic show trials, public executions and burnings, and even posthumous condemnations with public burnings of coffins (Antwerp, Augsburg, Edinburgh, Ferrara, Oxford, among others), became temporary or even permanent places in which refugees of faith from many different countries could find a safe harbor. Protestants in Augsburg, after

²¹ Hubertus Lutterbach, Münster – Bernhard Rothmann, Jan Matthys and Jan van Leiden, *Europa Reformata*, 279-290.

²² Klaas-Dieter Voß, Witmarsum – Menno Simons, *Europa Reformata*, 457-466.

their churches were confiscated following their impressive initial successes, patiently and peacefully conducted their worship services for fourteen years out in the open air. Accounts from other locales similarly relate how Protestants marched "outside [the town gates] to their worship services" (thus as late as 1649 in an engraving of Hernals Castle near Vienna by Matthäus Merian). The turbulent emergence of the Reformation was followed in many countries by long periods of great hardship and suffering. For more than a century bloody wars took the lives and homelands of millions of people. But the Reformation was also followed by long periods of patience, reconciliation and growing cooperation – on the road to a peaceful ecumenical life enduringly inspired by the Reformation.