

Multiple Reformations?

Edited by
JAN STIEVERMANN
and RANDALL C. ZACHMAN

Colloquia historica et theologica

Mohr Siebeck

Colloquia historica et theologica

4



Multiple Reformations?

The Many Faces and Legacies of the Reformation

edited by

Jan Stievermann and Randall C. Zachman

Mohr Siebeck

Jan Stievermann, born 1975; 2005 Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Tübingen; since 2011 Professor for the History of Christianity in the U.S. at the Ruprechts-Karls-University Heidelberg.

Randall Zachman, born 1953; 1990 Ph.D. in Christian Theology from the University of Chicago Divinity School, 1991–2017 Emeritus Professor of Reformation Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

ISBN 978-3-16-155652-4 / eISBN 978-3-16-156566-3

DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-156566-3

ISSN 2195-7053 / eISSN 2569-3905 (Colloquia historica et theologica)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2018 Mohr Siebeck Tübingen. www.mohrsiebeck.com

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that permitted by copyright law) without the publisher's written permission. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations and storage and processing in electronic systems.

The book was typeset by epline in Böblingen, printed on non-aging paper by Gulde-Druck in Tübingen, and bound by Großbuchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

Acknowledgements

The essays in this collection grew from presentations given in the context of three colloquia that were part of the project “Multiple Reformations? The Heidelberg-Notre Dame Colloquies on the Legacies of the Reformation.” The project is more fully described in the Introduction. Here we would like to thank, first and foremost, our friend J. Matthew Ashley, then chair of the Department of Theology at Notre Dame, for his unflagging support of this undertaking. Paul. S. Peterson also gave very valuable help to the conceptualization and organization of the project on the Heidelberg side. We are also thankful to all the great scholars who made our gatherings at Rome, Heidelberg, and Notre Dame so congenial and fruitful.

Moreover, we would like to express our deeply felt gratitude to a number of institutions at both universities whose support made our meetings possible. At the University of Notre Dame, we received very generous funding from the Department of Theology, the Department of History, the Berner Lectures Series in Theology, the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, and The Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts at the College of Arts and Letters, and Notre Dame International. Special thanks are also due to the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts for subsidizing the publication of this volume. At Heidelberg University, the Field of Focus 3 (Cultural Dynamics in a Globalized Worlds) and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies made substantial contributions. Additional funding was received from the Erich und Maria Russell-Stiftung and the Evangelische Landeskirche in Baden.

For invaluable help in organizing the conference we are indebted to the able administrators at Rome, Heidelberg and Notre Dame, in particular Theodore J. Cachey, Jr., Michaela Neidig, and Lauri Roberts. The editors are also very grateful to Jennifer Adams-Massmann and James Strasburg for their fine translation work. James, together with David Reißmann, also helped with revising, proof-reading, and indexing the essays. Thank you both for doing such an excellent job!

The editors

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	V
----------------------------	---

Jan Stievermann and Randall C. Zachman

Introduction	IX
------------------------	----

The Many Faces of Reformation

Euan Cameron

Reconsidering Early-Reformation and Catholic-Reform Impulses.	3
---	---

Randall C. Zachman

The Birth of Protestantism? Or the Reemergence of the Catholic Church? How Its Participants Understood the Evangelical Reformation	17
---	----

Interpretations of Scripture in the Reformation Period

Manfred Oeming

The Importance of the Old Testament for the Reformer Martin Luther	33
--	----

Greta Grace Kroeker

Erasmus and Scripture	57
---------------------------------	----

Paul Silas Peterson

“The Text of the Bible is Stronger.” The Rebirth of Scriptural Authority in the Reformation and its Significance	65
---	----

The Reformation as an Interpretative Event

Emidio Campi

The Myth of the Reformation	95
---------------------------------------	----

C. Scott Dixon

The German Reformation as a Historiographical Construct. The Shaping of the Narrative from Melanchthon to Walch	105
--	-----

Ute Lotz-Heumann

- Confessionalization is Dead, Long Live the Reformation?
Reflections on Historiographical Paradigm Shifts on the Occasion
of the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation 127

The Aftermath of the Reformation Period

John W. O'Malley

- Catholic Pastoral Care. The Early Modern Period 141

Jan Stievertmann

- Early American Protestantism and the Confessionalization Paradigm.
A Critical Inquiry 161

Confessional Empires, Missions, and Nations

Simon Ditchfield

- The "Making" of Roman Catholicism as a "World Religion" 189

Patrick Griffin

- The Last War of Religion or the First War for Empire?
Reconsidering the Meaning of the Seven Years' War in America 205

Hartmut Lehmann

- Nationalism as Poison in the Veins of Western Christianity, c. 1800–c. 1950 229

Confessional Modernities, Enlightenment, and Secularization

John Betz

- J. G. Hamann as a Radical Reformer. Two Mites Toward a Post-Secular,
Ecumenical Theology 241

Volker Leppin

- Friedrich Gogarten's Theology of Secularization 269

Confessional Cultures: Legal and Diaconical Traditions

Christoph Strohm

- Confession and Law in Early Modern Europe 289

Johannes Eurich

- The Influence of Religious Traditions on Social Welfare Development.
Observations from the Perspective of Comparative Welfare State Research 313

Scripture and the Evangelical-Pietist Tradition

Ryan P. Hoselton

“Flesh and Blood Hath Not Revealed It.”

Reformation Exegetical Legacies in Pietism and Early Evangelicalism 325

Douglas A. Sweeney

The Still-Enchanted World of Jonathan Edwards’ Exegesis

and the Paradox of Modern Evangelical Supernaturalism 343

Scriptural Authority and Biblical Scholarship in the Nineteenth
and Twentieth Centuries*Friederike Nüssel*

The Value of the Bible. Martin Kähler’s Theology of Scripture

and its Ecumenical Impact 359

David Lincicum

Ferdinand Christian Baur, the New Testament, and the Principle

of Protestantism 375

*Matthias Konradt**Sola scriptura* and Historical-Critical Exegesis 387

List of Contributors 399

Index 401

Introduction

Jan Stievermann and Randall C. Zachman

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the University of Notre Dame and Heidelberg University joined together to explore the significance of the Reformation from an ecumenical point of view, by means of a series of colloquies on various aspects of the Reformation, and on the relationship of the Reformation to the development of modernity. These colloquies included members of the theology and history faculties of the two universities, along with many international scholars invited to enrich each of our conversations by means of their particular areas of expertise. The central purpose of the Heidelberg-Notre Dame colloquies was to develop an innovative joint research project on the same subject in order to initiate a long-term relationship for the future among the scholars involved and the institutions they represent, in particular the theology and history departments, as well as the American Studies programs at the two universities. Thus the colloquies themselves had an explicitly ecumenical goal at the heart of their creation.

The essays in this volume grew from select contributions presented at the colloquies in Rome, Heidelberg, and Notre Dame between 2016 and 2017, that addressed our historical understanding of the Reformation and its relationship to modernity. These colloquies not only bore the fruit of the scholarship represented in this volume, but they also represent a remarkable collaboration between Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars and universities.

The three colloquies represented in this volume engaged three major questions. a) How do we interpret and assess the Reformation as a historical and theological event, as a historiographic category, and as a cultural myth from the perspective of different disciplines and confessional traditions? b) What are the long-term global legacies of the Reformation as manifest in the development of distinct Christian world religions and competing confessional cultures, producing different types of modernities? Here a specific goal was to revisit the deeply-entrenched understanding that the Reformation was a decisive trigger of the process of modernization, and that Protestant societies and cultures were at the forefront of much that we associate with Western modernity – an understanding that has informed both triumphant glorifications and sharp indictments of Luther, Calvin, and their legacies. To compare different confessional modernities, we examined how Catholic and Prot-

estant theologies and lived religions interacted with the development of modern empires and nation-states, with the emergence of the natural, historical and biblical sciences, as well as with divergent legal cultures and traditions in education and social welfare. c) Finally, the colloquia addressed the challenging question regarding how the Reformation should be commemorated (or can be celebrated) from an ecumenical perspective today.

The initial colloquy in Rome looked at the status of the Protestant Reformation in contemporary academic discourse, and considered “the Reformation” as a historiographic and normative challenge. How do we access and assess the Protestant Reformation as a historical and theological event today? One important dimension of this question is: When and how did the developments initiated by Luther and others become the event that we now call the Reformation? Here a special focus was on how constructing “the Reformation” was bound up with subsequent processes of confessionalization and later confessional traditions of historiography. The Rome conference thus featured several presentations on the Reformation as a historiographical construct or as a religious and cultural “myth,” and addressed how we should work with the normative descriptions of these constructs today. The contributions of Emidio Campi on the myth of the Reformation, and Scott Dixon on the construction of the German Reformation explore these issues in more depth.

Another important question has to do with how much historical particularity, and how much theological unity, one should grant to the event now referred to as the Protestant Reformation? Several chapters in this volume discuss issues regarding the multiplicity of Protestant Reformations as well as continuities and discontinuities between these Protestant Reformations and previous or contemporary Catholic reform movements. How did religious reform movements in the late middle ages contribute to the rise of the Protestant Reformation? These questions about the intellectual and religious climate of early modern Europe were addressed again in light of the new academic research that has drawn attention to the spiritual traditions leading to the Reformation and the conciliar-institutional dynamics of reform. But where does this lead us? Was the Protestant Reformation simply another one of these reform movements or was it rather something essentially different? In the context of this colloquy, we also asked whether we should address “the Reformation” in the fuller paradigm of “multiple Reformations.” The contributions of Euan Cameron on early reform impulses, Randall Zachman on the adequacy of the term “Protestant” to describe the evangelical Reformations, and Ute Lotz-Heumann on historical paradigm shifts in Reformation research all address various aspects of this set of questions.

The ramifications of the simultaneity of the Reformation with the global expansion of European civilization was a further question posed by this first conference. This was addressed especially with a view to the issue of ecclesial mission. Here we were particularly concerned with the way in which this mission contributed to the development of Catholicism and Protestantism into new and distinct “world re-

ligions.” In this framework, we touched upon a theme which was treated further at the second colloquy in Heidelberg, namely the question about the nature and long-term influence of the fierce competition in which these confessional identities were engaged. At the same time, the New World also became an important center of radical inner-Protestant reform movements that rejected European-derived confessional traditions and sought to restore the unity of “primitive” Christianity. How were these dynamics essential to the primary reforming impulses, and in what way were they new transformations of these traditions? Jan Stievermann approaches these issues from the perspective of developments in colonial America, whereas John O’Malley, S. J. does so by means of the development of different forms of pastoral care in the Roman Catholic context.

The central subject of the second colloquy held at Heidelberg University involved the complex interrelationships between the different confessional cultures that emerged in the wake of the Reformation, and the distinct forms of modernity which these cultures produced. Drawing on recent scholarship on confessionalization, modernization, and theories of multiple modernities, our guiding assumption was that there is not one form of modernity as the teleological apex of a historical genealogy that can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation. Instead we conceived of many competing intellectual and cultural and religious frameworks which drew upon and uniquely modified the processes of modernization.

This colloquy critically engaged with influential narratives that have either celebrated or blamed the Reformation, claiming that it was the basic impulse behind Western modernity with its perceived accomplishments or failures. This engagement can best be seen in the chapter contributed by Hartmut Lehmann on the poisonous effect of nationalism in the era from 1800–1950. At the same time, we pushed back in this colloquy against the tendency in some scholarship to overlook the important differences between these confessional modernities and sought instead to promote a comparative perspective on several key areas of modernization. Diverse Catholic and Protestant traditions, as embedded in different regional, social, and political contexts, were examined with regard to how they interacted with the development of modern empires, nation-states and their identities, with the emergence of the natural, historical and biblical sciences, as well as with divergent legal cultures and traditions in education and social welfare. In this way, we hoped to highlight parallel developments as well as crucial divergences. Special attention was given to the dynamic tension of confessionalization (understood as a process of creedal-formation, community-formation and ultimately identity-formation in contradistinction to other confessional creeds, communities and identities) as a productive force, which propelled modernization processes forward through competition.

One aspect of the productive force of confessionalization explored in the Heidelberg colloquy concerned the formation of Protestantism and Catholicism as modern world religions, and the related development of confessional empires, na-

tions, and missions. What differences as well as similarities can be observed in the building of Protestant and Catholic empires? Were certain Protestant traditions prone to a closer relationship with the modern nation-state and the ideologies of nationalism and colonialism, as is often assumed? How did the specific relationships with empires and nation-states influence the development of Catholic and Protestant churches as world religions especially with view to their spread across the globe? In what ways did they become bound up with ethnic or racial identity formations and in what ways did they produce resistance to these formations? The contributions of Simon Ditchfield on the making of Roman Catholicism as a world religion, and Patrick Griffin on the meaning of the Seven Years' War, address these questions from the global as well as American contexts.

Taking a comparative approach, two chapters engage with the question of where and how the confessional cultures of the post-Reformation period prepared for and pushed forward the critical streams of modern thought represented in the Enlightenment and in the rise of secularization. Where and how did they resist these streams leading to the early Enlightenment? John Betz in particular examines this question by means of his examination of the thought of J. G. Hamann. Volker Lepin analyzes secularism as a legitimate heritage of the Reformation, by means of a close examination of the thought of Friedrich Gogarten on secularization.

In recent decades the legal, educational, and diaconical dimensions of the Reformation and post-Reformation confessional cultures were newly discovered. Scholarship has drawn attention to specific traditions emerging from different confessional cultures. In addition to this, contemporary debates about the relationship between religion and law in the Western world have been revisited in light of the religious diversification and multiculturalism. This colloquy sought to expand this research by comparing the role of natural law traditions and academic legal studies in Protestant and Catholic societies. One of the questions here is to what degree the legal traditions in the post-Reformation context were liberating society from the grasp of religion, and to what degree they were a continuation of pre-modern traditions of Roman legal theory. The chapter by Christoph Strohm on confession and law in early modern Europe is especially germane here. Other presentations focused on convergences and divergences in Catholic and Protestant cultures since the early-modern period regarding diaconical approaches and the role of the welfare state, in particular the chapter by Johannes Eurich on the influence of religious traditions on the development of social welfare.

The third colloquy held at the University of Notre Dame addressed the issue of the authority and interpretation of Scripture in the Reformation and modern periods. We posed two questions in particular: a) To what extent can it still be maintained that the Protestant Reformation triggered a revolution in our understanding of the Bible, which, in turn, had a transformative influence on intellectual modernization? Here, a crucial issue to consider is the status of the Scriptures in theology, especially with a view to the debates with ecclesial authority structures. In what

regard did the Scriptures, as interpreted by the individual, acquire a new status of authority over against tradition and ecclesial authority? The chapters by Greta Kroeker on Erasmus, Paul Peterson on Karlstadt, and Manfred Oeming on Luther speak to these questions in particular. b) What differences as well as similarities can be observed in the subsequent history of biblical interpretation, as it played out in the different post-Reformation confessional cultures? Douglas Sweeney and Ryan Hoselton examine these questions in light of early evangelical and pietist exegesis whereas David Lincicum and Friederike Nüssel examine these questions in the development of Protestant exegesis in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with special attention to F. C. Baur and Martin Kähler. The impact of particular scientific traditions as well as the increasing number of historical sources was also addressed with a view to their effect on Biblical studies and theology. Matthias Konradt in particular explores the meaning of the Reformation criterion of *sola Scriptura* in light of the rise of the historical-critical interpretation of Scripture.

The final colloquy in Jerusalem, which is not represented in this volume, but which was the terminus of all four colloquies, gathered stock of the previous conferences and attempted to lay a new foundation for our academic and ecclesial reflection on the Reformation from an ecumenical perspective. Questions were addressed here such as, how can the Reformation be understood from a Catholic and a Protestant perspective today? What place should it take in the broader historical narrative of modernity and modernities? In what ways can a culture of remembrance and commemoration be encouraged which acknowledges the failures and violence of the Reformation period while also drawing upon the positive aspects from this period, as resources for the advancement of human flourishing?

These final questions point to the ultimate goal we are seeking to address in this volume and the larger project, which is to learn what it means to remember the Reformation of the sixteenth century in light of all the parties affected by it, and in light of all of the consequences that followed from it up to the present, and not just as an event which lies at the foundation of the Lutheran or Protestant traditions. Our hope is that by remembering the Reformation and its consequences in a truly comparative and ecumenical way, we will help to pave the way to an even more ecumenical future. This may not mean a future in which all divisions and conflicts of the past are overcome in a reunited church polity, but rather one in which our own identities as Christians in our particular traditions might be increasingly informed by the vision of Christian life and thought embodied by those who accompany us in other Christian traditions. For as the essays in this volume show, the divisions of Christendom after the Reformation were not only destructive – though they certainly were – but they were also highly productive of new ways of ministering in the church, or of thinking about law and justice, or of interpreting Scripture. It is our hope that the essays in this volume will lead to further productive efforts to envision and embody what it means to be a Christian in our own place and time, as heirs of the Reformation and the modernities it helped to create.

The Many Faces of the Reformation

Reconsidering Early-Reformation and Catholic-Reform Impulses

Euan Cameron

Introduction: “Pre-reform” in Historiography and History

A long-running literature, and some equally long-running controversies, have grown up around the idea of reforming impulses in the Latin Church in Europe before the Reformation. As a historian making my first steps in the history of the later Middle Ages and Reformation, I grew up on Augustin Renaudet’s *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d’Italie (1494–1517)*,¹ a work which celebrated its centenary in 2016. Renaudet’s vision encompassed the ascetic and monastic reforms as well as the intellectual experiments of the last decades of the fifteenth and the first decades of the sixteenth century. His description of the founding of the order of the “Minim” friars, and their influence in France, still stands as an object lesson in this kind of historiography.² An earlier generation of scholars was raised on the idea of “reformers before the Reformation” or “forerunners of the Reformation.” Such “forerunners” did not invalidate the historical importance or deny the creativity of the reformers of the sixteenth century: but they showed how the Reformation did not come out of nowhere.³

These historical trends derived, ultimately, from much older movements of confessionally motivated historical theology. The idea of “reformers before the Reformation” in the Protestant mindset reached back to the quest for forerunners in the ecclesiological polemics of the sixteenth century. Catholic critics of Luther in his own time (such as Johannes Eck in his *Enchiridion*) had begun this tradition

¹ Augustin Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d’Italie (1494–1517)* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1916; 2nd ed., Paris: Librairie d’Argences, 1953).

² Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanism* (1916 ed.), 171–73.

³ For some of the many different perspectives on this question see Carl Ullmann, *Reformers before the Reformation: Principally in Germany and the Netherlands*, trans. Robert Menzies, 2 vols., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1863–77); Pierre Janelle, *The Catholic Reformation* (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1949); Heiko A. Oberman, ed., *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought, illustrated by Key Documents*, with translations by Paul L. Nyhus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).

by claiming that he was simply resurrecting ancient and long-disproved heresies.⁴ Fairly soon, however, they had reversed their argument to ask instead “where was the church of the Reformation before Luther?” If Luther taught something unheard-of in the church for many centuries, and if he opposed beliefs and practices which had gone unchallenged in the church for so long, then how (or so the argument went) could he claim to speak for the “True Church?” To answer this criticism, antiquarian Lutheran scholars, above all the indefatigable manuscript-collector and forerunner-hunter Matthias Flacius Illyricus, discovered a whole range of “witnesses to the truth, who have cried out against the pope before our time.”⁵ On the whole these arguments sought *theological* antecedents, rather than individual people believed to have foretold the reform. Nevertheless, the story of Jan Hus’s prophecy, of the swan who would sing a century after the goose was burned, would resonate through Lutheran propaganda in the sixteenth century.⁶ Many of these forerunner-seekers conceived of the Reformation in apocalyptic terms: the decline of the medieval church was the work of Satan, whose ultimate conquest was foretold in Revelation.⁷ Not only the ultimate triumph of the Church, but its travails in the Middle Ages and its restoration in the Reformation, were foretold in prophecy and held in the mind and plan of God.⁸

Conversely, Roman Catholic scholars discovered “pre-reform” a few centuries later, with precisely the opposite aim in view. John Henry Newman’s *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, through its multiple editions accompanied and charted its author’s transition from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism.⁹ In the wake of this approach to Catholic history, other Catholic historians embraced the idea that the Church need not always have espoused precisely and fully from the very first all the doctrines and practices that it now held. The tradition could develop in a way that was authentic to itself. Catholic historians from the late nineteenth century discovered “pre-reform” as precisely this kind of self-discovery in

⁴ See references in Euan Cameron, “Medieval Heretics as Protestant Martyrs,” in *Martyrs and Martyrologies: Papers Read at the 1992 Summer Meeting and the 1993 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. D. Wood, Studies in Church History, vol. 30 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 185–207, at 187–89.

⁵ Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Catalogus testium veritatis: qui ante nostram aetatem reclamarunt papæ* (Basel: Joannes Oporinus, 1556).

⁶ See Phillip N. Haberkern, *Patron Saint and Prophet: Jan Hus in the Bohemian and German Reformations* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. 189, 212.

⁷ For different confessional readings see Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁸ For further details on these arguments see my articles, “Primitivism, Patristics and Polemic in Protestant Visions of Early Christianity,” in *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World*, ed. Katherine van Lieke, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27–51; and “The Bible and the Early Modern Sense of History,” in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: Volume III, From 1450 to 1750*, ed. Euan Cameron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 657–85.

⁹ See John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: J. Toovey, 1845).

the life of the Catholic tradition. Many Catholic reformers had addressed both the ethical and the doctrinal issues that troubled Martin Luther long before he came on the scene. The Catholic Church, the argument went, was already addressing its moral, theological and spiritual challenges before Martin Luther inaugurated the Protestant Reformation. Luther did not complete, but rather derailed and distracted from, that process of renewal. In this light, Luther was irrelevant to the grand narrative of Western Christianity.¹⁰

These rival arguments were of course both highly confessional and partisan. Both sides of the argument rested on what was until some thirty years ago a reasonably widely shared belief among Protestant, Catholic and uncommitted scholars: that the later medieval Church was in a poor state in terms of discipline, economics, governance, and spiritual life. In other words, “pre-reform” was a dire necessity in a Church beset with the Great Schism, the Hussite crisis, late scholasticism, the hypertrophic growth of the curial bureaucracy, and the Renaissance papacy. However, over the last forty years or so a rather different picture of the late medieval Church in the West has emerged. In this more modern view, the period from c. 1350 to c. 1500 should, first of all, be viewed on its own terms, rather than as an antithetical prelude to the Protestant Reformation, or an incomplete anticipation of sixteenth-century Catholic reform.¹¹ Secondly, the administrative and jurisdictional crises of the late medieval Church did not amount to the whole story. The same theologians who proposed radical conciliar solutions to the Great Schism of the West also wrote powerfully and pastorally about the spiritual needs and challenges of ordinary people.¹² Fifteenth-century Christians made enormous investments in beautifying worship through art and architecture. Religious orders diversified, as a result of the observance movement, and innovated. New shrines and devotions tapped enormous enthusiasm among the ordinary faithful, even if not all theologians responded positively to these new cults.¹³ Some accounts present the traditional faith of late medieval Europe in positively rosy terms.¹⁴

However, this argument, that all was really going very well with the late medieval Church, raises certain obvious difficulties. The most conspicuous problem is that

¹⁰ For a classic and very learned version of this argument, see Heinrich Denifle, *Luther et le luthéranisme: étude faite d'après les sources*, trans. J. Paquier, 4 vols. (Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1912–14), esp. vol. 3, ch. 4; see discussion in A. G. Dickens, *The German Nation and Martin Luther* (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), 91ff.

¹¹ See for example Francis Oakley, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1979); Berndt Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith in the Context of Late Medieval Theology and Piety*, ed. Robert J. Bast (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

¹² For the extensive pastoral literature, see e.g. Michael D. Bailey, *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies: the Boundaries of Superstition in Late Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

¹³ See especially Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

¹⁴ This positive view is associated above all with Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

many contemporaries did not share this view, or at least, claimed that they did not. Those same clergy and theologians who developed a sensitive pastoral theology in the first half of the fifteenth century also called for “reform” of the whole Church. If that proved impossible, as it almost certainly would, they called for reform of as many individual components of the Church as possible.¹⁵ It had become a cliché to lament the decadent state of the Catholic Church. The very passion that drove the spiritual and devotional innovations of the era also inspired laments about the *need* for reform. It is of course quite possible that calls for reform may derive from rising expectations and higher standards rather than lower performance.¹⁶ Moreover, the criteria may have changed. Since the age of the friars, expectations of real communication between clergy and laity had risen. Many key texts expressed a call for clergy both to instruct and to set good examples for their flock: performance of sacramental duties and vicarious holiness was insufficient.¹⁷ Seculars and regulars actively competed for the spiritual attention of the laity (especially those with money to give). In his colloquy *The Funeral*, Erasmus of Rotterdam described how around the bed of a dying man there gathered not only the parish priest, but several orders of monks and representatives of all four mendicant orders. One speaker asked sarcastically “so many vultures at one corpse?”¹⁸ The intended point was to satirize the rapacity of rival orders of clergy: the unintended effect was to testify to their competitive approach to pastoral care.

The Call for Reform: A Thematic Approach

Ultimately, one need not worry unduly over the unanswerable question of whether the pastoral ministry of the Church was better in 1500 than it had been in 1200, or worse. The evidence from many levels and branches of the Church suggests that, whether for the sake of improvement or recovery, many voices called for something like “reform” in the religious life of Western Europe. Moreover, by “reform” they all meant different things, even if one leaves out of account the radical transformation associated with the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers. “Reform” could mean

¹⁵ For this call for fragmentary and piecemeal reforms, see Johannes Nider’s *Formicarius*, edited as *De Visionibus ac revelationibus* (Helmstedt: 1692), bk 1, ch 7, pp. 96–99; and the echoes of Nider in Johannes Geiler von Kaisersberg, *Die Emeis* (Strasbourg, Johannes Grieninger, 1517), sermon 8, fos. 18–20.

¹⁶ See discussion in Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 51–53.

¹⁷ See for instance the late thirteenth century text known as *Ignorantia Sacerdotum*, inspired by the Franciscan archbishop of Canterbury, John Pecham. See discussion in Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 53–54.

¹⁸ Erasmus, *Colloquies*, translated and annotated by Craig R. Thompson, 2 vols., *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vols. 39–40 (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 763–95; quotation at 767.

the restoration of discipline to the religious life according to essentially traditional models, such as a meticulous return to the monastic rule of the founder. It could include a basically conservative, backward-looking desire to reanimate the religious life, but in terms of the spiritual movements specific to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, whether these were the *devotio moderna* or Christian humanism. (It will be remembered that neither of these movements just cited were remotely homogeneous.) Some of the more radical Christian Humanists envisaged reform as a re-orientation of the emphases of lived Christianity away from ceremony and dogma towards ethics and spirituality. That transformation could entail (but not always) fierce critiques of theology and the religious life as then practiced. At the opposite extreme, “reform” could be conceived in a strictly administrative mode. It could denote the effort to run a diocese with greater honesty, efficiency and consistency. It could mean tidying up the messy papal bureaucracy, or applying more stringent standards to the ordination of clergy by the episcopate. This list by no means exhausts the possibilities. Moreover, one cannot easily distinguish one type of “reformer” from another: several significant figures advocated for and participated in a variety of different kinds of reform, as this article will argue. Therefore, one needs to take a thematic approach, which distinguishes different strands in the concept of “reform” and even overflows beyond that concept. Accordingly, this paper will not focus primarily on people, or even on groups or salons of “reformers” whether in Meaux, Naples, Viterbo or elsewhere. It will draw out a series of themes and issues, and suggest how these played out and were developed in multiple different contexts.

Theme 1: The Return to Ascetic Discipline

There are numerous examples of people who in the years before 1520 enthusiastically embraced the call to a life of religious abstinence and self-discipline and, by doing so, acted as examples and provocations to others who were considering their own religious position. As mentioned earlier, the various modes of Franciscan reform produced a variety of new offshoots on the eve of the Reformation. The Observant Franciscans, formalized descendants of the medieval “Spirituals,” were separated from the remaining “Conventuals” as a distinct order in 1517. Giovanni Pietro Carafa, the future Paul IV, would draw from this division the lesson that the Conventual Franciscans were a dangerously undisciplined group and a threat to orthodoxy.¹⁹ The Capuchin Friars also grew apart from the main movement, distinguishing themselves by a special form of hood.²⁰ As noted earlier, the Minims

¹⁹ See Carafa’s 1532 memorandum as translated in Elisabeth G. Gleason, ed., *Reform Thought in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 58–59.

²⁰ Zaccaria Boverio, *Annali de’ Frati Minori Cappuccini*, 2 vols. (Venice: Giunti, 1643–5); Karl

(the “Most Minor Brethren”) set a particularly powerful example of ascetic self-discipline.²¹ Nor was this impulse confined to the Franciscans. The Venetian nobleman Gasparo Contarini received a powerful impulse to his own spiritual quest from the decision of his friends Paolo Giustiniani and Vincenzo Querini to enter a Camaldolese monastic community around 1510–11.²² Ultimately Contarini would seek his answers elsewhere; but there is no evidence that he felt anything but admiration for their choices. Monastic discipline could be focused on other goals than just self-mortification. The Cassinese Benedictines cultivated a distinctive theological agenda based on Eastern as well as Latin sources.²³ The Augustinians generated a range of scholarly orders devoted to their patron’s theological legacy, including the Lateran Canons in Italy and the Observant Eremites in Germany and elsewhere.²⁴

Theme 2: The Humanist Call for the Reinvigoration of the Secular Clergy

The most daunting challenge in the call for “reform” of the Church came from the secular clergy and the episcopate. To some extent, the observant movement was tailor-made for elitist communities whose members aimed to set extraordinarily high standards through maintaining collective and individual purity and discipline. Isolation – which at times meant even isolation from the contaminating effects of the unreformed brothers and sisters of the original order – allowed a relentless focus on high ideals. Such a strategy proved quite impossible for the seculars. By definition and by nature they were in the world. Ordinary priests faced economic challenges, the insistent rivalry of the regulars in pastoral care, and the temptations of a secular society which their education, such as it was, made hard to resist. Bishops were promoted for a whole host of reasons, political and dynastic as well as professional and administrative. Contemporaries recognized these challenges and tried to find ways to address them. Much of the surviving residue left by this effort takes the form of treatises of exhortation, dedicated to bishops and other clergy by their tutors, mentors, or opinion-formers in the Humanist movement. These treatises are

Benrath, *Bernardino Ochino, of Siena: a Contribution towards the History of the Reformation*, trans. Helen Zimmern (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1876), 11–15.

²¹ See further references in Cameron, *European Reformation*, 48.

²² Elisabeth G. Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome, and Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 11–24.

²³ Barry Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

²⁴ J. W. O'Malley, *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform: A Study of Renaissance Thought*, SMRT 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1968); for the theories of an “Augustinian school,” see e.g. Heiko A. Oberman and Frank A. James, III, eds., *Via Augustini: Augustine in the later Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation: Essays in Honor of Damasus Trapp*, SMRT 48 (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1991).

redolent of pious clichés. However, the particular clichés chosen by their authors can be instructive: and even works from relatively similar backgrounds were by no means all alike.

This section will examine and compare two such writings from the very eve of the Reformation debates, Josse Clichtove's *On the Life and Manners of Priests* (1519) and Gasparo Contarini's *On the Office of a Bishop* (1517).²⁵ Clichtove had been a pupil of Lefèvre d'Étaples, but took a conservative stance towards the Reformation and became a trenchant opponent of Luther in his later years. He dedicated *On the Life and Manners of Priests* to Louis Guilliard, bishop of Tournai, for whom he served as tutor. The starting point for Clichtove's oration was the dignity and grandeur of the role of a sacrificing priesthood. To make this argument, Clichtove combined authorities from pagan antiquity, Hebrew Scripture and Christian history without any apparent sense of their incongruity or incompatibility. In a manner reminiscent of Gregory VII, he recalled many instances in which kings and emperors had shown respect for priests.²⁶ For Clichtove, the dignity of the priesthood derived above all from the priest's authority and power to consecrate the Eucharist. Neither the angels nor even the Blessed Virgin had this privilege.²⁷ To perform this function the priest needed the gifts of knowledge, holiness of life, and humility.²⁸ Because of the dignity of the work, he was clear that it must not be undertaken unworthily.²⁹ There then followed a list of conventional but highly conservative virtues that the priest ought to cultivate, including humility, liberality, and abstemiousness.³⁰

However, Clichtove identified one virtue as above all necessary for the priest to cultivate. He laid a greatly extended stress on chastity and complete sexual continence. This topic occupied five chapters out of twenty-five in the work, whereas the other priestly virtues only merited one each.³¹ To justify a celibate priesthood out of the Old Testament required Clichtove to engage in some fairly specious exegesis of Hebrew Scripture. He insisted with copious canon law quotations that only a bishop could absolve a priest from the sin of incontinence. To deter priests from the company of women he quoted (rather inappropriately) some passages from the disillusioned amorous poet Ovid, as well as some of the more misogynistic writings of late antique Hebrew wisdom literature.³² From this text, it becomes clear that Clichtove, the dedicated Christian humanist, held an ideal of priesthood

²⁵ Josse Clichtove [Jodocus Clichtoveus], *De vita et moribus sacerdotum, opusculum: singularem eorum dignitatem ostendens, & quibus ornati esse debeant virtutibus: explanans* (Parisiis: Ex officina Simonis Colinaei, 1520).

²⁶ Clichtove, *De vita et moribus*, chapter III, fos. 8v–11v.

²⁷ Ibid., chapter V, fos. 14r–16r.

²⁸ Ibid., chapters IX–XI, fos. 23v–31r.

²⁹ Ibid., chapter XII, fos. 31r–34r.

³⁰ Ibid., chapters XV–XIX, fos. 40r–54v.

³¹ Ibid., chapters XX–XXIV, fos. 55r–75r.

³² Ibid., chapter XXIII, at fos. 66v, 67v.

that was not only entirely conventional, but was militantly conservative. He argued with a severity that went beyond the commonplaces of his age. Even before Martin Luther had made his frontal theological assault on the concept of Eucharistic sacrifice as a “good work” and against the imposition of obligatory priestly celibacy in 1520, Clichtove was already resolved to defend these theological and disciplinary principles to the utmost.³³

Gasparo Contarini’s *On the Office of a Good Person and a Bishop* presents a startling contrast to Clichtove’s work in many ways. Contarini was a devout and learned scholar with an already proven interest in spiritual matters.³⁴ In the vehemently anticlerical atmosphere of early sixteenth-century Venice, however, any family which had one of its members ordained priest could suffer political restrictions, which for an elite family like the Contarini would cause great inconvenience.³⁵ So Gasparo remained a layman until the latest possible moment that his burgeoning career in Roman curial circles allowed.³⁶ In 1517, Contarini published this work with a dedication to Pietro Lippomano, Bishop Elect of Bergamo. Contarini would have had every reason to expect that a well-educated and well-motivated bishop-elect would wish to elevate the standards of his office and his diocese. Italy already had examples of zealous reformer-bishops stretching back well into the fifteenth century.³⁷

The work displays its author’s enthusiasm for philosophy. In Contarini’s opinion, a bishop should guide the people in their growth towards the perfection for which their natures were intended.³⁸ Ironically, Contarini showed much more reserve towards aspects of humanistic education than Clichtove had done. He repeatedly warned against the effect of reading too much classical literature, especially in the amorous classical poets.³⁹ Contarini enumerated a range of episcopal virtues, which were modified versions of the classical virtues to be cultivated by all good people. The only habitual piece of prelatical misconduct that he expressed concern about was non-residence.⁴⁰

³³ Compare Luther’s critiques of the alleged sacrosanct nature of the priesthood, and of the obligation to celibacy, in *LW* 44, 127–31, 177–79, and *LW* 36, 101–02.

³⁴ Gasparo Contarini, *The Office of a Bishop (De officio viri boni et probi episcopi)*, introduced, translated, and edited by John Patrick Donnelly (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002). For the sources for his early theological struggles see Gleason, ed., *Reform Thought*, 24–31.

³⁵ William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 64–65.

³⁶ Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini*, 131–32.

³⁷ To name but two examples, the Carthusian prior of Bologna, Niccolò Albergati (1373–1443), elected bishop of the city in 1417, conducted a rigorous visitation after his election; similarly, the Dominican St Antonino Pierozzi (1389–1459), Archbishop of Florence from 1443, disciplined his clergy with some severity.

³⁸ Contarini, *Office of a Bishop*, 31–33.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 42–45, and again on 100–1, 108–11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

In the second book of the treatise Contarini outlined the typical life-style of a good bishop. He was robustly practical in his proposals: time should be allotted to regular participation in the Eucharist and to personal pastoral care, but also for conversation, music, and refreshment.⁴¹ The ideal bishop should be resident, diligent, prayerful, and a good conscientious administrator. Above all, a good bishop should not ordain priests carelessly: Contarini complained (as Carafa did later) of the promiscuous and over-eager acceptance of all kinds of people into holy orders.⁴² Again, in a manner redolent both of strict reformers such as Carafa and also of Luther, he objected to the use of canon law to create exemptions from the rules. To be ordained, priests (especially those serving in cities) should be well educated, in theology more than in humanist studies; country priests should have at least adequate education and set a good moral example.⁴³ Regarding the people of the diocese as a whole, the bishop would have to contend with the opposed vices of impiety (too little religion) and superstition (too much of the wrong kind). He would also have to ensure that bad examples were not perpetuated whether among religious orders or the churches as a whole.⁴⁴ Ironically, despite these admirable and in many respects attainable pieces of advice, Contarini found himself quite unable to live up to his own stated ideals when he was made bishop of Belluno, far north of Venice in the Dolomites, in 1536. By that stage his duties as a key diplomat in the papal court completely prevented him from residing in his see, which he visited only once.⁴⁵

Theme 3: The Humanist-Inspired Critique of Traditional Forms of Piety

Christian humanists on the eve of the Reformation called for all kinds of improvements and enhancements in the life of the Church. However, many of them also suggested, with some degree of shared conviction, that there were things going on in the Christian Church that could and should be done away with. In three broad areas Christian humanists typically opened up the life of the church to criticism, and called at the very least for a refocusing of emphasis, at most for significant changes in the style and priorities of Renaissance Catholicism. The competitive and often adversarial relationships between the various monastic orders, monks against friars, different kinds of mendicants against each other, observants against unreformed orders, all called forth criticism. Most famously Erasmus's *Folly* claimed that "nor is it so much their concern to be like Christ as to be unlike each

⁴¹ Ibid., 88–91.

⁴² Ibid., 96–99.

⁴³ Ibid., 100–03.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 104–09.

⁴⁵ Gleason, *Contarini*, 179–80.

other.”⁴⁶ Secondly, what was perceived, at least by some humanists, as an argumentative scholastic theology, which appeared to be (or could be claimed to be) divorced from the cultivation of piety, earned considerable and fairly widespread scorn. This attitude can be demonstrated even though many humanistic writers cultivated the use of traditional theological tools in their own work.⁴⁷ Thirdly, and with perhaps the widest consensus of all these three issues, humanistic writers echoed and developed the pre-existing late medieval critique of popular piety. This topic had already been explored extensively nearly a hundred years earlier, for example by Jean Gerson and the writers of the late medieval critique of superstition.⁴⁸ To take one obvious example, Renaissance scholars and writers challenged the practice of asking saints for material help with all kinds of daily needs. They speculated that the saints were being used in a way alarmingly similar to the way that pagan gods were appealed to in antiquity. The more classical lore that the humanists accumulated, the more the comparisons with pagan deities called for their attention.

The most famous exponent of this approach, obviously, was Erasmus, not only in the *Praise of Folly* but to a more restrained extent in the *Enchiridion* and in the *Colloquies*, where generations of school students imbibed humanistic ethical priorities along with instruction in conversational Latin. However, Erasmus’s approach gained notoriety after several of his major works were given additional publicity by the Luther affair from 1518 onwards. In that light, it is interesting to observe that Contarini, in his far from satirical *Office of a Bishop*, made very similar points. Contarini advised his ideal bishop to have the clergy instructed in theology, but “not that of a contentious and obstinate sort ... which puffs up the soul with a certain vanity and does more harm than good.”⁴⁹ He opposed the practice of bishops leaving preaching to the mendicants, and called for bishops to be preachers and catechists themselves. Most significantly, Contarini added an “appendix” to his work, fairly long in proportion to the overall modest size of the book, which warned against “superstitious” forms of religion. More bluntly even than Erasmus, Contarini observed that the common people created “gods” for fever, pestilence and other diseases; they entrusted cows, sheep and grain to their respective “gods.” Special prayers were supposed to cure everything from plague to headaches. Christians “exasperate the saints, even the statues of saints, with most of their prayers.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. Hoyt Hopewell Hudson, foreword by Anthony Grafton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 87.

⁴⁷ See e.g. Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, 77–85. The point recurs many times in Erasmus’s other works, notably in key essays in the *Adages*.

⁴⁸ See Bailey, *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies*.

⁴⁹ Contarini, *Office of a Bishop*, 100–01. This passage was deleted by censors in editions of the work published in Venice in 1579 and 1589.

⁵⁰ The Appendix is found on pp. 128–33; the passage quoted is on p. 129.

Theme 4: The Call for Institutional Re-focusing and Renewal

Early in the sixteenth century a broad and rather diverse consensus existed among all kinds of ecclesiastical writers that the Church needed to run its affairs with greater consistency and integrity. On this it seemed that the most hieratic, clericalist conservatives and the most open-minded of humanists could agree. In 1532 Giovanni Pietro Carafa compiled a memorandum on the state of the Church, written for a Franciscan Friar named Bonaventure, who was to deliver a report on the state of Venice to Pope Clement VII.⁵¹ The text reflects views which Carafa had been formulating over the previous decades. Many of its points would be fed into the *Consilium* to be presented by Clement's successor Paul III's select committee of cardinals in 1537.⁵² Like others (including Contarini) Carafa complained of those bishops who ordained large numbers of disreputable and ill-educated clergy, and called for far greater restraint. He blamed for this trend a number of members of religious orders who were given episcopal rank as suffragans, often holding sees *in partibus infidelium*. These impoverished bishops, appointed by absentees to perform the duties that the diocesans could or would not carry out, made up their incomes, Carafa claimed, by ordaining all kinds of people for money. "Thus the house of the Lord is filled with such dregs and filth that the quality of secular and now also regular priests of every order has made the entire population disgusted with the mass, other divine offices, and the authority and power of the church."⁵³ Carafa argued, with limited success, that he should be allowed to exercise more control over the process of selecting and ordaining clergy himself. Carafa also complained of the abuse of the system of dispensations, which allowed all kinds of clergy who had the pope's ear to abuse the system and accumulate incompatible benefices, or otherwise to break the rules in return for favours. Contarini (interestingly) had made a similar complaint years earlier in his *Office of a Bishop*, where he criticized "the contentious law that deals with the rights and legal quarrels of priests, [which] was clearly contrived by the flatterers of the clergy ... and allows that any deed may seem to be done legally."⁵⁴

When one explores the 1537 *Consilium* in the light of these writings, it is tempting to speculate that disparate members of the committee identified and developed

⁵¹ The text is translated in Gleason, ed., *Reform Thought*, 57–80.

⁵² The *Consilium* was published in hostile Protestant editions a year later, in German as *Rat-schlag eins usschus etlicher Cardinel, Bapst Paulo des namens dem dritten, auff seinem befehl geschrieben vnd vberantwortet/Mit einer vorrede D. Mart. Luth.* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, M. D. XXXVIII. [1538]), then in Latin as *Consilium delectorum cardinalium & aliorum praelatorum, de emendanda ecclesia: Epistola Ioannis Sturmi de eadem re, ad cardinales caetorsque uiros ad eam consultationem delectos* (Strasbourg: Crato Mylius, 1538). A further pro-Reformation edition appeared in London in 1609, STC/1166:10.

⁵³ Gleason, ed., *Reform Thought*, 67–69.

⁵⁴ Contarini, *Office of a Bishop*, 100–01. This passage was also deleted by censors in later editions (see note 49 above).