

Basic Course Reformed History and Theology

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Lesson 4 Reformed Confessionalisation in Germany and Upper Germany

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1. Introduction

In Lessons 2 and 3 of the basic course, the beginnings of the Reformed Reformation in Switzerland and Geneva were discussed (with a brief look at France).

This lesson shall deal with the question of how the Reformation of Reformed character became established in individual parts of Germany. It will be seen that this was not a uniform occurrence. For one, there was the phenomenon that individual regions, which had turned in the first place to the Lutheran Reformation, became Reformed in the course of the sixteenth Century, e.g. the counties of Bentheim and Lippe or the Electoral Palatinate. Besides this, there were also regions that experienced a reformation of a Reformed character from the beginning, e.g. Upper Germany, or that initially existed as much under Lutheran as Reformed influence, e.g. the Palatinate. And there were in Germany numerous congregations of refugees (above all Huguenots and Waldenses). All this makes it difficult to grasp the entire occurrence in one concept. The suggestion, discussed a great deal around 1985, to name the whole occurrence a "second Reformation" after a first Lutheran Reformation, must be viewed as a failure. For it makes into a rule a sequence which was present in only some areas, of first Lutheran and then Reformed confessionalisation. It is therefore more fitting, with regard to Germany, to speak somewhat more diffusely of the "Reformed confessionalisation" and the history of Reformed churches and congregations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Therefore, because of the very different ways in which the Reformed congregations originated in Germany, there are relatively many sections in this lesson standing independently of each other. They reflect the diversity but also demonstrate the complexity of the historical developments.

The Reformed church was first officially acknowledged in Germany in 1648 by the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in Munster and Osnabrueck, which ended the Thirty Years' War. Before this, there was an important event in the year of 1555. In the Religious Peace Treaty of Augsburg, two decisions were reached among others. For one, general peace was guaranteed for the members of the Augsburg Confession. For another, the so-called "ius reformandi" was confirmed. As a result, the regional rulers, counts and estates could determine

the confession of their country (which later arrived at the formula “*cuius regio eius religio*” – “he to whom the region belongs defines also the religion”). The fact that the Reformed confession was related to the Augsburg Confession gave the regional rulers who were becoming Reformed the freedom to introduce it into their areas. For the Reformed confession, confessionalisation reached from 1563 (when the Electoral Palatinate became Reformed) to the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. There, on the one hand, the same right was granted to the Reformed as to the Catholics and Lutherans. And on the other hand, the “*ius reformandi*” was limited so that a change of confession of the regional ruler no longer had to be followed by that of his region.

2. Martin Bucer and Strasbourg

Martin Bucer and Strasbourg belong to the “History of the Reformed Church” only in certain respects. For the so-called Upper German Reformation actually embodies an independent type besides the Lutheran and Reformed.

Boissard, Jean-Jacques; Bry, Theodor de: *Bibliotheca chalcographica, hoc est Virtute et eruditione clarorum Virorum Imagines*. Heidelberg: Clemens Ammon, 1669. Partes 1-5: 1669, S. 35

Martin Bucer (actually Butzer) was born on Nov. 11, 1491 in Schlettstadt (Alsace). 15 years old, he became a Dominican novice, studied theology in Heidelberg, left the monastery in 1521 and became first a priest. Far-reaching for Bucer was his participation in Luther’s Heidelberg disputation in 1518. Since then, Bucer’s theology was shot through with the message of justification. In the years of 1521 to 1523, Bucer entered the company of Franz von Sickingen, a knight inclined to humanism, became a pastor in Landstuhl and Weissenburg, married the former nun Elisabeth Silbereisen and was excommunicated by the Bishop of Speyer in 1523 on account of the marriage and Reformation preaching. He moved to his hometown Strasbourg and was chosen to be a pastor there in 1524. He pushed ahead in unmistakable steps the Reformation that had already been introduced there (among those who worked there was Wolfgang Capito). In this way he

developed his own theological character, which in the same measure both joined him to Luther and separated him from him. The basic trends of the doctrine of justification are especially present in Bucer: the human cannot redeem himself – he is a sinner through and through. However, (and here Bucer makes other emphases than Luther) this does not mean that the believing human being, who knows that God's grace alone saves him, is permitted to sit back and do nothing. Rather, the Spirit of God qualifies believers for the service of neighbour – and leads them to various reforms in the church and society. Only a few years after the beginning of his activity, at the beginning of the thirties, Bucer was already considered the most important Reformer of the Southern German towns. He became the adviser of Philip of Hesse, one of the regional rulers to be numbered among the forerunners of the Reformation in Germany. Bucer was principally interested in the uniting of the various Protestant camps. He worked intensively (and ultimately without success) on an agreement in the understanding of the Lord's Supper between the reformers of Wittenberg and of Zurich (to whom he stood somewhat nearer). Luther did not accept Bucer's in-between position. And further, after Bucer's death, Zurich rejected his efforts towards unification. Luther ultimately succeeded in moving Wittenberg and the Protestant Southern German territories (which were threatened by isolation) towards a (more formal) agreement in respect of the Lord's Supper (Agreement of Wittenberg in 1536). The result was that the Southern territories in the majority turned towards Lutheranism.

Throughout his endeavours towards an inner Protestant consensus, Bucer was also engaged as a prominent figure in the so-called religious colloquies in Hagenau, Worms and Regensburg (1540/41), which had the goal of a unification of, or at least an agreement between, the Protestant and Catholic churches. These colloquies failed however. Meanwhile, Bucer continued his activity of reform in Strasbourg – and for some in Strasbourg he went too far. In 1548 Bucer had to leave Strasbourg and went to England, where he sought from Cambridge (where he did his doctorate of theology) to foster the Reformation in England. He never felt at home in England however, and died in 1551. His bones were burnt in 1557 in the context of the temporary re-Catholicisation under Queen Mary in the market square of Cambridge. Three

years later, however, Bucer was ceremoniously rehabilitated by Queen Elizabeth I. Two years later, a co-worker of Bucer for many years, Conrad Hubert, wrote about Bucer, "... among the faithful servants of Christ ... he was in no way the least." Bucer's untiring dedication to the achievement of an agreement between the various camps and his ceaseless activity had effects which lasted long after his death. Bucer's theological significance was discovered anew in the 20th Century.

3. Johannes a Lasco and East Friesland

Reformation activities arose in East Friesland as early as 1520, influenced among other things by the "Devotio moderna." Those convinced of the Reformation received support in the larger towns (Emden, Norden, Aurich and Leer) and from individual members of the chieftain nobility (the regional rulers in East Friesland were called chieftains). By means of the event of "the Oldersum Religious Colloquy" in 1526 (the themes in dispute were the mediation of Christ, the function of Mary and the doctrine of justification) Ulrich of Dornum, above all, caused a dispute between the approach to Reformation and Roman Catholic theology. A further result of the colloquy was a distinctive profile for Protestant positions in East Friesland. It is striking that the positions of the Reformation in East Friesland are in the first place reminiscent of Zwingli. Luther's teachings, however, were felt as insufficient, particularly in respect of the doctrine of the church.

In the year of 1528, the "Preachers' Confession" arose, in which it is denied that the sacraments are the means of salvation – the authors thereby opposing Luther, whom they accuse of a lack of consistency.

From the Confession of the East Friesland Preachers of 1528.

Article 30

Much less does the Lord's Supper give to a Christian the certainty that he is a Christian and has faith; rather must he have certainty before he

goes to the Lord's Supper – otherwise he would be a swindler or a mocker.

Article 31

Whoever does not eat and drink the flesh and blood of Christ spiritually by faith, i.e. whoever is not saturated by Christ and does not think he has enough for eternal bliss, eats and drinks the bread and the chalice of the Lord – the signs of remembrance of his flesh and blood – to his own damnation.

Article 32

If you, poor man, still want first to win assurance and consolation there, then you still have no faith, which is the certainty itself. But if you have no faith, then neither do you eat and drink the flesh and blood of Christ, but take the external signs to your own damnation as a mocker. Those who despise the sacrament most are those who pretend that they think most highly of it.

Questions for further Work

- 1. What elements are contrasted here?*
- 2. What is it that only faith can give but not the Lord's Supper?*
- 3. What, then, is the Lord's Supper?*
- 4. Against whom could these statements be directed?*

This led to conflicts within East Friesland between the regional ruler Enno II, who out of political considerations gave precedence to the Lutheran positions, and the non-Lutheran circles, which at this point cannot yet be called

“Reformed.” In 1540 Countess Anna took over the government businesses. By this time it was clear that two coexisting Reformation lines had formed in East Friesland: the Lutheran and the other, which would later be called Reformed. In the same year of 1540, Johannes a Lasco (1499-1560) had come to Emden. He came from the Polish nobility, was a pupil of Erasmus of Rotterdam and was theologically formed in Strasbourg and Zurich. In 1542 Countess Anna appointed this humanist Protestant foreigner to be Superintendent for all Protestants in East Friesland. He founded the “Coetus” in Emden, a weekly meeting of all the East Friesland preachers, and besides this, the Emden Church Council. He brought about the removal of some of the pictures from the churches and effected further church reforms. His main concern was to produce a common doctrine in East Friesland, among other things through the Emden Catechism of 1546, put together by him and his colleagues. But opposition against a Lasco arose – from the surrounding congregations, because he was in part too radical for them, and from the congregations of Lutheran character, for whom a Lasco was too Reformed. In 1549 a Lasco was dismissed at the instigation of Count John I, brother-in-law of the Countess Anna. A Lasco went to London and became the pastor of the Reformed who had fled from the Netherlands. Driven out from there, he returned with his congregation in 1553, without being appointed to his old position again, and worked together with (among others) the preacher Gellius Faber (who was theologically inclined more strongly towards Calvin) on the small Emden Catechism, which appeared in 1554, and which was in use East Friesland until 1888. In 1555 a Lasco was finally banished, because he appeared from the point of view of those governing to be too uncompromising. A Lasco went back over Frankfurt to Poland, where he attempted, without result, to unite the scattered Polish Protestants. In 1560 a Lasco died. In 1571 the synod of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands took place in Emden – outside the territory of the Netherlands in view of the bloody persecution of the Reformed that was taking place there – admittedly without the participation of the East Friesland congregations. The two Protestant confessions in East Friesland drifted apart in the second half of the 16th Century. Since 1575 Menso Alting, who was strongly influenced by Calvin, had been the pastor in Emden. He organised the East Friesland congregations in a Reformed

manner by his “Order of the Coetus” of 1576, supported by Count John II, one of the two Counts of East Friesland. Against the opposition of the latter’s Lutheran brother, Count Edzard II, the citizens of Emden obtained for Emden its special position as an independent town in the Emden Revolution in 1595.

In 1599 the Concordat of Emden emerged, in which the coexistence of the Reformed and Lutheran confessions in East Friesland was explicitly set out. There was to be only one church in each place (either Lutheran or Reformed), and Lutherans as well as Reformed in a particular place would belong to this one congregation while maintaining their own confessional position (= “East Friesland Special Right”). Although it was broken after a while in the larger towns, Emden, Leer and Aurich, this rule still exists in some of the villages today.

In the majority of Reformed congregations, an almost strict orthodox Calvinism established itself, lasting into the 17th century. In some places this was replaced by Pietist movements. The “awe of the Lord’s Supper” (Abendmahlsscheu) – still known today, (i.e. only very few go to the Lord’s Supper because they fear that they are not worthy enough) goes back to this Pietist influence. Dutch remained the church language into the 19th Century. An invaluable source of knowledge of the development of the Reformed confession in Emden and its surroundings is the unique Emden Church Council Records, which are available also in printed form (published by Jan Weerda).

The Great Church in Emden was destroyed in the Second World War and is today, after restoration, the Johannes a Lasco Library – a place of research for Reformed Protestantism and a venue for a wide variety of events.

The Reformed congregations in East Friesland belong today to the “Protestant Reformed Church. Synod of Protestant Reformed churches in Bavaria and North West Germany.” The office of the Synodal Council is located in Leer, East Friesland.

4. The Counties of Bentheim, Steinfurt and Tecklenburg

The County of Tecklenburg became Lutheran in 1541 under Konrad of Tecklenburg. After his death in 1557, the County of Tecklenburg fell to the House of Bentheim, which also possessed the County of Steinfurt, where the Lutheran Reformation had been introduced in 1544. When the Protestant Count Arnold died in 1553, his son Everwin III, who was somewhat more distant from the church, became his successor. He died only at the age of 26 in 1562. In place of his son Arnold, his wife, the Countess Anna of Tecklenburg, took over the regency for her son. Countess Anna was a Lutheran. Arnold married the Reformed Magdalena of Neuenahr in 1573 and took over the rule in Bentheim and Tecklenburg in 1577. The young noble family could be considered Reformed in 1576 at the latest (but probably already in 1573). A Reformed Protestant influence could also be recognised in other places in the County of Bentheim. In the autumn of 1587, Count Arnold II invited Reformed preachers from the county and a few others to Tecklenburg in order to discuss a new Reformed church constitution (modelled on the Reformed Church Constitution of Moers / Lower Rhine). This was settled and officially introduced in Tecklenburg and in the County of Bentheim in 1588, and from 1591 was also valid for Steinfurt. It included, among other things, the abolition of images and altars from the church, the abolition of emergency baptism, and the use of white bread instead of wafers for the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper would be held in the future at tables. In the following years, the altars in the church were removed little by little. Thus from 1588, a gradual change from Lutheran to Reformed orientation became generally established in Bentheim and Tecklenburg. In some cases time was allowed to prepare the congregations better for the changes, and the change of confession was concluded about 1598. Arnold II also founded a Latin school in Schuettorf in 1588, which he transferred to Steinfurt in 1591 and then developed into a high school with departments of law, theology, philosophy and (from 1607) medicine. Among those who had an influence on the school were Conrad Vorstius, Johannes Althusius and Johann Heinrich Heidegger.

After the death of Arnold II in 1606, his son Arnold Jobst became the Count of Bentheim. In 1613 he introduced the Higher Church Council as a spiritual authority of supervision, which was directly under him. The Higher Church Council consisted of the (presiding) theologian, a lawyer and two administrative officials. In the same year, a short confession of the Reformed Church of Bentheim was drawn up along with the “twelve articles,” the former of which succinctly sums up the orthodox Reformed doctrine.

From the Bentheim Confession of 1613

VIII. The Effectiveness of the Merit of Christ

Whether you believe that outside Christ no salvation can be had or grasped. Just as the fathers in the Old Testament were justified and saved no less then by faith in the coming Christ, so also are we in the New Testament justified and saved now by faith in the Christ who there is offered.

Questions for further work

Besides the (classic Reformation and Reformed) statements that we are saved by Christ alone, there also stands out in this small article the classification of the Old and New Testaments.

- 1. Is the Old Testament belittled or seen negatively in relation to the New Testament?*
- 2. Is there salvation only for Christians?*
- 3. In what relation does Christ stand to the Old Testament?*

In the year of 1668, Count Ernest William, son and successor of Arnold Jobst, converted to Roman Catholicism after having been more and more influenced by the Bishop of Munster, Bernhard von Galen. As a result, the church in the county was caught in a difficult crisis. For fierce endeavours in opposition to the Reformation began (e.g. the replacement of the court chaplain, expulsion of pastors and the withholding of wages). First, on the basis of negotiations in connection with the succession after the death of Ernest William in 1693, a revision was reached, and in 1701 the County of Bentheim became Reformed again. The regional ruler, Maurice William, a nephew of Ernest William, remained Roman Catholic however, so that the Reformed Church had a Roman Catholic authority.

Already in 1709, a new "Church Constitution of Bentheim" was issued (on the model of the Church Constitution of the County of Lingen of 1678), which lasted officially into the year of 1971. In it are described instructions for the teaching and life of the congregations. The house call stipulated there has to some extent lasted into the present, and the extra church service teaching the catechism well into the second half of the 20th Century.

The Reformed congregations in the County of Bentheim form today a synodal unit inside the "Protestant Reformed Church. Synod of Protestant Reformed churches in Bavaria and North West Germany."

In the 19th Century there arose above all, as a movement in opposition to the rationalistic theology (influenced by Dutch theologians) in the County of Bentheim, several free Reformed congregations which called themselves the "Separated" or the "Old Reformed" (in the Netherlands there was an widely occurring parallel development). In 1838 the first of these congregations was set up in Uelson, after which further arose. This development led to severe tensions, conflicts and problems, which only ended towards the end of the 20th Century, when the churches came to terms with each other. The "Protestant Old-Reformed Church," consisting in total of 14 congregations, now has its numerical centre of gravity in the County of Bentheim, where eight congregations exist. Five Old-Reformed congregations are in East Friesland and one in Wuppertal.

5. Lingen

The County of Lingen belonged since 1496 to the rule of the Count of Tecklenburg. Konrad of Tecklenburg introduced the Lutheran Reformation in 1541. New preachers were installed and its own church constitution was introduced (in 1543). This phase ended five years later, however, because Konrad lost the rule over Lingen.

The decisive date for the introduction of the Reformed Reformation in the County of Lingen is the year 1578. For it was then that the County of Lingen came under the control of the Reformed House of Orange. The Prince Maurice of Nassau-Orange reformed the congregations from 1597 by causing the gospel to be preached. And although there was apparently no pressure exerted, most of the inhabitants turned to the Reformed confession. In 1605 however, Lingen was conquered by Spinola, commander in Spanish services, and the county was re-Catholicised. And with success – for the still young movement of the Reformed confession had not yet been able to root itself deeply enough. In 1524 the Reformed preacher Melchior Balthasar was executed in Meppen. In 1633 the rule changed again – Orange took over Lingen once more. From 1634 there was a Reformed service in Lingen once more. Reformed preachers were also appointed in several other congregations. At this point, however, a split existed: the overwhelming majority of the population was and remained Roman Catholic, a minority Reformed. A brief interlude in 1673/74, in which the Bishop of Munster, who had conquered the County of Lingen, reigned, caused a change in trend in favour of the Roman Catholic Church. But already in 1674, the members of the House of Orange took over the rule in the County of Lingen once again. Because of the numerous changes in the past few years, the majority of the population were unwilling to make yet another change of confession. The Reformed preachers were not accepted in a friendly manner, and forbidden Roman Catholic services took place, sometimes in emergency churches outside the country.

In 1678 its own church constitution was drawn up on the Dutch model, later becoming the model for the church constitution of the County of Bentheim. It emphasises the Reformed principles of the Heidelberg Catechism, entrusts

the church councils with the leadership of the congregation and states expressly that none of the congregations are to have power over any other.

In 1693 the high school in Lingen was set up, at which theology, law, medicine and philosophy could be studied. It was closed in 1820. Individual buildings of the high school are still to be found in Lingen today.

From 1702 the County of Lingen belonged to Prussia, whereby little changed for the congregations, their language and church hymns remaining Dutch (into the 19th Century). The rule changed again in 1815, the Lower County of Lingen being ascribed to the Kingdom of Hanover, while the Upper County remained with Prussia.

The Reformed congregations in today's Emsland belong to the "Protestant Reformed Church. Synod of Protestant Reformed churches in Bavaria and North West Germany."

6. Lippe

The development of the Reformation in the County of Lippe began as early as the beginning of the fifteen-twenties. Above all, there arose in the town Lemgo (also however in Salzuflen and Blomberg) a local movement that, as early as 1533, led to the town's becoming Protestant, the Church Constitution of Brunswick of the Reformer Johannes Bugenhagen being introduced in the town. The Protestant movement could not spread throughout the whole of the county, however, since the Count Simon V remained Roman Catholic. After his death in 1536, his still under-age son, Bernhard VIII, became his successor. There were at the time two competing powers trying to influence Lippe: the Catholic Paderborn and the Protestant Hesse. Bernhard's guardian, Landgrave Philip of Hesse, succeeded and so the Reformation was introduced officially in the whole of Lippe in 1538. In the same year, a new church constitution was drawn up by the Bremen theologians Adrian Buxschoten and Johann Tiemann, which was even reported on positively by Melanchthon. At the same time, a visitation by the Lower Saxon Reformer

Antonius Corvinus in 1542 brought about that the Reformation had in many places not yet properly gained a foothold.

In the Augsburg Interim in 1548, there was an attempt by Paderborn to re-catholicise Lippe, which nevertheless remained unsuccessful. Only after the Religious Peace Treaty of Augsburg in 1555 can one say that the Lutheran Reformation became generally established in Lippe. In 1571 there arose a new church constitution, which completed the first one from 1538. It keeps to the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and includes both instructions for the church service and for everyday life. In the meantime, Bernhard VIII had died in 1563. His son, Simon VI, born in 1554, became his successor and turned towards Melancthon-Reformed convictions (perhaps because of the family circumstances on his mother's side, but possibly above all on the basis of his study in Strasbourg with Johannes Sturm). During his educational tour, which also led him through the Netherlands, he came in contact with the Reformed theologian Menso Alting in East Friesland and with Christoph Pezel in Bremen, both of whom impressed him. When Simon VI took over the government businesses, he very gradually began a reworking towards the Reformed Reformation. For him this was no new reformation, but rather a continuation of what had already existed in Lippe for almost 60 years. He did not want to introduce any strict Calvinism in Lippe, but rather sought the balance between the various Protestant orientations. In the year of 1600, a consistorial constitution was drawn up on the instructions of Simon VI by Dreckmeier, the Chief Superintendent of Detmold, modelled on the Reformed Church Constitution of the Electoral Palatinate.

However, it was only in 1605 that Count Simon VI and his family, in the Detmold market church, received the Lord's Supper according to the Reformed rite. By 1612 all the congregations in the County of Lippe except Lemgo had become Reformed, though a negative attitude certainly arose among the church people in many places. The majority of the pastors nevertheless gave their support to the Reformed confessionalisation. The steadfast refusal of the town Lemgo to become Reformed was successful. They retained the right to remain Lutheran ("Roehrentruper Rezess" 1617).

Simon VI died in 1613. His successors reigned only briefly and did not create many new impulses. In the foreground there stood the terror of the Thirty Years' War. It was only in 1684 that the "Christian Church Constitution of the County of Lippe" appeared, a church constitution originating from the General Superintendent, Jakob Zeller, in which tasks and functions of life in the congregations are set out and described. The character of this church constitution is uplifting – a pietistic streak pervades this text, which is still officially valid in the Church of Lippe today. The Regional Church of Lippe today is Reformed in character with a Lutheran division.

From the Christian Church Constitution of 1684 (Lippe)

From the preamble

In this public document is this new church constitution herewith published / and thus made known to each and every one of our subjects regardless of class or social standing. And since we, the currently reigning regional ruler and bishop, are entitled to order and direct the public church service within the churches of our county, so that it may be as much as possible in agreement with the Word of God...

From Article 24:

On the exemplary life of preachers and congregation members

A Preacher who teaches others that no one will see God without sanctification and exhorts each individual to work for his own blessedness in fear and trembling should in the first place show in his own person that he has no higher concern than God's glory, ...and purify himself from any kind of defilement of the flesh or mind, in order to perfect his sanctification in the fear of the Lord... He should abstain from all inns, beer, wine and spirit houses; he should not join in with the general laughter and tippling, be modest and sober at feasts, not attend the dancing, and should not interfere in any world trade, courtship or writing of wills.

Questions for further work

1. *The Church Constitution of Lippe of 1684 came into force on 9th June 1684 at the instigation of Count Simon Henry. In its form it is typical and expressive of the “princely Reformation” in Germany. How does the Preamble see the function of the counts in relation to the church?*

2. *What role of the preacher is discernible in Art. 24?*

7. Rhineland and the Lower Rhine

Unlike that in the regions described up to now, the Reformed confessionalisation in Rhineland was not uniform. One reason for this is that up to the time of the Reformation the dukes in Rhineland possessed many different, small, so-called sub-rules, some of which were ruled by counts from other German regions.

Already early on there were influences of Luther in Rhineland. From 1519 many of the people of Rhineland studied e.g. in Wittenberg. Individual rules of the nobility became Protestant. The fate of Adolf Clarenbach, a supporter of the Lutheran doctrine who was burnt at the stake in Cologne in 1529, shows that the Reformation had only been able to establish itself in part. An attempt of Reformation in Cologne under the Archbishop Hermann of Wied failed in 1543. As a result, the Archbishop retired from his office. From then on, Rhineland was determined by the coexistence of Catholic and Protestant congregations.

The emergence of Reformed congregations happened in two ways – “from below” and “from above.” The Reformation “from below” is to be remembered in the first place in connection with the refugee congregations. From 1545, refugees of Reformed conviction from England, France and the Netherlands settled in Wesel, Aachen, Duisburg and Cologne, among other places. They

formed lively and well-organised confessional churches, “reformed according to God’s Word,” and possibly as a result were attractive to many of the locals. A whole series of “secret congregations” arose. Despite the successes, there was opposition and some suppression, in which the congregations in the Lower Rhine in the Dutch struggle for freedom became particularly involved and had to suffer under Spanish persecution (the self-designation “congregations under the cross” arose in this time). In an assembly at Wesel in 1568, delegates from the refugee congregations in Wesel, Emden and London assembled to discuss how the presbyterial-synodal constitution constructed by them could be maintained. The Synod of Emden in 1571 “of the Dutch churches, which are under the cross and scattered over Germany and East Friesland” (so goes the self-description), passed this constitution, in which both the independence of the individual congregations and the cohesion of the congregations is set out. This presbyterial-synodal constitution defines, among other things, the structure of the Protestant Church in Rhineland up to the present day.

Besides this Reformation “from below,” there was also the more typical introduction of the Reformed confession in Germany in various sub-rules. In this way, the various sub-rules functioned as “protectors” (H. Klueting) of the Reformed confession in various regions of the Lower Rhine, Berg, Hohensolms-Braunfels and Wittgenstein, in Sayn-Altenkirchen and the Palatinate-Zweibruecken, so that one can without doubt speak of an “advance of Calvinism” (E. Muelhaupt). Under the protection of the Bernsau rulers, the first Reformed synod of Berg met in 1589 in Neviges.

In 1610 in Duisburg, the first Reformed general synod of the Rhineland took place, in which the presbyterial-synodal constitution for the Reformed congregations was passed for the four regions Juelich, Cleves, Berg and Mark. In 1617 this was arranged and worked out in more detail in a church constitution. The synods as governing body of the church throughout the whole of the 17th Century and also to a large extent in the 18th Century proved to be in a position to direct the course of the congregations. At the same time, the Reformed John Sigismund, who had become the Elector

of Brandenburg, took over the rule as successor of the last Duke of Cleves. He strengthened the Reformed, among other things, by the founding of a Reformed high school in Duisburg in 1655. Between the Lutherans and the Reformed, but also amongst the Reformed themselves, some fierce conflicts took place over dogmatic questions (e.g. concerning free will, the doctrine of predestination etc.). In the 17th Century, possibly in connection with the emphasis on right doctrine (Orthodoxy), Pietism found favour with many of the Reformed, both in modest and in enthusiastic form. To be named in this connection are, for example, the so-called "Ronsdorfer Rotte" under Elias Eller, who built the Kingdom of God on a hill outside of Elberfeld, but also Gerhard Tersteegen, who was inclined towards mystical Pietism but not lost in mysticism, and whose effects can scarcely be overestimated. The Reformed congregations belong today to the "Protestant Church in Rhineland." Some of the congregations have remained Reformed; others have merged with Lutheran congregations to form united congregations.

8. The Wetterau Association of Counts (Wittgenstein, Nassau-Dillenburg-Siegen, Wied)

The counties merged since the beginning of the 16th Century in the so-called Wetterau Association of Counts had already introduced the Reformation into their counties early on, e.g. William I in the County of Wittgenstein from 1534 and William The Rich from 1533 in the County of Nassau-Siegen-Dillenburg. On the basis of various contacts the counts had in the Electoral Palatinate and the Swiss Confederation, but especially in the Netherlands, the attitudes of the counts from after 1566 tended gradually towards the Reformed confession. First and foremost among these was Count John VI of Nassau-Katzenelnbogen. In 1576 the previous Wittenberg Professor Christoph Pezel had become the preacher in Dillenburg, and in 1577 Count John officially professed his allegiance to the Reformed confession. And already by 1578, a "Nassau Confession" drawn up by Christoph Pezel was adopted. Although there was clear mistrust of the introduction of the Reformed confession

among the people, there was at the same time no coercion on the part of the count.

In 1584 Count John VI founded the high school in Herborn, which gained a reputation stretching far beyond the county, among other things, owing to the professor of law Johannes Althusius, and became a model for other high schools (e.g. the one in Steinfurt).

The transition to the Reformed confession also gradually progressed in Wittgenstein from 1565 on and gained a somewhat greater dynamic when the previous Heidelberg theologian, Kaspar Olevian, became court chaplain in Berleburg in 1576 (and from 1584 professor in Herborn).

In 1586 a Reformed general synod of the counties Nassau-Siegen-Dillenburg, Wittegenstein, Solms and Wied met in Herborn and a new church constitution was passed (on the model of the Church Constitution of Middelburg of 1581). Two things stand out. First, a characteristic of this church constitution is to combine the presbyterial-synodal constitution, according to which the church is constructed from below (concretely, from the congregation), with the regional rulers' church rule, which portrays a church from above, combining them in such a way that the presbyterial-synodal element predominates. Second, it unites the churches in the county to form a church embracing all regions. It is striking that the counts accepted this constitution. The attempt of a re-Catholicisation of the Part-County of Nassau-Siegen (in 1626, after the death of John VI, the county was divided up) ultimately failed.

The Reformed congregations belong today either to the "Protestant Church in Westphalia" or to the "Protestant Church of Hesse and Nassau." Some of the congregations have remained Reformed while others have merged with Lutheran congregations to form united congregations.

At the general synod of Herborn of 1586 the constitution drawn up by Caspar Olevian was passed.

Among other things, this says:

The general synod should take place in turn in the individual counties of the rulers who have consented to it, not only in order to avoid the

appearance of a precedence, but as much to gain a better immediate impression of the nature and position of the churches. (...)

Orderly legislative assemblies should be held by four different organisations: a) the presbytery, b) class assemblies, c) part or provincial synods, d) general synods. (...)

In all these the affairs of the church are to be brought to discussion and that which is brought up should be dealt with according to church procedure.

Only what could not be resolved in the smaller assemblies should be dealt with in the larger assemblies, or what relates to the whole church or several churches.

Questions for further work

The constitution originating in 1586 and going back to a Dutch model displays the typical presbyterial-synodal church structure for many Reformed congregations in Germany.

- 1. What role do the “rulers” (Herren) i.e. the regional rulers play for the life of the church?*
- 2. What does it mean if the general synod can meet in various counties?*
- 3. What is the relationship like between the smaller and larger assemblies?*

9. Hessen-Cassel

The Landgrave of Hesse, Philip the Magnanimous (1504-1567) was amongst the protagonists of the Reformation in Germany. His urge towards

rapprochement brought about the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529 between Luther and Zwingli. He also endeavoured to achieve reconciliation between the present Protestant camps in the church in the County of Hesse-Cassel. One could describe the Church of Hesse neither as Lutheran nor as Reformed.

After his death, the rule was divided among his sons. At this point, it appears that Philip's position was only pursued further in Hesse-Cassel by William IV, whereas the other brothers, under the guidance of Louis IV of Marburg, brought about a Lutheran confessionalisation. After the death of William IV, his son Maurice became his successor in 1592. He had close contact to the Nassau counts, and by the so-called "Mauritianic Amendments" caused his land to join the Reformed confession in 1605. These reforms basically concerned the church service. In respect of the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, any speculation or dogmatism should be avoided. The ban of images should not be left out (as happens in the Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions). For the Lord's Supper, no wafers should be used, but normal pieces of bread should be distributed. Against these points of improvement there was clear opposition from Lutheran theologians. By 1607 three professors of theology in Marburg and 54 pastors had been dismissed (they were taken on, however, by the Lutheran landgraves in Hesse-Darmstadt). Unlike in the Nassau regions, however, Maurice of Hesse did not take over the presbyterial-synodal element – he himself governed the church from above. This also meant that in some parts of Electoral Hesse the Reformed element only became established with difficulty.

After the ruling line of Hesse-Marburg had died out, there was an argument between Hesse-Cassel (Reformed) and Hesse-Darmstadt (Lutheran) about the possession of Upper Hesse. The Marburg University, founded by Philip and made Lutheran by Louis IV, was converted by Maurice into the Regional Reformed University during this time. The founding of the (Lutheran) University of Giessen by Hesse-Darmstadt was the consequence. From 1648 there were two coexisting Protestant churches in Hesse as a whole, a Reformed and a Lutheran.

The Reformed congregations belong today to the “Protestant Church of Electoral Hesse and Waldeck.” Some of the congregations have remained Reformed while others have merged with Lutheran congregations to form united congregations.

10. The Electoral Palatinate and Baden

The Electoral Palatinate was considered up to the end of the 16th Century to be a completely Reformed territory and served as a model to be emulated by other regions and regional rulers in Germany. The Lutheran Reformation was introduced early on in many towns in the Palatinate (from 1526), and likewise in the part-region Zweibruecken (in 1533). In Heidelberg, Luther was able to win several over at the disputation in 1518 (e.g. Martin Bucer), and the knight Franz von Sickingen served as protector for several Protestant movements.

In the Electoral Palatinate as a whole, the Lutheran Reformation was carried through first under the Elector Frederick II (who ruled from 1544 to 1556), and then under his successor and nephew Ottheinrich (who ruled from 1556 to 1559). But this was a Lutheranism in the Electoral Palatinate with a number of different influences present. There were strict Lutherans, followers of Melanchthon (Philipp Melanchthon came from Bretten in the Palatinate after all), and indeed those who were of Reformed persuasion. After Ottheinrich’s brief reign, Frederick III – also named the Pious – became his successor. He ruled from 1559 to 1576. The Protestant orientations, ever drifting apart from one another, demanded Frederick III to profess his faith unambiguously in one confession. By now, the Reformed confession was not considered a force to be reckoned with in Germany, but was so considered in the whole of Europe. His own theological education and the Disputation of Heidelberg in 1560 concerning the Lord’s Supper led him to become Reformed. His inclination towards the Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper, his growing theological critique of Luther, and the presence of polemical “Lutherans” in Heidelberg also contributed to this. The Electoral Palatinate was thus the first Protestant Reformed territory. The Heidelberg Catechism, completed in 1563,

in the context of the new Church Constitution of the Palatinate, was the document of this new orientation in the Palatinate. Frederick III himself had collaborated on it, but the chief author was the Heidelberg professor of theology, Zacharias Ursinus. Although the Heidelberg Catechism is regarded world-wide as one of the most important Reformed confessional writings, it must nevertheless be noted that it continually attempts to integrate Lutheran concerns. Certain important concerns of Calvin are lacking (like the doctrine of predestination).

Echoes of Luther's Small Catechism and Calvin's Geneva Catechism can be discerned in many places. After its introduction in the Palatinate, the Heidelberg Catechism gradually became the most important and binding confession in German Reformed territories, and became native even outside Germany, e.g. in the Netherlands. During the time of his reign, Frederick III built up the Heidelberg University into one of the most important centres of Reformed theology. The numerous foreign students there demonstrated Heidelberg's power of attraction.

After Frederick's death in 1576, his son Louis II (who ruled from 1576 to 1583) caused once more a change of direction towards Lutheranism. The Reformed teachers emigrated for seven years to Neustadt in the Haardt, where John Casimir, a brother of Louis II, reigned. Besides Ursinus, the influential Girolamo Zanchi, originally from Italy, was among those who had an effect in Neustadt. The Lutheran episode nevertheless came to an end after the early death of Louis II. John Casimir now ruled in Heidelberg as well, and the Electoral Palatinate was a Reformed region once more. It attracted Walloon and French refugees (having fled on account of their faith). Both under Frederick III and John Casimir refugee congregations arose.

In Baden, unlike in the Electoral Palatinate, there was only one, if also notable, Reformed interlude. The chief figure in this was the margrave Ernest Frederick, who was theologically extremely well versed. The county of the margraves of Baden-Durlach had joined the Reformation late, like the Electoral Palatinate. The county was divided first into two regions in 1584, and then in 1590 into three. Ernest Frederick obtained the lower half of the county (including Pforzheim and Durlach), George Frederick the upper. Whereas

George Frederick remained Lutheran like his father, Ernest Frederick turned to the Reformed church – indeed from an inner theological conviction. This became outwardly visible in 1599 when Ernest Frederick published a “Staffort book” which he had written himself. Ernest Frederick demonstrates in this, on the one hand, that he agreed with the Confessio Augustana (Augsburg Confession). On the other hand, he investigates fundamental Reformed statements of faith (free will, the providence of God, predestination, the person of Christ and the sacraments). He interprets these basically in the light of Calvin and sees them at the same time in continuity with the Confessio Augustana (even if not with the Lutheran Formula of Concord). With this Staffort book, named after the castle in which it was written and printed, a turn to the Reformed church took place in the County of Baden-Durlach, but without anything changing legally, because the Confessio Augustana was still valid.

In Pforzheim, however, this change came up against fierce protests, and Ernest Frederick’s attempts at arbitration ended before they had even begun because he suddenly died. After his death, his brother George Frederick took over the rule, and so it appears that the Reformed confession in the County of Baden-Durlach was only an interlude.

The formerly Reformed congregations in the Palatinate constitute today the Protestant congregations in the “Protestant Church of the Palatinate (Protestant Regional Church).”

11. East Germany

In today’s East Germany, there appear to have been two different courses of events.

The course of events in the Principality of Anhalt resembles some of the types of Reformed confessionalisation which have been described up to now. The Reformation was introduced in several small stages up to 1545. Within the Lutheran doctrinal disputes after Luther’s death, Anhalt tended towards the orientation of Melanchthon. And from 1580, the princely house, which was connected to the Palatinate and the House of Orange, carried through the

gradual transition to the Reformed Church. The most important theologian was Wolfgang Amling, who drew up the "Anhalt Confession" (of 1579). In 1603 the principality was divided up. From 1644 on the princely house of Anhalt-Zerbst carried through a re-Lutheranisation of this part-region. In Brandenburg, however, the Reformed confessionalisation progressed differently. The Elector of Brandenburg John Sigismund accomplished his conversion to the Reformed confession at Christmas in 1613. However, unlike in almost all other regions, this conversion did not affect the whole of the territory, but only the ruling house and its nearby surroundings. The principality itself remained Lutheran. Thus, the principle "cuius regio eius religio" was broken. The reasons for why the Elector did not demand his land to become Reformed are not wholly clear. On the one hand, John Sigismund's tolerance is emphasised, but on the other stands the suspicion of political calculation.

In 1614 the "Confessio Sigismundi", which brought out several Reformed emphases, appeared, and became Brandenburg's binding confession for the Reformed. About twenty Reformed so-called court congregations and court chaplains arose before the death of Sigismund (e.g. in Crossen, Koepenick, Landsberg and Kolberg). The existence of these congregations and of the Reformed ruling house led to numerous refugees coming to Brandenburg after 1648 (above all Huguenots).

Some of the formerly Reformed court congregations continue to exist as Reformed congregations and others have merged with Lutheran congregations to form Protestant congregations in the "Protestant Church of Berlin-Brandenburg."

13. Huguenots in Germany

The Edict of Nantes of 1598 had given the Protestant Christians in France the possibility of becoming established after the Huguenot war. King Louis XIV, whose conversion was expected by a large number of the Huguenots, not least because he was a rival of the Pope, had no understanding for the

Huguenots, despite their declarations of loyalty. The coexistence of two confessions was in his eyes a threat to the unity of France. So under his rule, the persecution of the Huguenots started first, which culminated in the Edict of Fontainebleau of 1685. By this, the Edict of Nantes was superseded and Protestantism in France was forbidden under threat of death.

The result was a tremendous movement of flight. More than 250,000 people fled from France in the direction of the West and the North, the main site of transit being Frankfurt. Many French Reformed moved to the Swiss Confederation, Great Britain, the Netherlands and even the USA. In Germany, the main places that were ready for admission were Brandenburg-Prussia, Hesse-Cassel, the Rhine-Main region, the Electoral Palatinate and Franconia. The motivation for admission of Reformed refugees was many-layered. There was the solidarity with those of related confession. Added to this was also an economical concern to repopulate the regions that had to some extent bled to death after the Thirty Years' War. The fleeing Huguenots were mostly salesmen and craftsmen. Already in the autumn of 1685, Elector Frederick William passed the so-called Edict of Potsdam, which guaranteed the Huguenots freedom of settlement and other privileges. Roughly 20,000 followed this invitation and settled above all in Potsdam, Berlin and the Uckermark. In Hesse-Cassel, roughly 3,500 Refugees (so the self-designation of the Huguenots) found a new home, primarily in Cassel and North of it. Bad Karlshafen was a new Huguenot establishment.

In Bad Karlshafen today, there is the Huguenot museum and the German Huguenot Association has its headquarters there. In Franken, it was Margrave Christian Ernest who brought about the new settlement of Huguenots and thus an economical upturn – Erlangen is basically a Huguenot establishment (of 1686). As a consequence of the admission in individual territories, French-Reformed congregations arose in many other towns as well, e.g. in Hamburg, Celle, Hanover, Hameln, Leipzig and Stuttgart.

Many congregations in several German regional churches are still able to look back to a Huguenot tradition today, e.g. in the Protestant Reformed Church (Synod of the Protestant Reformed churches in Bavaria and North West

Germany), in the Protestant Church of Berlin-Brandenburg, the Protestant Church of Electoral Hesse and Waldeck and the Protestant Church of the Palatinate.

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