

INTRODUCTION

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LAY PIETY AND ACADEMIC THEOLOGY IN THE RESEARCH OF CHRISTOPH BURGER

The title of this book, presented in honor of Christoph Burger's 65th birthday, characterizes the great depth of his research interests. During his whole life the correlation between lay piety and academic theology, focusing on academics who are concerned with the devotional life of non-academics, has been at the heart of his research. A central aspect is the transformation of academic theology into catechetical tracts for laypeople, a procedure which Burger formulated programmatically in several publications.

The *œuvre* of Johannes von Paltz (ca. 1445–1511), an Augustian eremite and professor of Theology at the University of Erfurt, provided rich material about catechetical activities for laypeople. Christoph Burger has made an important contribution to making the *œuvre* of this fertile author accessible for modern readers, by three editions published in collaboration with colleagues and numerous articles.

The far-reaching influence of the theology of Johannes Gerson (1363–1429), the French theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris, on late medieval piety—in the title of Burger's *Habilitationsschrift* aptly summarized as *aedificatio, fructus, utilitas*—has been a subject of intensive research as well. Closely connected with this is the problem of the difference between mysticism and piety, a question Burger has repeatedly discussed.

His strong interest in sermons, another means by which theologians influence the devotional life of laypeople, is documented not only in many papers but especially in two Flemish-Dutch projects within the international SERMO series of projects, organized together with his colleague Thom Mertens from Antwerpen University and resulting in a huge inventory of late-medieval vernacular sermons from the Netherlands and Belgium.

In his views on the question of *Kontinuität* and *Umbruch* in the Late Middle Ages and the Reformation, a frequent subject of heated dis-

cussions among church historians and other scholars, Burger has been clearly influenced by Heiko A. Oberman during his long term as researcher and editor at the *Institut für Spätmittelalter und Reformation* of the University of Tübingen. Several of his articles point to this question, mentioning both the late Middle Ages and Reformation already in their titles.

To Reformation research Christoph Burger has also contributed a huge number of publications, not to mention his long term as editor/coordinator of the *Register zu den lateinischen Werken Martin Luthers* (Index to the Latin works of Martin Luther) at the University of Tübingen, resulting in volumes 62–66 of the *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (the so-called *Weimarer Ausgabe*). Within the field of Reformation history Martin Luther was always his main interest. This is obvious from his monograph on Luther's interpretation of the *Magnificat*. But besides Luther, his broad perspective as director of the edition of the letters of John Calvin at VU University Amsterdam included other exponents of Humanism and the Reformation as well, and he has made an important contribution to a nuanced image of Early Modern History.

However, Christoph Burger's scholarly interests have reached beyond the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. On the one hand, he remained in touch with the historiography of the Early Church after his PhD, notably in his research on the influence of the Church Fathers on later theologians. On the other hand he has connected with the modern period with his investigations of the sermons of Friedrich Schleiermacher, and of Rudolf Bultmann's view of Martin Luther in the latter's famous collection *Glauben und Verstehen*.

It is a proof of Christoph Burger's broad research interests that he has always looked beyond the boundaries of his own field. Perhaps it is the continuous scholarly communication with his wife, a musicologist, that made him one of only few church historians who recognize the fundamental importance of sacred songs for the history of theology. However, besides songs his research includes other media as well, and sometimes he even combines several of them to achieve a more complex description of the history of theology and piety.

THE ESSAYS IN THIS COLLECTION

The essays presented here are arranged in four sections: Middle Ages, Reformation, Modern Times and Media. They reflect Christoph Burger's

broad range of research interests regarding the field of lay piety and academic theology, thus making this an epoch-transcending and interdisciplinary research issue.

Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, laypeople increasingly took up the pursuit of personal piety, originally a feature of monastic life. The contributions to this section show that this development covered centuries and—besides theological advances—also influenced medieval literature, music, and art, as well as the education of children.

Martin Ohst's contribution forms the upbeat to this collection. Via the example of the indulgence he links medieval church history to modern times, showing that the indulgence as a central concern of the Reformation on the one hand reaches back to the High Middle Ages, but on the other hand is still newsworthy today.

Sigurd Hjelde's article on the term 'eschatology' shows that there are timeless aspects of piety which transcend centuries. His article is about the changing interpretations of the Last Things (*novissima*) from the Middle Ages, via the Reformation, until Modern Times, which raises many questions about the feasibility of an all-encompassing concept of eschatology in Christian theology.

Martijn Schrama o.s.a. connects aspects of the Early Church with the Middle Ages. His starting point is the description of the *translatio* of relics of St Augustine, given by Beda Venerabilis, and the liturgical implications resulting from this event.

Thom Mertens's essay on Middle Dutch mystical Whitsun sermons from 1492, mediating Johannes Gerson, focuses specifically on lay piety. Those sermons sometimes follow the early works of Johannes Gerson closely, in particular his *De mystica theologia speculativa*, and to a lesser degree *La montagne de contemplation*. It seems that Gerson's works started to spread in the Middle Dutch language area from Flanders and that his catechetical-pastoral writings were the first to be translated into Middle Dutch, probably from the French.

The article by Ulrike Hascher-Burger deals with piety in the circles of the *Devotio moderna*. The author discusses a song manuscript from the convent of the Brothers of Common Life in Zwolle, Eastern Netherlands, which contains five monophonic Latin songs dealing with life in Heaven. These songs probably had a function in the penitential meditation in the Brothers' house, which on Sundays included the contemplation of

Heaven. The songs reflect several instructions for meditation on Heaven, written by authors from the *Devotio moderna*.

In her article about girls' reading material in the Middle Ages, Barbara Fleith combines lay piety with the field of Christian children's education. Her starting point is the medieval tradition underlying the Protestant practice of recommending the reading of Saints' and Martyrs' legends specifically to girls.

Reformation

In the beginning of this section there are several articles on Martin Luther, followed by articles about other reformers such as Bucer (Strasbourg), Bibliander (Zurich), and Farel (Geneva).

Volker Leppin points to the shift from late medieval piety to Reformation thought, using the example of Martin Luther's 1519 explanation of the Lord's Prayer, which shows the reformer in the process of his transition from medieval theology to Protestant.

Matthieu Arnold is concerned with the image of Mary as presented in Luther's *Tischreden*. This corresponds with his theological works: Luther characterizes Mary as a simple young woman rather than a goddess. In this way she can be a role model for simple people because she knows she depends solely on God's mercy.

That Luther used rhetorical means to convince his opponents in disputations is shown in the article by Johan S. Vos. Although Luther claimed to be a 'layman in discourses' (*ein Laie der Rede*), he seemed to have an enormous arsenal of rhetorical means at his disposal and to be familiar with the theory of rhetoric. While Erasmus, in his *Diatribes*, follows the antique dialectic tradition in considering debates a collective attempt to find verity, and therefore uses notably rational arguments, Luther uses the means of eristic rhetoric to try and win the debate.

Martin Bucer at Strasbourg used rhetorical figures as well, as is made clear by Annie Noblesse-Rocher using the example of his *Tzephaniah epitomographus*. This text reflects on Bible interpretation and typology, offering a palette of thoughts about exegesis and theology.

Hans-Martin Kirn deals with the Zurich reformer Theodor Bibliander and his quite unknown text *Quomodo legere oporteat sacras scripturas* ... from 1550, a text about the authority and hermeneutics of the Bible that shows a strong connection with academic theology, combining interpretation of the biblical text with the presentation of traditional sources from, for instance, Patristics and Canon Law.

Finally, Frans van Stam presents the Genevan reformer Guillaume Farel as a flaming fighter for the Reformation, rather than a theologian. Farel's personal piety is apparent when he adds a prayer to a text to make it more convincing.

Post-Reformation and Modern Times

In Post-Reformation as well as Modern Times the dichotomy between lay piety and academic theology as two competing—but also complementary—concepts of Christian life persisted, although the manifestations of both models. The authors of this subgroup offer a small section of the expanding range of the modes of reception of Reformation thinking.

Peter G. Bietenholz focuses on Georg Mayer, a minister from Leeder in Southern Germany, who wrote several pamphlets in support of Caspar Schwenckfeld. He left behind a considerable *oeuvre*, although little is known about his life. At the centre of Mayer's religion there is the spiritual awakening that prepares the obedient heart for approaching the Gospel with both faith and reason (*gleübig und verstenndig*).

Klaas Zwanepol's contribution concerns the attempts around 1566 to get the Augsburg Confession accepted as a uniting formula for all 'magisterial' Protestants in the Netherlands. This explains the publication of Dutch translations of the *Augustana* in its *Variata* version before and in 1566, whereas after 1567 (when the *Variata* had lost its momentum) only translations of the *Invariata* were published. This pursuit of unity under the Augsburg Confession needs to be understood within the broader European context of attempts to bring Protestantism together, as well as from specific developments during the period of Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries.

Irena Backus deals with the reception of Clement of Alexandria in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century, when in first instance he was read by laypeople, men and women, as a source of Greek philosophical thought. It seems that without lay intervention at crucial moments, be it from du Plessis or, in a very different context, from Mme Guyon, Clement of Alexandria would have remained far more marginal to theology than he deserved.

Jasper Vree points out how in the nineteenth century ministers in Groningen (in the Northern Netherlands) fought for a more substantive theological role. Due to a vivid interaction between practice and scholarly reflection at this time, the profession of minister seemed to be 'reinvented' again.

Piety and Media

Books and other media have not been passive carriers of new developments and thoughts, but themselves influenced historical processes. It was especially in the late Middle Ages and the Reformation that they played an important role. Five contributions focus especially on the influence of books, illustrations, and other media.

Willem Heijting points out that for historians the invention of printing and the Reformation constitute essential points of reference, and their view of history from 1500 onwards is to a great extent based on these two events. It seems inconceivable that we should question this paradigm and those social values, but nevertheless the time has arrived for a reassessment. The processes of change which at present affect us force us to examine the developments in printing and religion of half a millennium ago from a new perspective, and to reconsider their nature and relevance.

Koen Goudriaan deals with the production of printed texts by the Brothers of Common Life in late medieval Gouda. The output of the Gouda Brethren illustrates the fact that their printing press was used in combination with a variegated set of means of communication, quite apart from the fact that many of their editions themselves combined text and images. Liturgy, for one, was such a means, and so was public preaching. Indulgence campaigns, the launching of local and supra-local confraternities, and the exhortation to (real or spiritual) pilgrimages were other methods of bringing home central tenets and values of Christianity to the faithful.

Berndt Hamm's article focuses on the free imperial city of Ulm and its surroundings. He describes lay piety at the end of the Middle Ages, when the number of objects of devotion increased explosively and at the same time meditation and mystical contemplation also increased. He especially concentrates on two media: xylographical broadsheets and woodcarvings.

Max Engammare offers various interpretations of the function of Bible illustrations, notably images of Mary's visit to her cousin Elisabeth, who was also pregnant. The author investigates richly illustrated treatises for laypeople, such as the 'lay Bible' (*Leien Bibel*) and Martin Luther's *Betbüchlein mit Passional*.

Last but not least, August den Hollander describes how in the Netherlands at the beginning of the sixteenth century a growing circle of humanist scholars was seriously studying the Hebrew Bible. Dutch Printers and publishers actively searched for new translations published on the

international market. It is striking how rapidly new translations were acquired, and also how fast they were then translated into Dutch and thus made available to a broad audience of lay readers.

Christoph Burger has given a major impulse to research in the history of theology, notably in the field of the translation of academic theology for lay people. The contributions to this *Festschrift* reflect this broad spectrum of correlations between academic theology and lay piety from the Early Church period until Modern Times. The reactions of colleagues and friends from all over the world mirror the broad and interdisciplinary interests of this fertile scholar. Many disciplines are represented here: besides church historians and New Testament scholars, authors from the fields of religious studies, history, literary history, music history, and book history have contributed to this book. They all are connected, not only by their pronounced interest in the history of theology, but notably by their close contact over many years with Christoph Burger as a colleague and favored friend.