



The Reformation in the Croatian Historical Lands. Research Results, Challenges, Perspectives. Edited by Zrinka Blažević, Stanko Jambrek, Nataša Štefanec. Zagreb: Biblijski institut, 2015, 300 pp.

The Reformation in the Croatian Historical Lands. Research Results, Challenges, Perspectives is a conference volume compiled on the basis of papers presented at the international scientific conference of the same name held at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb from 25th – 27th April 2013, on the 450th anniversary of the printing of the Croatian translation of the *New Testament*. The conference organizers were the History Department of the aforementioned faculty, the Bible Institute in Zagreb, the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, and the Slovenian Scientific Institute in Vienna.

The importance of this conference volume becomes apparent in light of the fact that, even though we are fast approaching the 500th anniversary of the Reformation (2017), the movement remains a topic that is seldom touched upon not only in Croatian historiography, but in the Croatian media and culture in general. Despite the fact that Protestantism had a significant presence in the Croatian historical lands, an even stronger wave of Counter-Reformation managed to sweep away almost all traces of it. Another complication is the fact that the Lutheran 'heresy' is often seen as anathema to the strongly Catholic identity of Croatia. It should, therefore, be unsurprising that there exists little scientific literature on the subject apart from the doctoral dissertations of Maja Ćutić Gorup and Stanko Jambrek, Antonio Miculian's book *Protestantizam u Istri* [Protestantism in Istria], and Jasmin Milić's works on Calvinism in Slavonia.

However, since the Reformation is one of the most important historical, cultural and religious events in the history of Europe, one which had a long-reaching influence on the formation of various religious and sociopolitical structures in Europe, the papers collected in this volume are intended to shed some light on the legacy of this movement in the Croatian religious, cultural and political heritage from the 16th century until today and also to explore the German-Croatian intellectual and cultural exchange during Reformation.

The book contains a total of 15 papers, divided into five sections, plus short biographical notes on their authors and an index of personal names. The first section, *The Reformation in the Croatian Historical Lands as a Research Challenge*, explores the theoretical trends and methodological innovations in contemporary Reformation studies and their applicability to research on the Reformation in the Croatian lands. It consists of two articles, the first of which is *Reformation Studies in the Croatian Context: Possibilities and Perspectives* by Zrinka Blažević, Associate Professor at the History Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. Blažević examines the cognitive, interpretative and practical research possibilities of contemporary Reformation studies, giving special attention to the heuristic potential of a creative fusion of theoretical approaches such as cultural transfer, mobility theory, historical network analysis, and media and communication theories for discerning the distinctive features of the Reformation in the Croatian historical lands. The other text was written by Stanko Jambrek, the Dean of the Bible Institute in Zagreb, and is entitled *The Reformation in the Croatian Historical Lands as Spiritual and Cultural Transfer*. Jambrek's paper is a critical synthesis of the history of the Reformation in the Croatian lands, based primarily on the theoretical approach of cultural transfer, and focused on the modalities of reception and practice of Reformation ideas among various social strata in said lands.

The second section is entitled *The Reformation of Ideas*, and consists of three articles. It aims to explore the influence of Reformation doctrine on intellectual history in the early modern period. *God and Human in the Croatian Crikveni ordinalic* by Fanika Krajnc-Vrečko, head librarian of the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana, Theological Library Maribor, is the opening text of this part of the volume. It is a theological-anthropological analysis of the *Crikveni ordinalic* of 1564, which Kranjc-Vrečko

describes as more than a simple translation of the Württemberg Church Order of 1559, finding within it sufficient evidence that the authors and translators were striving to institutionally organize a new genuine doctrine of God. The second article, *Understanding Islam According to the Magdeburg Centuries* by Tomislav Vidaković, Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Zagreb, deals with a chapter in the *Magdeburg Centuries*, a comprehensive Protestant church history whose spiritual rector was the Croat Matthias Flacius Illyricus, in order to a picture of how the Protestant reformers saw Islamic history and theology, with special emphasis on questions regarding eternal salvation, the importance of good deeds in soteriological terms, one's attitude towards Jesus Christ, the Bible and religious traditions, etc. The third paper, *From Savage to Civilized: Schools and Student Life in Rural Hungary before the Reformation* by Gabriella Erdélyi, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, uses approaches such as *Alltagsgeschichte*, historical anthropology and ethnology, sociology, memory studies, and the history of reading in order to analyze the importance of schools for the socialization of youth in early sixteenth century Hungary. Special emphasis is placed on the learning of "civilized" conduct and its effect on the role of mediator between elite and popular culture that youth played once they returned to their communities after finishing their education.

The section entitles *(Counter-) Reformation*, focuses on the interplay between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation as opposed ideological systems, and contains three case-studies. Stanko Andrić, Scientific Adviser at the Croatian Institute of History's Unit for the History of Slavonia, Srijem and Baranja in Slavonski Brod, authored a paper entitled *A Protestant's Letter and its Catholic Interpreters: Michael Starinus's Pastoral Report from 1551 and its Echo in Croatian Historiography*, wherein he analyzes a letter written by Michael Starinus, Franciscan friar and Paduan student turned Protestant preacher. Andrić claims that many Croatian historiographers misinterpreted certain Starin's claims about the violence and torture allegedly committed by Protestants against Catholic clergy, believing such historians likely read their own biases into Starinus's text, and that this can be proven through historiographical and philological analysis. *As Christianity Becomes Blind: Echoes of the Terrible History of Francesco Spiera in the Hungarian and Slavic Lands* by Ma-

rina Miladinov, freelance translator and lecturer at the Theological Faculty 'Matthias Flacius Illyricus' in Zagreb, focuses on local specificities of the popular accounts of the Paduan lawyer Francesco Spiera, who renounced his Lutheranism under the pressure of the Inquisition and later died 'damned and deranged'. This 'terrible history' is of particular importance since it served as a textbook example used by the Catholic Church to illustrate the fate of apostates. Franc Kuzmič, custodian at the Murska Sobota Regional Museum, contributes an article entitled *The Evangelical Church in Surd as a Spiritual Center for Međimurje and Prekmurje in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. He examines the organization of the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church community in Surd, with special emphasis on the ways its members fulfilled their spiritual needs once their religious freedom was curtailed during the Counter-Reformation.

The fourth section bears the title *The Reformation at the Borderlands*. It is the largest and thematically central part of the entire volume and focuses on the regional specificities of the Reformation, positing that the Reformation itself was a 'borderland' phenomenon. The Croatian lands are particularly relevant in this context due to their complex political organization and their location on the boundaries between the Holy Roman Empire, Hungary, and newly-liberated Ottoman Lands, each of which has a considerably different cultural, social and religious heritage. The first paper in this part of the volume was written by Maja Čutić Gorup, Senior Research Assistant at the History Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, and was entitled *Promoters of Protestant Thought in the Principality of Pazin*. Gorup analyzes the relations between the Holy See and the bishops of Pićan, Poreč, and Pula (towns in Istria), the correspondence between the employees and collaborators of the Urach printing house, the testimonies of Pietro Menelfi, Grison and Valier's apostolic visitation and various anti-Reformation documents of the Austrian government in order to establish which noblemen and priests participated in promoting Protestant thought in the Principality of Pazin. The next paper, *Prekmurje (Districtus Transmuranus): Its Connections to the Croatian Lands during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation Period* was authored by Andrej Hozjan, Assistant Professor at the History Department of the University of Maribor. The goal of the paper was to explore the connections between the Prekmurje region in Hungary (today in Slovenia) and the Croatian lands during

the turbulent Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods as well as the role the Bánffy and Nádasdy noble families had in both of these processes. *The Dravsko Polje District of the Augsburg Confession – A Styrian Border Area during the Reformation Period and its Connections to the Croatian Lands* by Žiga Oman, teaching assistant at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor, is a case-study on a religious community of the Augsburg Confession in the Dravsko Polje district whose members included most of the local nobility and the townspeople of Maribor and Ptuj, and its links with the Croatian lands during the 16th century. The fourth paper, *The Reformation in Northwestern Croatia, Northeastern Slovenia and Southeastern Austria in Light of Aristocratic Connections* by Gene S. Whiting, is a historical-genealogical case study of the pivotal role of aristocratic families (especially the Zrinskis, Bánffys and Batthyánys) in promoting the Reformation movement in the regions mentioned in the title, which were at that time all part of Hungary. The last paper, *The Process of the Reformation in the Trans-Drava Area of the Diocese of Pécs in the 16th Century* by Szabolcs Varga, Senior Lecturer at the College of Divinity in Pécs, examines the link between the Ottoman encroachment on the Pécs region south of the Drava river and the appearance of Protestantism (Lutheranism, Calvinism, Unitarianism) in that area.

The final section in the volume, *Cultural Reformation*, examines the scope and effectiveness of two practical attempts to evangelize the Croatian historical lands in the 16th century. The first of the two papers presented herein is *The Urach Printing Shop and its Significance for Croatian Literature: Production – Finance – Distribution*, written by Hermann Ehmer, Honorary Professor at the Evangelical Theological University of Tübingen. Ehmer presents new data on books printed in the Croatian language in the 16th century and the financing of the mentioned printing shop by donations from all across the Habsburg Empire, and discusses some theological questions related to printing Protestant books. The final work in the volume was *The Adaptable Religious Politics on the Zrinski Estates during the Reformation* by Nataša Štefanec, Associate Professor at the History Department of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Zagreb. Focusing on the Zrinski noble family, Štefanec examines how aristocratic families who converted to Protestantism in the Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom treated sacral buildings and projects on their lands, and to

what extent they intervened in the activities of Catholic priests and monks who worked there.

In conclusion, the greatest value of the papers contained within this conference volume lies in the fact that they open new venues for further international and interdisciplinary research projects on the topic of the legacy of the Reformation movement in Croatia and the contacts between Croatian and foreign reformers. Hopefully, such research shall help increase Croatian public awareness of the plurality of Croatia's religious heritage and pave the way for further constructive discussion of this often-ignored aspect of Croatian history. The texts presented in this volume will also surely contribute towards a better understanding of the local realization of the Reformation as a universal European religious and historical movement.

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