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The Crisis of Spirituality in the Late Middle Ages: From the Twelfth Century to the Protestant Reformation; with an Emphasis on the Reformatio Sigismundi (1439)

By Albrecht Classen
The University of Arizona

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The Crisis of Spirituality in the Late Middle Ages: From the Twelfth Century to the Protestant Reformation; with an Emphasis on the *Reformatio Sigismundi* (1439)

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I. The Reform before the Reformation

As both medievalists and early modernists have long recognized, the Protestant Reformation was only the final culmination point in a process the beginning of which can be traced back even several hundreds of years, at least to the high Middle Ages. What happened in 1517 was not at all an unforeseen explosion which no one would have expected. Martin Luther was not the first, and also not the last to endeavor to introduce reform, to change the Orthodox Church in its corrupt shape and to break open the encrusted structure, to return to the origins of Christianity, and to reinvigorate the ethical and moral foundation of the Christian religion according to the original teachings. His protests against the institution of indulgence letters, against the cult of saints, and his questioning of the priestly authority in all spiritual matters were formulated in a striking, but certainly not innovative fashion.[1]

We only need to think of John Wycliffe (ca. 1320–1384)[2] and John Hus (1369–1415),[3] or, taking an even more historical perspective, of the Cathars/ Albigensians, the Beguines, the mystics, and countless individual critics already in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries challenging the Church and its claim on absolute authority with regards to being the exclusive intermediary to and with God and hence on being privileged to enjoy absolute political power (Peter Abelard, Walther von der Vogelweide, Peter Waldo, countless so-called heretics, etc.).[4]The events surrounding the years from 1517 onwards, involving much legal and theological wrangling, extensive media outreach, intensive writing and publications, and a whole lot of propaganda activities from both sides,

Author: *The University of Arizona. e-mail: aclassen@email.arizona.edu*

[1] See, for instance, the contributions to *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); the contributors to *A Companion to the Reformation World*, ed. R. Po-chia Hsia. Blackwell Companions to European History (Malden, MA, Oxford, and Carlton, Victoria, Australia: Blackwell, 2006), focus more on the Reformation itself and the subsequent developments. By contrast, more recent research has paid considerable attention especially to local attempts to achieve reform before the Reformation; see, for instance, Jörg Bölling, *Reform vor der Reformation: Augustiner-Chorherrenstiftsgründungen an Marienwallfahrtsorten durch die Windesheimer Kongregation*. Vita regularis / Abhandlungen, 61 (Berlin and Münster: LIT, 2014); *Thüringische Klöster und Stifte in vor- und frühreformatorischer Zeit*, ed. Enno Bünz, Werner Greiling, and Uwe Schirmer. Quellen und Forschungen zu Thüringen im Zeitalter der Reformation, 6 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2017); *Reformen vor der Reformation: Sankt Ulrich und Afra und der monastisch-urbane Umkreis im 15. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gisela Drossbach and Klaus Wolf. Studia Augustana, 18 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

[2] See, for instance, Walter Rügert, *John Wyclif, Jan Hus, Martin Luther: Wegbereiter der Reformation* (Constanz: Südverlag, 2017); *De scientia dei: John Wyclif*, ed. Luigi Campi. Auctores Britannici medii aevi, 30 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); *Europe after Wyclif*, ed. J. Patrick Hornbeck II and Michael Van Dussen. Fordham Series in Medieval Studies (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

[3] Thomas A. Fudge, *Jan Hus Between Time and Eternity: Reconsidering Medieval Heresy* (Lanham, Boulder, et al.: Lexington Books, 2016).

[4] Martina Hartmann, *Humanismus und Kirchenkritik: Matthias Flacius Illyricus als Erforscher des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001); Wolfgang Frenz, *Ketzer: religiöse Opposition im europäischen Mittelalter* (Stegen/Ammersee: Druffel und Vowinckel, 2004); *Die Kirchenkritik der Mystiker – Prophetie aus Gotteserfahrung*, ed. Mariano Delgado. Studien zur christlichen Religions- und Kulturgeschichte, 2 (Fribourg, Switzerland: Academic Press, 2004); Franz Josef Schweitzer, *Meister Eckhart und der Laie: ein antihierarchischer Dialog des 14. Jahrhunderts aus den Niederlanden*. Akademie-Geschichte, 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2009); Michael Van Dussen and Pavel Soukup, *Religious Controversy in Europe, 1378–1536: Textual Transmission and Networks of Readership*. Medieval Church Studies, 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Manfred Lütz, together with Arnold Angenendt, *Der Skandal der Skandale: die geheime Geschichte des Christentums* (Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna: Herder, 2018). See now also Nelly Ficzel, *Der Papst als Antichrist: Kirchenkritik und Apokalyptik im 13. und frühen 14. Jahrhundert*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 214 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019). Literature on this topic is actually legion.

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created the critical mass that ultimately led to the 'revolution,' that is, to a fundamental paradigm shift, creating a new world in which at first there were suddenly two Churches (Catholic and Lutheran), but soon enough also a world in which religious groups proliferated rapidly and fought against each other, with the Orthodox factions acrimoniously embattled against liberal sects, free spirits against authoritarian groups, etc. (Lutherans vs. Calvinists and Zwinglians, Schwenkfelders, Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, etc.).

Frustration existed everywhere, and subsequent wars (Schmalkaldic War, The Thirty Years' War) terribly settled scores with a terrible toll of blood on all sides.[5] This paper will take us back to the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries in order to trace the public discourse focused on the downfall of the Church and the loss of spirituality as a foundation for the imminent Protestant reformation.

However, the intention of this paper cannot be, of course, to bring to light the multitude of voices raised everywhere both attacking the old Church and defending it. Much scholarly ink has already been spilled on those issues, and I do not want to carry the proverbial coals to Newcastle. More relevant and insightful promises to be to focus on a highly influential text in which the fundamental criticism against the Church came most clearly to the fore well before Luther, summarizing the broader chorus and driving it forward by emphasizing the spiritual crisis affecting every aspect of life in the late Middle Ages, and thus also the Church. Instead, after an examination of ever-growing anti-clericalism since the twelfth century, I will turn to the *Reformatio Sigismundi* (*Reformacion keyser Sigmunds*) which was closely associated with the Conciliar movement, and thus mirrored the widespread discomfort with and anger about the general malaise. The intention here is to combine the analysis of the theological with the literary arguments that together contributed fundamentally to the transformation of the late Middle Ages. As we will observe, the *Reformatio* digested much of the public discourse and assumed central position for the subsequent decades leading up to the Protestant Reformation. The author obviously picked up much of the older discourse directed against the Church and reformulated it in such a way that his treatise became a rallying cry of enormous impact, ultimately leading to Luther's own accomplishments.

II. The Late Medieval Paradigm Shift

Paradigm shifts have always presented the most intriguing situations both for historians of many different backgrounds and for scholars working in the field of mental history, which includes the history of literature, religion, art history, social, technological, and economic conditions, the history of emotions, and the history of everyday life. The profound changes leading to such a shift might be determined by external, material, or technical challenges, such as in the case of the invention of the printing press, or they might be the result of a deep crisis in spirituality, which this paper will address through the study of several selected literary and religious documents. It might be an idle question of what came first, the significant changes in the external economic, political, military, and technological conditions (including corruption, the disruption of the exchange system supporting feudalism within a Christian universe, or maybe even climatic changes), or the transformation of the broader mindset leading to new questions, critical approaches to traditional structures, or the discovery of old or new truths. There were countless factors contributing to the evolution from the high to the late Middle Ages, and then to the age of Reformation, but at one point, certainly around or shortly after 1500, a fundamental shift in the global world view emerged, whether we accept the narrow or the more global concept of a paradigm shift as developed by Thomas Kuhn, above all.[6]

While previous research has focused primarily on the various theological and political debates, which often involved the question regarding alleged heresy as perceived by the authorities,[7] my purpose at first is to examine more thoroughly the spiritual crisis as perceived by a number of late medieval poets and

[5] I have explored the global consequences most recently in the Introduction, "Epochs, Paradigm Shifts, the Middle Ages, and the Early Modern Age: Where are we Situated Today?," *Paradigm Shifts During the Global Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. author. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, # (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

[6] Paul Hoyningen-Huene, "Paradigma/Paradigmenwechsel," *Lexikon der Geisteswissenschaften: Sachbegriffe – Disziplinen – Personen*, ed. Helmut Reinalter and Peter J. Brenner (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau, 2011), 602–09. The theoretical concept has been heatedly discussed in many different scholarly disciplines and continues to plague the academic discourse in many corners; see, for instance, *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450–1650*, ed. with and intro. by Claire Farago (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1995); *Geschichtswissenschaft und "performative turn": Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit*, ed. Jürgen Martschukat. Norm und Struktur, 19 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2003). For the field of early modern literature, see, for instance, Stefan Seeber, *Diesseits der Epochenschwelle: Der Roman als vormoderne Gattung in der deutschen Literatur* (Göttingen: V& R unipress, 2017). For more historical-theoretical reflections, see *Crisis in the Later Middle Ages: Beyond the Postan-Duby Paradigm*, ed. John Drendel. The Medieval Countryside, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015). As to the concept of paradigm shift, as discussed by Robert Merton and then Thomas Kuhn, among others, see Thomas Willard, "Goddess and Guide or Treasury and Machine?: Seventeenth-Century Debate about the Role of Nature," *Paradigm Shifts During the Global Middle Ages and Renaissance* (see note 5).

[7] See the contributions to *Heresy and the Making of European Culture: Medieval and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Andrew P. Roach and James R. Simpson (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013); cf. also Michael D. Barbezat, *Burning Bodies: Communities, Eschatology, and the Punishment of Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2018).

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chroniclers who contributed to the establishment and growth of a discourse in the Foucauldian sense.[8] Even though the Catholic Church managed to hold on to its power for a very long time despite massive internal conflicts and problems, most poignantly expressed by the Schism between 1378 and 1417, it became increasingly evident that this facade was losing its strength and was about to collapse because of the deep dissatisfaction among people about the religious conditions.[9]

III. Crisis

Every crisis indicates that a structure, an institution, or an organization, in physical or emotional terms, is losing its foundation. Crisis can emerge within an individual, a social group, a community, a region, a territory, a country, a continent, or even within the entire world. The term 'crisis' indicates that a fundamental principle is no longer fully at work, that the basic building blocks of an entity are no longer properly available or have been lost. There is the danger of imminent collapse, whether this will occur rapidly and devastatingly, such as in nature, if we consider an avalanche, the outbreak of a volcano, or a tsunami, or whether it is the slow but steady erosion of a human relationship, of a sense of identity, of belonging, or the loss of an intellectual and spiritual framework. The crisis in material terms, at least within human society, is commonly preceded by a crisis in spiritual or ideological terms, and once both crises have reached critical mass, the entire building, to use a metaphor, comes crumbling down.

The *OED* offers the following definitions for crisis: "A vitally important or decisive stage in the progress of anything; a turning-point; also, a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent; now applied esp. to times of difficulty, insecurity, and suspense in politics or commerce," or: "The point in the progress of a disease when an important development or change takes place which is decisive of recovery or death; the turning-point of a disease for better or worse; also applied to any marked or sudden variation occurring in the progress of a disease and to the phenomena accompanying it."[10] The word 'crisis' can be found in a flood of scholarly and popular literature and reflects on many different phenomena, all of which, however, have one feature in common: the realization that an old entity is no longer sustainable and is in the process of giving way to something new, which is taking place in a destructive, and perhaps then also constructive way.

Virtually every academic discipline has used that word of crisis, whether historians, economic historians, medical or social researchers, or mathematicians, chemists, or sociologists. Every crisis results either into a revolution, a war or at least into some kind of conflict, whether this proves to be progress or a cataclysm. Without a crisis, we might say, there cannot be reform or a revolution, so advancement ironically depends heavily on crisis, or it is the result of it. For us as pre-modernists, there is nothing more valuable but to study past crises because they illustrate in a very poignant fashion how and why things went wrong, why people behaved in a certain way, and what the outcome of that crisis was, which all can be read in analogy to our own conditions today.[11]

IV. Medieval Anti-Clericalism

One of the central points of criticism against the (Catholic) Church, and this already since the thirteenth century, was aimed at the rise of an overbearingly strong hierarchy of the political structure and the loss of spiritual purity among the clergy due to a constant growth of materiality. The chorus of poetic and didactic voices addressing the widening discrepancy between the public claims by the clergy and the reality of their actual lives intensified throughout the centuries, as reflected by the vast corpus of texts dealing with anti-clericalism.[12] Many of the poems contained in the

[8] As to the generally perceived crisis in the late Middle Ages, see Ernst Schubert, *Einführung in die Grundprobleme der deutschen Geschichte im Spätmittelalter*. Grundprobleme der deutschen Geschichte (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992); G. Bois, "Discussion: On the Crisis of the Late Middle Ages," *Medieval History Journal* 1.2 (1998): 311–21; Werner Rösener, "The Crisis of the Late Middle Ages in New Perspective," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 99.2 (2012):189–208, focuses primarily on ecocritical problems. The research on this topic is truly legion.

[9] For older research, see *The Dawn of the Reformation in Europe* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1854); James Mackinnon, *The Origins of the Reformation* (London, New York, and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, 1939); Alister E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1987); W. E. Winterhager, "Ablasskritik als Indikator historischen Wandels vor 1517: Ein Beitrag zu Voraussetzungen und Einordnungen der Reformation," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 90 (1999): 6–71; C Scott Dixon, "Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and the Origins of the Reformation Narrative," *The English Historical Review* 132 (556) (2017): 533–69.

[10] *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44539?redirectedFrom=crisis& (last accessed on Jan. 17, 2019).

[11] See, for instance, Gerard Delanty, *The European Heritage: A Critical Re-Interpretation* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, and New York: Routledge, 2018).

[12] José Mariano Sánchez, *Anticlericalism: A Brief History* (Notre Dame, IN, and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972); Wendy Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval And Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter A. Dykema, and Heiko A. Oberman. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, LI (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1993); Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Antiklerikalismus und Reformation: sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*. Kleine Vandenhoeck-Reihe, 1571 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); Geoffrey Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism in the German Reformation: Johann Eberlin von Günzburg and the Campaign Against the Friars*. St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, England, and Brookfield, VT: Scholar Press, 1996); Birgit Beine, *Der Wolf in der Kutte: Geistliche in den Mären des deutschen*

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collection *Carmina Burana* (ca. 1220/1230) mirror this deep distrust of and frustration with the Church at that time.[13] The poet of "Licet Eger cum egrotis" (no. 8), probably Walter of Châtillon,[14] does not hold back in his explicit charge that the clergy has lost its ideals, that Christ's bride, Christianity, has become corrupt ("sponsa Christi fit mercalis," 3, 3), that the altars and the Eucharist are being sold to the highest bidder (3, 5–8), and that greed and lust for monetary gains have taken over the clergy (4). No one leads a pure life (8, 1), the wall protecting chastity has collapsed (8, 2). Those who want to assume the post of a bishop would spend much money to secure that appointment (8, 7–8).[15] Many other poets, such as Walther von der Vogelweide, subsequently followed suit, and sharp criticism of the church and its clergy became a trope of virtually all satirical literature, whether we think of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (ca. 1350), Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (ca. 1400), or Heinrich Kaufringer's verse narratives (ca. 1400). Laughter about the hypocrisy determining the Church peeled throughout the centuries, and the members of the monasteries (male and female) were particularly targeted for their presumed pretentiousness to lead a holy life.

Critical mass, however, was not reached until the end of the Middle Ages, although the critical discourse continued well beyond the early sixteenth century and the establishment of the Protestant Church.[16] Significantly, once the Reformation had actually taken place, the tradition of medieval protests against the Orthodox Church continued to play a significant role, particularly in the subsequent discourse on the direction the Reformation was to take in the future. As Joanna Miles now confirms, engaging with the medieval past was relevant for the Protestants "to establish continuity with the English past . . . to connect to their Englishness and establish themselves not as adherents to a foreign 'heretical' influence, of Luther or Calvin, but as heirs to a well-established English tradition of religious reform, of Wycliffe."[17]

One of the most powerful literary expressions of this global criticism against the moral, ethical, and spiritual decline within the Church and society at large, at least within the English-language area, can be found in William Langland's famous *Piers Plowman* (composed in various stages between the mid-1360s and the mid-1380s). Here the author also targets the increasing role which money plays in all of society, closely connected with the failure of ethics, because falsehood enters the stage in that process. The Seven Deadly Sins gain strong prominence in the second dream, but when the dreamer later seeks help from the allegorical figures of Thought, Intelligence, Study, Learning, and Scripture, he is only befuddled and lost in the scholastic argumentation. Instead, Fidelity, Nature, Imagination, and Patience help him find his way back to himself, that is, to Faith, Hope, and Charity. Nevertheless, at the end, the Harrowing of Hell takes place, and in that process, many evil souls are released, including a corrupt and fraudulent friar, who causes a major disruption within the Church once again. Despite a major effort by Conscience to summon help from Learning and Contrition, the collapse is near. Conscience then sets out to find Piers the Plowman in the hope that he would "put down Pride" (Step XX, 383). She also realizes the great need "to find work for friars who flatter out of need / And no longer know me" (Step XX, 384), but the entire allegorical narrative concludes with desperation because divine Grace is absent.[18]

Mittelalters. Braunschweiger Beiträge zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur, 2, Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1999); *L'anticléricalisme en France méridionale: (fin XIIe-début XIVe siècle)*. Cahiers de Fanjeaux, 38 (Toulouse: Ed. Privat, 2003).

[13] *Carmina Burana*. Mit Benutzung der Vorarbeiten Wilhelm Meyers kritisch herausgegeben von Alfons Hilka und Otto Schumann. 2 vols. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1930); *Carmina Burana*. Texte und Übersetzungen. Mit den Miniaturen aus der Handschrift und einem Aufsatz von Peter und Dorothee Diemer. Herausgegeben von Benedikt Korad Vollmann. Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 13 (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987). For a most recent edition along with an English translation, see now *Carmina Burana*, ed. and trans. David A. Traill. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 48–49 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). For a study of the satirical songs, see Albrecht Classen, "The *Carmina Burana:* a Mirror of Latin and Vernacular Literary Traditions from a Cultural-Historical Perspective: Transgression is the Name of the Game," *Neophilologus*, 94 (2010): 477–97.

[14] This song is also contained in the famous *Cambridge Songs* as no. 14 (Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff. I 17[1]); see *The Later Cambridge Songs: An English Song Collection of the Twelfth Century*, ed. and with an intro. by John Stevens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 34. For Walter, see Walter of Châtillon, *The Shorter Poems: Christmas Hymns, Love Lyrics, and Moral-Satirical Verse*, ed. David A Traill. Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), no. 27, pp. 56–60. It was only in 1925 that Karl Strecker could prove that the thirty-three anonymous poems in the manuscript St.-Omer 351 had been composed by Walter (Traill, xxi).

[15] Vollmann, ed. (see note 18), believes that the poet of this Latin song was Walter of Châtillon (ca. 1135–ca. 1179); Traill, ed. (see note 18), suggests the same.

[16] Albrecht Classen, "Anti-Clericalism in Late Medieval German Verse," *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (see note 17), 91–114; id., "Anticlericalism and Criticism of Clerics in Medieval and Early-Modern German Literature," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 72 (2014): 283–306.

[17] Joanna Miles, *The Devil's Mortal Weapons: An Anthology of Late Medieval and Protestant Vernacular Theology and Popular Culture* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2018), 23.

[18] William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Modern Verse Translation*, trans. Peter Sutton (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014); for the latest research, see *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. Andrew Cole. Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), Curtis A. Gruenler, *Piers Plowman and the Poetics of Enigma: Riddles, Rhetoric, and Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017); Claire Marshall, *William Langland: Piers Plowman*. Writers and Their Work Series (Tavistock, Devon: Liverpool University Press, 2018). The literature on this poem is legion, of course.

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V. Reformatio Sigismundi

Anti-clericalism, however, cannot be simply equated with any kind of opposition to the Church or religion. The protests voiced everywhere were not so much aimed against the institution itself, but against the abuse of clerical authority. This general discomfort, unrest, or irritation finds some of its best expression in the famous *Reformatio Sigismundi*, first composed in Basel in 1439 and first printed in 1476, 1480 and 1479 (Augsburg: Bämler; with at least seven reprints until 1522). Here we come across a major critical voice, whose identity has not yet been determined. Older researcher suggested that he might have been a man called Friedrich von Lancironi, or Landskron, or Lantnau, or Friedrich Feiser, or a Magister Friedrich, or Valentin Eber, or Heinrich von Beinheim, but this all belongs to the realm of speculation, and we do not even know whether the author was a cleric or a layperson.[19] We are certain, however, that he powerfully and in a rhetorically elegant fashion addressed the crisis as it was generally perceived in the fifteenth century and that he achieved great success with his work. Analyzing the *Reformatio Sigismundi* will allow us to look both forward and backward in time and thus to gain a solid understanding of the profound historical-narrative tradition addressing the crisis of spirituality, as it was formulated already in the vernacular, both in German and in other vernaculars (Middle English – John Wycliffe; Medieval Czech – John Hus).

The anonymous author seems to have participated in the famous Council of Basel (1431–1449) and might have originated from there as well, perhaps working in the chancellery of Emperor Sigismund of the House of Luxemburg (1368–1437), whether he was a cleric himself or a lay person. The *Reformatio Sigismundi* immediately experienced great popularity, as the various manuscript copies produced following shortly after the appearance of the original indicate (1439, 1440, 1449, 1448–1452, 1469, 1470, etc., that is, sixteen in total, and fifteen incunabula and early modern prints), and it was mentioned probably the last time around 1600, before it was rediscovered by modern historians.[20]

As scholars have repeatedly documented, this critical document does not open a really new chapter in anti-clericalism, but it succeeded most dramatically in formulating wide-spread criticism of the shortcomings within the Church and society at large. As the author emphasizes immediately, reflecting upon God's response to the dire situation here in this world: "wan dein zorn ist offen, dein ungenade hat unns begriffen; wir geen als dye schoff on hirten, wir gen an dye weyde an urlaub" (50, here following ms. N, Weimar, Landesbibliothek Ms. Fol. 73, fol. 24r–64r; Your wrath is obvious; your withholding of grace affects us, we are like sheep without a shepherd, we are moving into the pasture without permission). Without necessarily calling for a revolution or a radical transformation of the entire institution, the author simply observes that the fundamental order in his world has been lost, both in the religious and in the secular sphere (52). The leaders in the country, both within the Church and among the laity, would have to be blamed for their readiness to abuse their powers for their selfish goals (52). The author appeals, above all, to the free imperial cities to step up to defend the order in the country, whatever that might mean, and to help to restore "alle gerechtigkeyt," which has "kein gelidmaß und stet in gebrechen und in kummer von tage zü tage" (52; all justice which has no internal limbs, is suffering from frailty, and experiences sorrow day in and day out). Despite all previous efforts to institute reform throughout the entire social system, those in power have only spoken idle words and then turned their 'ass' against it all, as the author formulates it literally (54). Irrespective of all attempts during the Council of Constance (1414–1418), under the leadership of Emperor Sigismund, and then during the Council of Basel (1431–1449), the religious leaders disrespected all of them out of selfish interests, which thus made null and void all strategies to reform the Church altogether from within (56).

Three points were formulated, however, first, to fight heretics; second, to secure peace everywhere; and third, to carry out a reform of the clergy and the laity (56)—all very well-known issues voiced already since the thirteenth century at the latest. However, as the author then observes, all the Church leaders have fled or removed themselves in their attempt to defy those efforts. Hence, strong physical force would be necessary to realize the reform: "man kan dye reformat nit außgeben dann mit gewalt und pene / zu verorden, daz sye bestee" (56; the Reform cannot be carried out unless with physical force and punishment that would have to be imposed so that it can be maintained). Voicing profound frustration, the author laments that the

[19] Jacob Salwyn Schapiro, *Social Reform and the Reformation*. Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, 90 (New York: Columbia University, 1909), 94–95; for a full discussion of the author's possible identity, see Heinrich Koller, ed. (see note 25 below), 4–10; for a good summary of the current research on this issue, see id., "Reformatio Sigismundi," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd compl. rev. ed. by Kurt Ruh et al. Vol. 7 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 1070–74.

[20] *Reformation Kaiser Sigismunds*, ed. Heinrich Koller. Monumenta Germaniae Historic 500–1500. Staatsschriften des späteren Mittelalters, VI (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1964), 1–17; for a listing of all mss. and prints, see 33–46; see also the facsimile edition (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1979), 30–31; for an online version of the copy held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Marston MS 273 (late fifteenth century), see https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3444980?image_id=1292896cf.
Hartmut Boockmann, "Zu den Wirkungen der 'Reform Kaiser Siegmunds'," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 35 (1979): 514–41.

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wise people have lost their wisdom and that the entire community of Christians is no longer involved in working toward that Reform (58).

The author puts his finger directly into the wounds of the entire Church, arguing that simony, which would be very similar to corruption and usury, has become a pervasive problem among the clergy, while the wealthy people within secular society would suffer from extensive miserliness ("geytz," 60; probably rather meaning 'greed'), which would destroy all friendship and bring about much disrespect, disloyalty, and injustice (60). The new practice of selling indulgences would have to be identified as a root problem of the loss of all virtues within the Church (62). Simony, however, began when the popes started to take money from the cardinals in return for gaining those posts (64), who then, in turn, followed that pattern, which had devastating ripple effects throughout the entire clerical hierarchy (64).

It deserves mention that many of those charges raised here belonged to the tropes commonly addressed already in thirteenth-century miracle tales, such as by Caesarius of Heisterbach in his *Dialogus miraculorum* (ca. 1219–ca. 1223), according to whom there were many ambitious, greedy, if not power-hungry prelates and abbots who deserved to be punished.[21]The author of the *Reformatio Sigismundi* appears simply more disgusted and enraged about the global corruption within the Church, where simony has become the common business model all the way from the pope down to the ordinary abbots and priors who all sell clerical offices for money (64), and this even to the laity, which uses this opportunity to find profitable posts for their sons and daughters (66). For the author, this universal scandal could only be overcome and solved once God would have released His wrath upon people and begun with the Day of Judgment, charging people for their material desires and, as the author then adds, for their greed, one of the Seven Deadly Sins, of course (68).

By contrast, there would be specific ways out of the chaos of this world, at least in the fifteenth century, if one were to keep in mind the seven sacraments (70–74) and the traditional social structure (74). Those who are eventually able to search for the proper path would be graced with God's help and discover the correct direction (78). This does not imply direct communication with the representatives of the clergy; instead, there is hope that the individual could talk to God directly: "wer den rechten weg sucht, der edelt sich selber und soll ers und sein geschlecht billich sein" (78; who ever seeks the right path, ennobles himself, and that will be just right for himself and his family). Disobedience, meaning opposition to God and the world, would not help anyone and bring about nothing but damage to one's soul (80).

In a subsequent section, the author tentatively draws on the old and highly popular tale of *Barlaam and Josaphat*, a widely disseminated narrative throughout the late Middle Ages that had originated from the Indian biography of Gautama Buddha, although the narrator does not mention those names specifically and cuts the account very short (82).[22] Nevertheless, he explicitly advises his audience to turn away from the external world, where people become blind and lame, experiencing much physical suffering, and urges them to commit themselves to God who is, of course, identified as the ultimate source of every facet here in this life. Basically rejecting the old Church as the relevant intermediary for all religious teachings, the author emphasizes, instead, the need to lead a 'natural life' and to find God "in allen sachen und sein gepot" (82; in all things and to accept His laws).

Subsequently, the narrator expands on his criticism, targeting the scholars, for instance, because they do know what injustice is committed everywhere, and yet they would not stay away from following the same path (82–84). Consequently, he argues that the poor folks would have to take on the task of teaching the cultural elite by means of the Gospels (84). Thus, both the prelates and the university teachers become the main target of his criticism here when he is claiming that these authority figures have actually turned away from God, have blasphemed His holy name, and have absconded their responsibilities: "sye sein abgetretten"

[21]Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum/Dialog über die Wunder*, trans. and commentary by Nikolaus Nösges and Horst Schneider. Fontes Christiani, 86/1–5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009). See also the English trans., Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. H. von E. Scott and C. C. Winton Bland (London: George Routledge, 1929). See the Sixth Distinction with many relevant examples (vol. 3). For a critical introduction, see Karl Langosch, "Caesarius von Heisterbach," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*. 2nd completely rev. ed. by Kurt Ruh et al. Vol. 1 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), 1152–68; cf. also Fritz Wagner, "Caesarius von Heisterbach," *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 2 (Munich and Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1983), 1363–66.

[22] As far as I can tell, previous scholars have not identified this literary source behind this section in the *Reformatio Sigismundi*. The editor Koller, *Reformation* (see note 25), 83, n. 1, only suggests that this passage might have been drawn from Berthold von Freiburg's *Summa Johannis Deutsch* (1294–1296). By contrast, as I would submit, the author seems to have had some knowledge of the *Barlaam and Josaphat* tradition, but he was obviously not quite fully informed. After having witnessed the blind and the lame person, the protagonist turns to God, and the account concludes with the remark that the young man subsequently converted his father and the entire kingdom to Christianity, which is the basic outcome of *Barlaam and Josaphat* as well, whereas here the critical realization concerning the vanity of the physical existence is not addressed, though that leads to the conversion. See the contributions to *Barlaam und Josaphat: neue Perspektiven auf ein europäisches Phänomen*, ed. Constanza Cordoni and Matthias Meyer, together with Nina Hable (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015); for the dissemination of this narrative material throughout Europe, see Albrecht Classen, "Kulturelle und religiöse Kontakte zwischen dem christlichen Europa und dem buddhistischen Indien während des Mittelalters: Rudolfs von Ems *Barlaam und Josaphat* im europäischen Kontext," *Fabula* 41.3/4 (2000): 203–28.

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(84; they have stepped away). Nevertheless, the author then goes even further and criticizes people at large: "und lebet nyemant mee naturlichen" (84; and now no one lives naturally). Even though Christ had broken the door to hell through His own sacrifice, the Harrowing of Hell, thus had defeated the devil, but in the present time, as the narrator emphasizes, the latter has been allowed to leave his prison and to return to humankind, resuming his previously seductive and destructive work, endangering people's souls once again (84–86). The solution would simply be to convert, to return to Christ, and once some individuals would do so, the rest would all follow.

As in the case of other contemporary narratives aiming at criticizing people's hypocritical religious values, the author also projects an exchange between a Turkish nobleman and a Christian knight who appeals to the former to convert.[23] In response, the Muslim prince brutally points out that even though many people would claim to be Christians, in reality they would betray their own Lord, they would hurt each other and would deprive their contemporaries of their honor and goods. The crusades with their massive killing of Muslims would have to be characterized as a self-illusion, not granting the hoped-for eternal life after death. The Turk urges the knight that the Christians should terminate all their external, physical crusades and turn inward, instead, struggling to defeat false Christians: "das wer ein gute merfart" (88; that would be a good journey across the sea).[24] The real challenge would be for the Christians to return to their own spiritual values and hence to convert back to their original faith (88). Once that would have happened, the Muslims would join them, and all people would belong to the same herd: "und wirt ein hirt und ein stall" (88; there will be one shepherd and one sheepfold). The narrator then concludes this chapter by formulating hardly veiled threats against the Church hierarchy insofar as the good people could resort to their weapons to force the prelates to accept reform (90): "man muß daz unkraut auß dem garten suchen und außgetten" (90; one has to look for the bad plants and weed them out).

Following, the author turns his attention to the various figures within the Church structure, from the pope down to the cardinals, the bishops, the priests, etc., warning the audience about common abuse and corruption, which have undermined all traditional values and ideals. As was common in the general fifteenth-century discourse, the ever-growing significance of money also endangered the principles upon which the Christian Church had been built (112–114, et passim).[25] Considering the efforts by the Conciliarist movement during the fifteenth century (Constance and Basel) to replace the papal authority with its own, it does not come as a surprise to read in the subsequent section of much and very sharp criticism of the Holy See. Even though Christ had entrusted His house to St. Peter, its current condition proves to be disastrous and lamentable: "Nu sehe man an, wye woll Ihesus sein hauß versorget hat und nu so ubel stet" (112; Look how well Jesus had taken care of his house and how badly it has been run down by now). Similarly, church law and imperial (secular) law clash with each other, which would undermine the observation of justice globally (114).

The litany of complaints formulated in this *Reformatio* continues and covers much ground which many other didactic and religious authors had already addressed for a long time. The author of this major treatise, however, successfully summarized the global criticism and sharpened it to some degrees, making his own treatise to a powerful instrument in the public challenge of the Church altogether, which is consistently identified as a by then mostly secularized institution in which money and power mattered centrally, whereas spiritual ideals, the core issue for the existence of a Church in the first place, were missing altogether.

The *Reformatio* seems to have achieved its success as a poignant diatribe also because of the author radically approached his task, without sparing

[23] The best example proves to be Hans Rosenplüt's contemporary "Des Turken Vasnachtspil" from 1456, in *Fastnachtspiele aus dem XV. Jahrhundert*, ed. Adalbert von Keller (Stuttgart: Literarischer Verein, 1851), vol. I, no. 39, vol. I, 288–303; cf. Martin W. Walsh, "Conquering Turk in Carnival Nürnberg: Hans Rosenplüt's Des Turken Vasnachtspil of 1456," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 36 (2000): 181–99; Glenn Ehrstine, "Fastnachtsrhetorik: Adelskritik und Alterität in 'Des Turken Vastnachtsspil," *Werkstatt Geschichte* 37 (2005): 7–23. See also, for instance, song no. 66 in the *Heidelberger Liederhandschrift* Cod. Pal. 343 from the first half of the sixteenth century. Here the criticism targets the Christian soldiers and their leaders who fail in defeating the Turks because of their own moral shortcomings. Albrecht Classen, *Deutsche Liederbücher des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*. Volksliedstudien, 1 (Münster: Waxmann, 2001). For a broader overview of how the Turks were viewed in German literature, see Cornelia Kleinlogel, *Exotik – Erotik: Zur Geschichte des Türkenbildes in der deutschen Literatur der frühen Neuzeit (1453–1800)*. Bochumer Schriften zur deutschen Literatur, 8 (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 1989), 19–32. She dates Rosenplüt's Shrovetide play to 1454 (20), without giving any explanation. For a major study of Rosenplüt, though without considering his plays, see Jörn Reichel, *Der Sprachdichter Hans Rosenplüt: Literatur und Leben im spätmittelalterlichen Nürnberg* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985).

[24] Both types of texts existed, those advocating a crusade against the Turks, and those ridiculing the Christians for their own hypocrisy. For the first genre, see Eckehard Simon, *The* Türkenkalender *(1465) Attributed to Gutenberg and the Strasbourg Lunation Tracts*. Speculum Anniversary Monographs, 14 (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1988). For the second genre, see *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlmann. Frühe Neuzeit, 54 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000).

[25] Albrecht Classen, "The Role of Wealth and Money in Medieval and Late-Medieval German Literature," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* CI.3 (2000): 415–28; id., "Money, Power, Poverty, and Social Criticism in the Work of Heinrich der Teichner," *Studi medievali* LI, serie terza, fasc. II (2010): 671–99; see also *Geld im Mittelalter: Wahrnehmung – Bewertung – Symbolik*, ed. Klaus Grubmüller and Markus Stock (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005); the *Reformatio Sigismundi*, however, is not considered here.

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any representative of the Church, including the intellectuals altogether, probably meaning the university professors who have all allegedly turned blind toward the obvious crisis in spirituality (138). Of course, the author himself would have to be counted among the same group, but he insists on having deeper, more spiritual insights because those in authority positions have abused their power to their material advantage. Greed, in other words, has replaced wisdom and spirituality: "alle gotsgabe ist umb ewig gut der sele" (140; all God-given goods serve the eternal blissfulness of the soul). The criticism raised here thus turns from the specific charges against the clergy to a universal lament about the confusion concerning the relationship between material goods and spirituality. Here we grasp the essential concern both in this treatise and in many other contemporary texts dealing with the global crisis affecting the Church and society at large before the Protestant Reformation.

From here the author unleashes a stream of complaints about misbehavior, abuse of power, greed, and corruption both within the Church offices and at the universities, everything coming down to one and the same problem, the unquenchable lust for money secured through taxes, selling of offices (simony), and official ranks: "Dye byschoff von geitzigkeyt on alle notturft wider recht schetzen sye dye priester und nemen in stewr ab wider alles recht und zwingen sye darzü mit processen" (148; Out of greed the bishops charge without any justification the priests and tax them against all rules and force them to submit to this by means of court trials). In that context the author also raises the specter of marriage for priests, as is the custom, according to his knowledge, in the Orient (in the Greek Orthodox world?) and in Spain (150). The author vehemently attacks the strict rule of celibacy, identifying it as one of the core issues creating enormous tensions between the clergy and the laity.[26] World priests should have the right to marry which would make it possible for them to lead an honorable and also spiritual life, that is, to enjoy the marital pleasures and yet also to perform their roles as priests in an honorable fashion after ritual cleansing (154). Accordingly, both husband and wife would be able to lead a life "zuchtiglichen, demutgilichen und gehorsamlichen" (156; respectfully, humbly, and obediently).

In essence, the *Reformatio* proves to be a most eloquent and specific harbinger of Luther's Ninety-Nine Theses from 1517 and many of his various tracts, outlining the fundamental teachings as they would become the guiding principles for the Protestants ca. eighty years later. For the author, this treatise hence serves as a crucial vehicle to warn the entire audience to reform, to convert, and to live according to the basic Christian values and rules, "oder wir geen in gots zornn" (214; or we will walk in God's wrath).

At the same time, he raises his voice to warn people about the dangers resulting from the Beguines and the Lollards (216–24) who live on the results of begging for alms.[27] According to our author, however, there should be only four groups that would be entitled to that kind of income: 1. pilgrims; 2. the members of the four mendicant orders: Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, and Carmelites; 3. lepers; and 4. those who have lost bodily limbs and cannot earn their own living (222–24). Beguines and Lollards, however, appear to him as most suspicious and untrustworthy individuals and groups who deceive people through their presumed piety and devotion. The quest for true spirituality was pursued by many individuals, especially in their realization of the universal crisis, but this also led, as is the case here, to sharp disagreements among the critics.

As to be expected, the *Reformatio* then moves to many different aspects relevant in a Christian society and examines them from a radical, socially relevant perspective, outlining shortcomings everywhere and demanding reform, just as Martin Luther was to formulate it only a few decades later.[28] For instance, he demands that no adulterer, no usurer, and no other person guilty of a severe sin should ever assume a position within the Church administration (228). He requires the observation of specific rules pertinent to all churches and the masses (228–32), and insists that much of the constant bickering and internal conflicts that had resulted from the competition for offices (abbot, bishop, etc.) ought to be repressed. So, while he had at first examined the internal, spiritual problems vexing the Church universally, here he turns to the external, political, administrative, even financial issues, entering even into the domain of how the empire ought to be ruled efficiently by an individual who would be well educated, disciplined, and in full control, pursuing justice and peace (244). His critical view consistently

[26] Carl Pfaff, "Klerus und Laien im Spiegel der 'Reformatio Sigismundi'," *Pfaffen und Laien – ein mittelalterlicher Antagonismus* – ein mittelalterlicher Antagonismus? *Freiburger Colloquium 1996*, ed. Eckart Conrad Lutz and Ernst Tremp. Scrinium Friburgense, 10 (Fribourg: Universitäts-Verlag, 1999), 191–207.

[27] As to the world of Beguines, see, for instance, Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Alison More, *Fictive Orders and Feminine Religious Identities, 1200–1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); for Lollards, see, for instance, Curtis V. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, 70 (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1998); Richard Rex, *The Lollards*. Social History in Perspective (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave, 2002); J. Patrick Hornbeck II, with Mishtooni Bose and Fiona Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy*. Brills Companions to the Christian Tradition, 67 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016).

[28] Lothar Graf zu Dohna, *Reformatio Sigismundi: Beiträge zum Verständnis einer Reformschrift des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960).

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expands and moves from the individual Christian to the Church as a whole and then to the empire globally. Moreover, he discusses the proper behavior of the citizens, of the members of the guilds, of the merchants, physicians, and many other groups. Ultimately, referring to the Emperor as the final authority, the narrator then concludes by emphasizing the great need to restore justice everywhere (332), whatever that might mean in specific terms.[29]

VI. Criticism and Confidence

As much as this author perceives crisis everywhere, and this probably with good reasons, as much he also harbors hope because of the Council of Constance and the Council of Basel, although neither one brought about the actual breakthrough and the long-hoped-for reform both on the outside and in the inside of the body of the Christian community. Hence, the real reform had to wait until critical mass was achieved, the Protestant Reformation in 1517 and in the following years. After all, as the narrator admits himself: "alle geistliche heupter sein aller gotlicher ordenung wider" (234; all spiritual leaders are opposed to every divine order).

True hope rested only in turning away from the Church toward God who would convey His messages to the worldly leader, Emperor Sigismund, who is also depicted in a woodcut placed as the frontispiece in the edition published by Lukas Zeissenmair in Augsburg in 1497.[30] After all, the treatise is called a "Reformatio," and by outlining all the gravamina, the author undoubtedly intended to achieve a reform both in material and in spiritual terms, and thus to establish a new foundation for a radical transformation of his entire world. A crisis was imminent and felt everywhere.

A Baroque Voice Captures It Most Poignantly, Long After the Reformation

Tragically, however, the sense of crisis continued well into the next centuries. In order to round off our reflections and examination of relevant sources, I turn, to conclude this study, finally to a Baroque voice. One of the essential points that I pursued so far was later also expressed by a famous German Baroque poet, Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664), who ruminated on the consequences of the Thirty Years' War on people in Germany and summed up his observations in the sonnet "Tränen des Vaterlands" (1637; Tears of the Fatherland), reaching this insight in the last tercet as follows:

> Doch schweig' ich noch von dem, was ärger als der Tod,
> Was grimmer denn die Pest und Glut und Hungersnot:
> Daß auch der Seelen Schatz so vielen abgezwungen.[31]
>
> [But I will keep silent about that which is worse than death, that is worse than the plague, the fires, and the famine: that many people have been robbed of their souls' treasure]

As much as we might study the history of wars, architecture, technology, literature, music, or fashion, nothing counts more, it would be safe to say, than the examination of the human spirit in its cultural-historical manifestation. We gain profound insight into the essence of human life, past and present, through the analysis of religious attitudes, idealism, faith, dreams, identity, and values. Hopes, dreams, belief systems, anxiety, emotions, and, above all, the desire to reach beyond one's own material existence have always mattered more in all human societies than material conditions. Gryphius's lament is at first aimed at the catastrophic destruction of Germany during the Thirty Years' War in material terms, but he is ultimately much more concerned with the loss of people's souls as a consequence of the horrors of physical suffering.[32] Of course, this was only an iteration of countless other laments voiced a long time before him, such as by Boethius in 525 in his *De consolatione philosophiae*,[33]

[29] The history of the Council of Constance has already been discussed many times; see, for instance, Phillip H. Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance: (1414 – 1418)*. Studies in the History of Christian Thought 53 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1994); *Über die ganze Erde erging der Name von Konstanz: Rahmenbedingungen und Rezeption des Konstanzer Konzils*, ed. Karl-Heinz Braun and Thomas Martin Buck. Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für geschichtliche Landeskunde in Baden-Württemberg. Reihe B, Forschungen, 212 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2017).

[30] See the facsimile edition (see note 25), p. a i v.

[31] Marian Szyrocki, *Andreas Gryphius: Sein Leben und Werk* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1964); Eberhard Mannack, *Andreas Gryphius*. 2nd completely rev. ed. Sammlung Metzler, M 76 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1986). As to his poetry, see Victor Manheimer, *Die Lyrik des Andreas Gryphius* (Norderstedt: Vero Verlag, 2015); Manfred Orlick, "Der sprachgewaltigste Autor deutscher Literatur im Zeitalter des Barock: zum 400. Geburtstag von Andreas Gryphius," *Literaturkritik.de* 18.10 (2016): 98–103; for a solid introduction to Gryphius in English, see Blake Lee Spahr, "Andreas Gryphius," *German Baroque Writers, 1580–1660*, ed. James Hardin. Dictionary of Literary Biography, 164 (Detroit, Washington, DC, and London: Gale Research, 1996), 131–44; for an edition of Gryphius's sonnets, see Andreas Gryphius, *Sonette*, ed. Marian Szyrocki. Gesamtausgabe der deutschsprachigen Werke, 1 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1963). prefer to use my own English translation.

[32] Historians such as Peter Dinzelbacher, *Lebenswelten des Mittelalters 1000–1500*. Bachmanns Basiswissen, 1 (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Bachmann, 2010), 453–61, tend to associate medieval people almost exclusively with a high degree of spirituality, in contrast to modern people. Such contrastive perspectives might be very difficult to maintain, despite an ever-growing number of people today leaving the Church. Even declared atheism does not say that people have no longer a need for spirituality. See now Krijn Pansters, *Franciscan Virtue: Spiritual Growth and the Virtues in Franciscan Literature and Instruction of the Thirteenth Century*. Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 161 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012). In most recent trends within the field of integrative medicine, for instance, there is a remarkable realization of the great significance of spirituality for the well-being of the human body; see, for instance, Allan J. Hamilton, *The Scalpel and the Soul: Encounters with Surgery, the Supernatural, and the Healing Power of Hope* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2008); *Integrative Medicine*, ed. David Rakel. 4th ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier, 2018).

[33] See these recent studies by Albrecht Classen, "Boethius and No End in Sight: The Impact of *De consolatione philosophiae* on Early

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but the German Baroque poet formulated this painful realization in a most dramatic and expressive manner, resonating ever since throughout the centuries.

In this poetic culmination, we hear the profound lament about the decline, if not loss, of human ideals, spirituality, faith, and also dreams, and it strikes us so meaningfully because it summarizes similar worries and deep concerns formulated already centuries earlier, such as by Walther von der Vogelweide in his famous "Reichston," his single stanza "Ich saz ûf eime steine" (no. 27; I sat upon a boulder), among others.[34] While the medieval poets still held significant faith in the possibility of reform, the Baroque poet, as devout as he unquestionably was, examined the catastrophic consequences of the Thirty Years' War and drew an apocalyptic conclusion, virtually desponding over people's chances to survive the horrors in their lives, physically and particularly spiritually.[35]

Modern German Literature From the Fifteenth Through the Seventeenth Century: Andreas Gryphius and Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius)," *Daphnis* 46 (2018): 448–66 (online at: doi 10.1163/18796583-04601010); id., "Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius): The Silesian Mystic as a Boethian Thinker. Universal Insights, Ancient Wisdom, and Baroque Perspectives," *Humanities Open Access* 7.127 (2018): 1–12, Dec. 4, 2018; online at https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/7/4/127/pdf.

[34] Walther von der Vogelweide, *The Single-Stanza Lyrics*, ed. and trans., with intro. and commentary by Frederick Goldin (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 160 (the English translation is on p. 161). Walther voiced much similar criticism in his other stanzas, such as in "Sô wê dir welt wie übel dû stêst" (no. 11, p. 108–09; Woe to you, World, what a bad way you are in!). Since my focus does not rest on the entire history of social and religious criticism in the history of German literature, I can only refer to two standard studies of greater worth, Matthias Nix, *Untersuchungen zur Funktion der politischen Spruchdichtung Walthers von der Vogelweide*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 592 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1993); Hermann Reichert, *Walther von der Vogelweide für Anfänger*. 3rd, compl. rev. and expanded ed. (1992; Vienna: Facultas, 2009).

[35] Volker Meid, *Der dreißigjährige Krieg in der deutschen Barockliteratur* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2017); Albrecht Classen, "German Baroque Poets and their Responses to the Thirty Years' War: An Unchartered Literary Terrain," *Lied und populäre Kultur: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Volksliedarchivs* 63 (2018): 15–34.

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