



The Reformation as a Process of Transformation

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Abstract

The Reformation is described mostly as an upheaval. In fact, it is worth considering this period as transformation. The article is an attempt to modify the usual perception of this historical period. At the very beginning the paper discusses the idea of transformation from a sociological perspective. Then it introduces a comparison of the Reformation with other transitions and the late Middle Ages. This allows at the end to define the Reformation as a kind of consequence of medieval times and their transformation.

Keywords: reformation, culture, Martin Luther, transformation, spirituality

Słowa kluczowe: Reformacja, kultura, Marcin Luter, transformacja, duchowość

The impact of German nineteenth-century research on historical scholarship remains enormous. This might be seen in the scholarly division of history into periods. Looking at the international scene, the overall conviction still seems to be that the Middle Ages ended at some time in the sixteenth century and Modern times then followed. Even if other cesuras are discussed, the organization of academia, the naming of chairs at universities, and the titles of printed series seem to follow this usual assumption. This means a concept still flourishes institutionally, one rooted in the Ranke's concept of the Reformation as an epoch breaking with the Middle Ages,¹ which in itself bears the strong heritage of Protestant self-interpretation. Luther saw himself as

¹ H.-J. Goertz, *Ende der Welt und Beginn der Neuzeit. Moderner Zug im apokalyptischen Saeculum*, [in:] *Endzeiten – Wendezeiten*, R. Moser, S.M. Zwahlen (eds.), Bern 2004, pp. 95–112, 104–106.

the prophet of the last times,² but in the following generations this view melded with the humanist idea of the time before 1500 as a *media aetas*, thus forming the Middle Ages as a period, with the Reformation another period distinct from it.

Obviously, any distinction of periods in history is ambiguous and in some way mirrors the self-interpretation of the times in which they were defined. Nevertheless, the case of the Reformation is somehow different because it sets not only a difference between the Reformation and the Middle Ages (which no one would completely deny the existence of), but also the idea of a rapture or break, which is very popular among leading Reformation historians in Germany. They tend to depict the Reformation simply as a break, or a bit more emphatically and verbosely as a “ground-breaking revolutionary change of the ecclesiastical system being that time.”³ One might give an even more precise background for this idea than just the general Protestant self-interpretation: The idea of ending the Middle Ages at just one moment by one person was developed by Karl Holl at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴ This idea still persists, despite the research over a long period of time showing that the Reformation is a phenomenon with more of a long-term evolution than a momentous revolution. Maybe a deficiency in this attempt to change the common understanding of the Reformation as a breakthrough lies in how it still had to deal with the term of “the Reformation” as a leading term, putting it into plural or playing with the words “reform” and “reformation.” Therefore, below I will not simply replace the term “Reformation” with “transformation” in general but offer “transformation” as a term to better describe what historically can be said about the Reformation as a process changing Europe between 1350 and 1650, than the term “the Reformation” can in itself.

The concept of transformation was established as a sociological theory after the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe which led to the breakdown of the Soviet Empire. It was and remains poorly defined, but one can identify three kinds of use:⁵ 1. the everyday use, meaning any change, 2. in economics to describe the change from a planned economy to a free market, and 3. the general use for a system change. Obviously, when “transformation” is used for the cultural change around 1500, as it is in this paper, the third use is the most appropriate. In this sense, “transformation” means a change affecting the whole of a society in a way that the elements of society are arranged in a new way, including that some of the elements are sorted out and some are newly established. This understanding of system change as a kind

² S.V. Leppin, *Luthers Blick auf das Mittelalter*, [in:] *Die Reformation und ihr Mittelalter*, G. Frank, V. Leppin (eds.), Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt 2016, pp. 113–133.

³ Th. Kaufmann, *Erlöste und Verdamnte. Eine Geschichte der Reformation*, 2nd edition, München 2017, p. 17: “grundstürzende revolutionäre Veränderung des bestehenden Kirchenwesens.”

⁴ S.V. Leppin, *Wie reformatorisch war die Reformation?*, [in:] *idem, Transformationen. Studien zu den Wandlungsprozessen in Theologie und Frömmigkeit zwischen Spätmittelalter und Reformation*, 2nd edition, Tübingen 2018, pp. 1–15, 3–5.

⁵ E. Sandschneider, *Stabilität und Transformation politischer Systeme. Stand und Perspektiven politikwissenschaftlicher Transformationsforschung*, Opladen 1995, p. 34.

of reconfiguration is based on some ideas of Pierre Bourdieu.⁶ It avoids any strong radicality in describing a mode of change, without denying that there has been a real and effective change. The following might help to elaborate what is meant by this. First, I will compare the Reformation with other known transitions in European history. Then I will draw a short sketch of how to understand the Late Middle Ages as the background of the Reformation. Ultimately, then, I will illustrate how the early Reformation could be understood within this framework.

The Reformation compared to other transitions

There seem to be two events in history comparable to the Reformation regarding the impact they had, and the relevance ascribed to them in cultural memory: the traditionally so-called “migration period” or “Völkerwanderung” between Antiquity and the Middle Ages on the one hand, and the French Revolution on the other. While the first, like the Reformation, is linked with the German nationalist historiography of the nineteenth century, absorbing the history of all Teutons into German history, the latter is obviously linked with French historiography, founding the myth of the modern French nation as the heir of the revolution. The myths of both events had to undergo extreme forms of de-mythologization. For the understanding of the French Revolution, it was a major shift when François Furet and Denis Richet not only argued that it was more a work of the elites than of the masses, but also that it did not start with the bourgeoisie but with the nobility, fighting for its own rights against the absolute monarchy.⁷ For the migration period Reinhard Wenskus, with his important study about the *gentes* of this time,⁸ gave way for a new understanding that even questioned the label “Völkerwanderung” itself, replacing it with the more precise term “ethnogenesis.” This means, briefly, that nations stood not at the beginning of this period but at its end, growing in a centuries-long process of gathering together and identity-building. Somehow, the Reformation suffered the same de-mythologization, but regarding a minor point: When Iserloh showed convincingly that Luther did not nail his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church on 31 October 1517,⁹ it upset many Protestants, even though the fact itself was of no major importance, as all participants in the debate admit. It was a kind of symbol for the question of to what degree the Reformation had been a break or not, since Iserloh argued that Luther, instead of posting the theses, had sent them humbly to his superiors, the Bishops: no revolutionary event in that case, but a kind of administration as usual. However, research still has to broaden the picture. Not that the question of nailing or mailing

⁶ P. Bourdieu, L.J.D. Wacquant, *Die Ziele der reflexiven Soziologie*, [in:] *idem, Reflexive Anthropologie*, Frankfurt 1996, p. 127.

⁷ F. Furet, D. Richet, *La revolution*, 2 vols., Paris 1965.

⁸ R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes*, Köln 1961.

⁹ E. Iserloh, *Luthers Thesenanschlag. Tatsache oder Legende?*, Wiesbaden 1962; for recent discussion see J. Ott, M. Treu (eds.), *Faszination Thesenanschlag – Faktum oder Fiktion*, Leipzig 2008.

the theses is important, but the question of the roots of the Reformation *is*. However, while there seems to be at least some similarity regarding the mythological weight as well as the degree of the de-mythologization, we have to look for other parameters to compare the three phenomena. These will be geographical extent, duration, and social impact.

Beginning with the geographical extent, at first glimpse the time span of ethnogenesis seems to be incomparably broad when compared to the others. Even if we do not assume that the Teutons started at the Baltic Sea making their way through the whole of Europe, ethnogenesis did not only effect all of Europe, but actually led to a relocating of Europe's political center from the Mediterranean Sea to what later on would become France and Germany, while, interestingly enough, the religious center remained in Rome, which caused some major problems in the following centuries. Even if this seems to mark a sharp difference from the other phenomena, the French Revolution and the Reformation were also of tremendous impact geographically. The ideas of the Revolution certainly helped the forming of the nineteenth-century civil society throughout Europe, replacing the stratigraphic society of the Middle Ages and Early Modern times. The case of the Reformation is a bit different here. As Diarmaid MacCulloch has shown, the Reformation changed the landscape of Europe entirely, dividing it according to confessional lines.¹⁰ Actually, this means that while the French Revolution spread its own ideas over Europe, the Reformation had positive effects as well as negative: While some countries adopted the ideas of the Reformation, others abandoned them.

For the moment, the duration of the phenomena has to be discussed. Again, ethnogenesis seems to play a special role, as its beginnings can be found in the fourth century, while the end is unlikely to be set before the establishment of the Lombards as the leading group in Northern Italy in the seventh century. One could even argue that its end point would be better marked by the coronation of Charlemagne in the year 800. So, we have to take into account a period of at least four centuries. This seems to be completely different in the cases of the Reformation and Revolution. Both are obviously centered around one single year, 1789 in the case of the former, and 1517 in the latter, which prompted case books to be titled with exactly those years.¹¹ It is equally clear in both cases that the phenomenon itself had a broader extent than one single year. Now, here, the discussion begins: MacCulloch starts the Reformation in the late fifteenth century and ends it at 1700, while others like Tom Brady would set the start around 1400 and the end at 1650.¹² The same can be said of the French Revolution, especially if we wonder how French it really was: If we think about an "age of revolutions," we could start with the American Revolution and span the time until the Russian Revolution in 1917.

The issue becomes even more complicated if we think about the social impact of the events in question. Again, just a few examples will suffice. If we consider the

¹⁰ D. MacCulloch, *The Reformation. Europe's House Divided 1490–1700*, London 2004.

¹¹ C. Mazauric, *1789. La révolution de France. À propos de la Révolution française*, Auxerre 2019; H. Schilling, *1517. Weltgeschichte eines Jahres*, München 2017.

¹² Th.A. Brady, *German Histories in the Age of The Reformations, 1400–1650*, Cambridge 2009.

social impact of the ethnogenesis period to be important, the question of feudalism immediately arises, and we have to admit that the ruralization of society started still under the constraints of the Roman Empire, following internal developments caused not only by, and not even mainly by, the emerging Teutonic groups. The other way around, looking on institutions, one could build the argument that the Roman Empire did not end before 1806 when Francis II casted off the Emperor's crown. This would, interestingly enough, immediately combine the question of ethnogenesis with that of the French Revolution, completely thrusting away the Reformation. However, if we look at educational traditions, the interruption created by the Reformation might be seen as deeper and harsher. Somehow comparable is the situation for the French Revolution and the Reformation: Scholars looking mainly at intellectual history would see many ideas behind the French Revolution being developed years and decades earlier during the French Enlightenment, as one might see important ideas of the reformers being at least pre-formed in the Middle Ages. Both reflections do not lead back to a kind of "Geistesgeschichte" that sees thinking as the decisive motor driving historical development. But it makes one aware of the fact that in history different lines of evolution come together. Even more: The more an event seems to be a kind of break, the more it is in fact like a knot, one in which a number of those lines seem to be intertwined. The more complex our models of interpretation are, the more they have to admit the differences between those lines. This difference does not only affect content, but also the varying speeds of different lines of evolution. This means important cumulations of change in history, even if by self-interpretation and myth concentrated on one spot, cannot be seen other than as a multiplex combination of different lines of unfolding, all of them having different starting points and different ends. In this view, all three of the phenomena under consideration here have to be seen as complex evolutions more than as single events. The most appropriate term I can find for describing all three of them now is transformation, which has for a long time been accepted for the period of ethnogenesis,¹³ but can also be applied to the other two other phenomena. In the following, I will demonstrate what this means for an understanding of the Reformation against the background of the Middle Ages.

The Reformation and the Late Middle Ages

Understanding the long-lasting process of the Reformation means to refrain from linear explanations of it, as was common in the centuries since the Reformation itself. While the classical Protestant model explained that Luther had to animadvert a church that had been constantly falling from its good beginnings, the classical Catholic model answered that the Church in the Middle Ages had been in good shape and Luther had been the one to raise problems without good reason. This was somehow still the state of the debate at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Heinrich Suso

¹³ From 1997 to 2004 even a book series existed with Brill publisher's under the title "The Transformation of the Roman World."

Denifle polemically explained Luther's critique as a consequence of his, to say the least, deficient character,¹⁴ and Protestant research responded, highlighting the relevance of Luther's theology for the current times.¹⁵ But then, during the Second World War and after, a remarkable shift took place: The Roman Catholic researcher Joseph Lortz in his comprehensive history of the Reformation¹⁶ argued that the medieval Church had not for a long time been Catholic in the real sense, so that Luther had not really been struggling with Catholicism, but with a deformation of it. In this perspective, Luther was somehow right, even in Catholic eyes. The Protestant response to this shift did not wait long: Bernd Moeller argued in contrast, that the Late Middle Ages showed a massive increase of piety,¹⁷ putting Luther at both the climax of this development, and causing the break from the same, like Hegel's transition from a quantitative change to a qualitative one. However the confessional shift happened, and at its end, in both contexts the idea remained that a direct line of development led to the Reformation, downwards now in the Catholic view, upwards in the Protestant, both agreeing that Luther somehow dialectically broke with this line.

Seeing such different positions and taking into account the astonishing possibility of a complete change in the evaluation of the Middle Ages within each confessional tradition, one might come to the conclusion that neither the completely negative nor the conditionally positive view on the Middle Ages might be right, but that a new model had to be found, abandoning the idea of linear development and respecting the diverse realities of Late Medieval society and the Church. This idea led to what I would call the "model of polarities" by which I meant that in contrast to a linear understanding of the Late Middle Ages, we should take into account that quite different, even contradicting, phenomena could exist at the same time in different parts of medieval society, sometimes even in the same part of society, and even in the same person. Polarities, understood like this, are what Max Weber called ideal types: patterns we can identify in the substructure of social and religious life.

The Middle Ages themselves knew about particular polarities, for example in the universities, with a definite distinction between *via moderna* and *via antiqua*. However, this distinction in the academic field might be a minor aspect of the entire development. More important seem to be three polarities: regarding the concept of Church government, regarding the social composite of the Church, and regarding the kind of spirituality. All three of them cannot be elaborated here extensively,¹⁸ but a brief sketch should at least show what is meant by the model of polarities.

¹⁴ H.S. Denifle, *Luther und das Luthertum in der ersten Entwicklung. Quellenmäßig dargestellt*, 2 vols., Mainz 1904–1909.

¹⁵ Most important: K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 1: *Luther*, Tübingen 1921; cp. H. Assel, *Der andere Aufbruch. Die Lutherrenaissance – Ursprünge, Aporien und Wege*. Karl Holl, Emanuel Hirsch, Rudolf Hermann (1910–1935), Göttingen 1994.

¹⁶ J. Lortz, *Die Reformation in Deutschland*, 2 vols., Freiburg 1939.

¹⁷ B. Moeller, *Frömmigkeit in Deutschland um 1500*, [in:] *idem, Die Reformation und das Mittelalter. Kirchenhistorische Aufsätze*, J. Schilling (ed.), Göttingen 1991, pp. 73–85.

¹⁸ For this see V. Leppin, *Kulturelle Transformationen in Europa um 1500*, "Gdański Rocznik Ewan-gelicki" 2018, no. 12, pp. 25–54; *idem, Polarities in Conflict. The Late Medieval Roots of the Disputes*

Regarding the *Church government*, any understanding of the Reformation that identifies the medieval Church simply as a “papal church,” as some modern historians do, will fail.¹⁹ Yes, the Latin Church was governed by the Bishop of Rome, identified as the successor of St. Peter and thus the Pope of the entire Church. It was, however, just one concept of the Church among others that identified the Catholic Church with the Pope himself, as for example Sylvester Prierias did, when in his *Summa summarum*, first published in 1514 and often reprinted, he stated that the church was virtually the College of Cardinals and the Pope (“*ecclesia [...] virtualiter et raepresentative simul est collegium cardinalium cum suo capite idest summon pontifice*”).²⁰ This was the clearest expression of what is usually seen as “papalism” in the Late Middle Ages. But papalism was not the only position this time: it was confronted by the position of “conciliarism,” based on the scriptures of William of Ockham and elaborated in the times of the Councils of Constance and Basel in the fifteenth century. In contrast to the kind of top-down model in the papalist party, the conciliarists would plea for a kind of bottom-up model, as can be seen in their use of the word *repraesentare*, for example in the Decree *Haec Sancta* from 1415 about the power of the Council of Constance. The Church, in this sense, was not organized by the Vicar of Christ but gathered around the world. This was not the only case in which a kind of polycentric understanding of the church took the lead. The same can be seen in the frequent attempts of local authorities in the territories as well as in cities to gain the upper hand over the church. When, for example, the Duke of Saxony was able to appoint Bishops nearby, in Meißen, Merseburg or Naumburg, the dioceses became more and more part of the regional landscape and less under the sway of the papal head of the Church.

However, the question of laypeople intervening in ecclesiastical matters was not a simple one. Here we come to the question of the *social composite of the Church*. Clearly, the Church in the medieval understanding was split into “two kinds of Christians” (“*duo [...] genera Christianorum*”).²¹ This did not only mean a difference in social status, but also in law, including the rule that clerics could appeal to be tried in legal cases in Rome instead of at courts in their homeland. In terms of religion the distinction meant that clerics were able to handle the Sacraments, even the Corpus Christi, while the laity were no more than passive recipients of them, the sacrament of marriage being the only exemption. Now, in the late Middle Ages, we can see other forms of participation growing, some in which the laity remained reliant on the clergy, like in the increase of the number of sermons in Churches, some in which laypeople could organize and build their own institutions and societies by, for example, reading books about religion. The laity came to observe the clerics more and more

between the Reformers and their Opponents, [in:] *The Reformation as Christianization. Essays on Scott Hendrix's Cristianization Thesis*, A.M. Johnson, J.A. Maxfield (eds.), Tübingen 2012, pp. 349–371.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, p. 128; H. Schilling, *Martin Luther Rebell in einer Zeit des Umbruchs*, München 2012, p. 108.

²⁰ Prierias, s.c., *ecclesia. I. Summa sum- | marum que | Syluestrina dicitur [...]*, Straßburg: Grieninger 1518, f. 140^r.

²¹ *Decretum Gratiani* C 12 q. 1 c. 7 (*Corpus Iuris Canonici*, Emil Friedberg [ed.], 2nd edition, Pars 1, Leipzig 1879, p. 678).

critically, culminating in the so-called Anticlericalism²² that confronted the real life of clerics with the ethical standards for all Christians in the New Testament. Sometimes the point of critique was not even ethics, but education: Many of the common parish priests had no or little knowledge of theological matters, while among those citizens more and more persons were able to read and, with this, to form their own opinions. One might say there was a kind of suspicion between clerics and laypeople, bringing them more into conflict than cooperation.

This also affected the performance of *spirituality*. Clerics clearly were important for external devotional exercises like receiving the Sacrament with all its consequences. Here, we have to note that among the consequences of sacramental penance is the satisfaction, and fulfilling satisfaction can be eased by indulgences, which might be the best known and most criticized expression of external devotion. But concepts of the Middle Ages that focus on the question of indulgences are at risk of underestimating the medieval opposite pole, which obviously is a kind of inward devotion, as we can see in meditation or in mysticism. In these fields of spirituality, God gives Himself not by mediation through clerics, but immediately by cognition, vision or experience. In the strongest form, He can be present within the believer by the birth of Christ in the soul. This provides a completely different image of the relationship between God and humankind than that offered by external devotion.

The Reformation: Transformation of polarities

Now the elements are together to explain the Reformation in an appropriate way. Seen as transformation in the sense elaborated above, there is no need to assume a total innovation at any step of this development. It is the other way around: We might see and explain how the Reformation tied itself to special elements within the medieval world, configuring them anew in Bourdieu's sense depicted above. If this is possible, and it seems to be, the idea of transformation applied to the model of polarities could make it possible to explain the Reformation in its continuity, as well as in its discontinuity, with the Middle Ages, which might make the model a bit less confessional than traditional models seem to be. So, I try in the following to explain the motives as well as the conflicts of the Reformation using the model of polarities.

First of all, obviously, Luther's theological ideas came from the side of inward devotion. He was a member of the Augustinian Order, deeply influenced by his mentor John of Staupitz, who was one of the leading figures of internalizing devotion in the time around 1500. Above all, there are good reasons to say that Luther's first impulse to protest against some practices in the church of his day arose from his concern with mystical literature.²³ In 1515 or 1516, he carefully read the sermons of the

²² P.A. Dykema, H.A. Oberman (eds.), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Leiden 1993.

²³ For the following, see V. Leppin, *Die fremde Reformation. Luthers mystische Wurzeln*, 2nd edition, München 2017; *idem*, *Luther's Roots in Monastic-Mystical Piety*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, R. Kolb, I. Dingel, L. Batka (eds.), Oxford 2014, pp. 49–61.

fourteenth-century mystic John Tauler. Here, he discovered the idea of penance as a permanent change of life, and not merely going to a confessor. In his marginal notes to his copy of Tauler's sermons, we can see that he was excited about exactly these ideas in Tauler. Now, they formed the first two of the 95 theses in 1517, in which Luther defined penance as something forming the entire life of Christians, contrasting this with merely sacramental penance. Strictly speaking, this is a very clear expression of the polarity between external and inward devotion described above. The very first act of the Reformation is thus a kind of performance of a completely medieval struggle, far from heralding the advent of Modern times.

So, it remains to explain how the Reformation could nevertheless become an event transforming the Church and society. The story can indeed easily be told using the scheme of polarities: After having sent his 95 theses to the bishops, Martin Luther still acted as a devotional author, stressing in his treatises inward spirituality, about, for example, the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ²⁴ over merely external devotion.

But at the same time he gained a reputation as one of the main critics of the Church, and especially of the Pope, of his time. Obviously, here another polarity comes into play, and Luther is not absolutely free of responsibility for this. There were some of the theses attacking the Pope, even if quite cautiously. In thesis 82, for example, Luther asked why the Pope would evacuate the Purgatory for the disgraceful motive of money instead of the most righteous motive of Christian charity.²⁵ Nevertheless, his aim was mainly the reform of devotion, not the destruction of the Church as given. His adversaries, however, actively shifted the issue from devotion to Church. The first to do so of all people was Sylvester Prierias. He had to write the indictment against Luther for the Pope and in doing so, he did not only speak about penance and indulgences, but at the beginning of his statement he put four "fundamental sentences" (*fundamenta*) about the church, directly based on his earlier-developed idea of the Pope virtually being the Church, leading to the conclusion that by no means could the Pope err.²⁶ Both the virtual essence of the Church in the Pope and his infallibility were anything but points of consensus in the medieval church. But Prierias, in his position as Luther's prosecutor, made them the measure of one being a heretic or not. No wonder that Luther in his response in 1520 publicly declared that if Prierias' position was officially held by the Roman Church, the reign of the Antichrist had begun.²⁷ What followed in the same year was the warning of excommunication against Luther and, later the year, the burning of this bull by Luther in Wittenberg. Evidently, the shift from polarity over devotion to polarity over the Church government marked the rift between the old Church and the reforming side.

A third polarity was, however, of importance for the whole process: To enact his reform measures, Luther counted more and more on the laity, not only giving them

²⁴ M. Luther, *Sermon von der Betrachtung des Leidens Christi* (WA 2, 136–142); for the Late Medieval context see V. Leppin, *Passionsmystik bei Luther*, "Luther Jahrbuch" 2017, no. 84, pp. 51–81.

²⁵ M. Luther, *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum* (WA 1, 237, 22–25).

²⁶ S. Prierias, *Dialogus (Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri [1517–1521])*, 1. Teil, P. Fabisch, E. Iserloh (eds.), Münster 1988, pp. 53–56.

²⁷ M. Luther, *Preface to Epitoma responsionis* (WA 6, 328, 12–15).

the opportunity to judge the church's doctrine and behavior by translating the Bible, but as early as in 1520 by claiming that as long as the church authorities showed themselves incapable of reform, the lay nobility had to step into the breach. This was the core argument in his treatise *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* in 1520, with its central argument: "Whoever has crept out of baptism, may claim him- or herself to be ordained priest, Bishop and Pope."²⁸ From this followed the evolution of Protestant churches, promoted by the princes.

In the end, obviously, the Church in Germany, and with some delay all over Europe, had changed. There was no break, there was not even a sudden invention changing it all. What there was rather, was a slow transformation of the situation given around 1500. The polarities surpassed the reconfiguration, and in the end the medieval *Corpus Christianum* had split into a society of confessions.

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²⁸ M. Luther, *An den christlichen Adel* (WA 6, 408, 11–13): “Dan was ausz der tauff krochen ist, das mag sich rumen, das es schon priester, Bischoff und Bapst geweyhet sey.”

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