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A COMPANION TO THE REFORMATION WORLD

Edited by

R. Po-chia Hsia
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In commenting on the Book of Daniel in 1530, Luther reflected on the eschatological mood of the Reformation movement: “Everything has come to pass and is fulfilled: the Roman Empire is at the end, the Turk has arrived at the door, the splendor of popery has faded away, and the world is crackling in all places, as if it is going to break apart and crumble.” The world that Luther lived in had indeed come to an end. Once, Latin Christendom, united in faith and allegiance to the Roman pontiff, had resisted many forces that threatened to break it apart: the struggles between popes and kings, the critique of medieval reformers and prophets, and the mixture of social, national, and anticlerical movements branded as heretical – Lollardy and the Hussite Revolution of the late Middle Ages. Now, challenged by new theologies, the Latin Church jostled for orthodoxy amidst a growing array of churches and sects, each claiming for itself the apostolic mantle of pristine evangelical Christianity.

Suspended as it were between heaven and earth, the world of the Reformation existed simultaneously in different temporal and spatial dimensions. Drawing their inspiration from the world of the Gospels, the reformers and their supporters called themselves evangelicals and clamored for a pure Christianity, purged of its human and papal encrustations. Critics of the Roman Church harked back to a golden ecclesiastical age, much as the humanists advocated returning to the Greco-Roman sources of moral philosophy and rhetorical elegance, for many of the latter were found among the defenders of the causa Lutheri. This imagined world of primitive Christianity was invoked in order to discredit the present world of corruption: there, the true shepherds of Christ, here wolves in clerical garment; then, apostolic poverty in imitation of Christ, now, the pomp of prelates mocking the passio Christi; a past world of the true Kingdom of God struck a poignant comparison with this present world in the clutches of the devil. Yet, “the world is crackling in all places,” as Luther reminded us, for the corrupt world would yield to a new time, to the Second Coming of Christ, to a new world subsumed under heaven.

Convinced though he was of the imminence of the end-time, Luther refused to prophesy its precise advent. For the true church of the new world was like an unborn child,
INTRODUCTION: THE REFORMATION AND ITS WORLDS

a representation and simile of the Church, as the baby in the womb is surrounded and wrapped with a thin skin, which in Greek is called a chorion. . . . The chorion does not break until the fruit is ripe and timely and is brought forth into the light of the world. And thus also is the Church wrapped up and enclosed by the Word and seeks no other teaching of God’s will, except what is revealed and shown in the very same Word, with which it is at peace, and remains steadfast through the faith until such a time, that it will see in that other life God’s light and countenance and hear God Himself preaching on the mysterious and now hidden things, which we have here in faith, but only there in beholding.

Not all waited patiently for the birth of the new world. In their midwifely zeal, radical reformers ruptured the chorion, only to bring forth premature matter and aborted children, as Luther would castigate the Anabaptists “and other enthusiasts and hordes of rebellious spirits.”

Indeed, for the radicals of the Reformation, Luther had stopped dead in the tracks of reform. In the words of Thomas Müntzer, reformer turned prophet of the rebellious peasants and townspeople of Thuringia, Luther was “the spiritless, soft-living flesh at Wittenberg, who has most lamentably befouled pitiable Christianity in a perverted way by his theft of holy Scripture.” Once a follower of Luther, Müntzer became disenchanted with the Wittenberg reformer for his refusal to call on the princes to root out godless popery with the sword. Urging the princes to wield the surgeon’s knife to rip through the womb of the corrupt body ecclesiastic in order to deliver the newborn evangelical church, Müntzer and the other radical reformers failed to understand Luther’s reluctance to hasten a divine delivery. What separated the Reformation of the established Protestant churches and the radical movements was a fundamental disagreement over the timing of the new world of redemption. Eager as they might have been for the Second Coming, the Lutheran Church refused to give in to the eschatological temptation: the imminent end of the world signified not a reordering of society and congregation, as the radicals would have it, whether by violence or peace, but an infinite patience to await the will of God.

If expectations for the future – the end of time itself – created a chasm between the Protestant and radical reformation, it was memory of a past world that cemented the permanent schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the new evangelical churches. History itself was up for grabs. After the battle lines were drawn, the doctrinal fronts stabilized, both the Protestant and Catholic churches turned to create a new understanding of the past world of apostolic Christianity and the present world of confessional conflicts. The blood of martyrs ensured the wounds would not heal, that the world torn asunder would not come together again in desecration of their memory. For the Protestants, the blood of their martyrs flowed in a continuous stream from the persecutions of the pagan tyrants to the repression of papal tyrants. Hence, the Acts and Monuments of John Foxe or the Actes Martyrs of Jean Crespin represented the English and French Protestant martyrs of the sixteenth century completing a redemptive history that stretched back to the world of apostolic Christianity. This was one area in which the Protestants and the Anabaptists held the moral high ground for some time, as initially Catholics played the role of killers rather than martyrs. England, however, proved an exception: the executions of Thomas More and John Fisher gave the Catholic world, especially English Catholics, their martyrdoms and just cause. The bonfires of the Marian reign yielded to the quarterings
under Elizabeth, as English Jesuit missionaries shed their blood to blot out the moral triumph of Protestant martyrdom during the Marian years.

Crucial to the Catholic world’s recovery of redemptive history was not so much its present martyrs, but the discovery of a past world of Christian heroism and sacrifice centered in Rome. The wonder of corporeal perfection after the opening of St. Cecilia’s tomb, the discovery of the full extent of the catacombs, and the cognizance of the bloody baptism of the apostolic church restored the full confidence of the Roman Catholic Church. Publications in the early seventeenth century described the sacred subterranean world of Rome, the horror of instruments of torture and martyrdom, and the stories of early Roman virgins and their families, whose exempla served both to inspire the elites of a resurgent Catholicism and to affirm the legitimacy of the Roman Church, built literally upon the soil soaked through by the blood of martyrs. Parallel to this Tridentine discourse of martyrology, the Catholic renewal fashioned a new ecclesiastical history: Cesare Baronius’s *Annales Ecclesiastici* was published in 12 volumes between 1564 and 1588, to refute the claims of Lutheran ecclesiastical history, exemplified by Matthias Flacius Illyricus’s *Centuriae Magdeburgenses*, that represented the papacy as an aberration of the apostolic tradition. Contesting the Protestant assertion of martyrdom, the Tridentine Church affirmed its own continuous martyrological history, with new chapters written by Catholic missionaries who testified with their lives to the traditional faith in lands far from the doctrinal struggles of Latin Christianity.

As early as 1535, during the turmoil of the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster, the Carthusian monk Dionysius of Cologne linked the confessional struggles at home with the European voyages overseas:

> When Greece was involved in various heresies, finally became schismatic, and hence was cast away by God, it fell into the hands of the Muslims. . . . Did, therefore, the faith or the church perish? To be sure, it has perished with those in the Orient, but meanwhile in the Occident it has increased and remained. Even if here in the Occident – on account of our sins – faith, obedience, and finally the holy sacrifice have been taken away from many cities and territories, they nevertheless remain healthy and unimpaired with others. . . . For God is able to arouse other sons of Abraham even in the most distant nations. . . . But why do we say God can do this, since we know that the same is just now happening in America, Cuba, New Spain, and in other regions, populations, and languages of Great Asia through the Spaniards. And what is happening in Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, India, and on the surrounding southern isles through the Portuguese?

This was a remarkable statement. Tucked away in a Latin manuscript in the Carthusian monastery of Cologne, these lines by Dionysius foreshadowed already the close connections between the confessional struggles in central Europe – where the Protestant schism originated – and the restorative evangelizations in the wider non-European Catholic world. Even as the Holy Roman Empire was torn between the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic churches and rocked by popular revolts, it survived the carnage of the Thirty Years’ War and the witch-craze to furnish reinforcements for the Catholic overseas missions.

Among the Catholic centers that published the annual reports (*Litterae Annuae*) of the newly founded Jesuit missions was Dillingen, seat of the bishop of Augsburg and a Jesuit university. There, the mission reports to Japan from 1577 to 1581 were
translated into German and published for the defense of the Catholic faith in the Holy Roman Empire. The dedication stated “that the Almighty good God, in the place of so many thousand souls in Upper and Lower Germany who were tempted by the Evil Enemy – through numerous unstable new teachings, particularly by the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Zwinglian heretical preachers . . . has elected another people from the other side of the world, who has hitherto known nothing of the holy faith.” No wonder that Catholic Germany was ready for the missions. During the Jesuit Nicolas Trigault’s fundraising tour in Europe (1615) for the China mission, all the leading Catholic princes in the Holy Roman Empire pledged financial support. After the trauma of war and economic recovery in the late seventeenth century, Jesuits from German-speaking provinces would join a steady stream of missionaries who went to Asia and the Americas to serve their God. The worlds of Protestant and Catholic Germanies would have very different geographical references.

The Reformation world is very different today than it was 20 years ago. In 1985 Lewis W. Spitz, late Professor of Reformation History at Stanford University, published his synthesis, *The Protestant Reformation 1517–1559*, the last volume in the series “The Rise of Modern Europe” begun in the 1950s under the editorship of William Langer, which covered the span of European history from 1250 to 1945. The frames 1517 and 1559 encapsulated the history of the Reformation, as it were, between Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses* and the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis. This was a framework adopted earlier in another series across the Atlantic, the “History of Europe” under the editorship of J. H. Plumb, with Geoffrey Elton writing the volume in question (*Reformation Europe 1517–1559*, London, 1963). The history of confessional conflict and Catholicism were not neglected in these series; rather, they were relegated to separate treatments that dealt with the period 1560 to 1598/1610, emphasizing respectively the Catholic Reformation or the confessional struggle.

There was much to be said then for this periodization. Examination fields in early modern Europe in departments of history were often organized around a century; and an orderly match between chronology and theme made good pedagogic sense. The only trouble is that university curricula tend to lag behind developments in scholarship. In my review of *The Protestant Reformation 1517–1559* published in 1986, I had called for a unified analysis of both Protestant and Catholic Europe, taking in the full length of the sixteenth century, in order to compare the disciplinary effects of religion in the entire early modern period.4 I was, of course, only reading the latest signs in historiographical trends. And since the mid-1980s, many studies indeed have been published that stretch the classic terminal dates beyond recognition. Under the late Heiko A. Oberman and his students, the focus of the Reformation was shifted backward in time to the scholastic debates of the late medieval university. Fewer scholars today would suggest that the Reformation was “born deep within a single individual but emerged to become a public matter and a powerful historical force,” as Spitz had claimed. Instead, the battles between the *via antiqua* and *via moderna*, and the influence of German mysticism on Luther, were very much crucial to the development of Reformation theology. The late Middle Ages also presented an urgent interpretative problem: if the thesis of an increasingly more corrupt clergy and declining church has been rejected on the evidence of new scholarship, why was it then that dissident movements in late medieval England and Bohemia – the Lollard and
the Hussite – failed to threaten the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church? The contributions in Part I by Euan Cameron and Larissa Taylor suggest ways to understand the relationship between society and religion, and between official and heterodox religions in the late Middle Ages, without implying a point of origin for explaining the events of 1517 and after.

Grasping the larger structures of society and religion allows us to focus in on the particulars of the early Reformation, located in the German-speaking lands of central Europe. In this area of scholarship, the theoretical debates from the 1960s to the 1980s proved stimulating; the Marxist concept of an “early bourgeois revolution,” the model of communal Reformation, and the theory of confessionalization have spurned various studies, but the utility of any one hegemonic theory is now quite exhausted in the agenda of research. An enduring legacy of these fruitful decades of scholarship is the recognition of the need for a better integration of the history of social movements and the history of theology. While focusing on the years between Luther and the Religious Peace of Augsburg, the four contributions in Part II on the Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire explore the various connections between ideas and structures, theology and society. Concerned above all with giving a balanced exposition of the extraordinarily diverse religious and social movements of protest in the first decades of the German Reformation, the authors have desisted from allegiance to hegemonic theories that had dominated the German-language scholarship in the field.

From the cradle of the Reformation in Germany, new religious movements spread to other European lands, as if the one Saxon heresy had begotten a multitude of monstrous offspring to plague Latin Christendom. For the faithful of the Roman Church, like the sixteenth-century French physician Antoine Valet, it was a divine warning:

A witness, a witness, will be for us Germany
When she opposed Christ with fraudulent Lutheran perjury
Stuffed with innumerable offspring monstrous
Saxony suffered and felt divine wrath wondrous.

Saxony, however, did not suffer alone. Within a few short years of the Ninety-Five Theses, the first evangelical martyrs – two Augustinian friars – were burned at the stake in Brussels. In western Europe and Italy, Luther’s Latin treatises made a significant impact among intellectuals, although the German and hence national dimension of his appeal necessarily limited the Wittenberg reformer’s influence on larger society. However, in Scandinavia, with extensive ties to the Hanseatic cities, and in eastern Europe, thanks to the extensive German settlements – in urban trading centers along the Baltic and in Bohemia and in the compact villages of Transylvania – Luther’s message and evangelical reform made rapid progress.

For western Europe 1534 represented a crucial year for the Reformation breakthrough. On the surface, it seemed as if the Protestant challenge had been successfully contained. The Anabaptists represented a nuisance in the Low Countries, but hardly the menace they were in neighboring Westphalia; harsh repressive measures kept the peace in the Habsburg lands even while the Anabaptists seized power in Münster in northwestern Germany. In France, the incipient evangelical communities
seemed shattered by royal ordinance, faced with the determination of Francis I to crush all heresies after the Affair of the Placard. In the Iberian peninsula, the Protestant heresy remained a distant echo. Even in England, where Henry VIII was about to break with the papacy in pursuance of his marital and dynastic goals, the allegiance of a deeply traditional Catholic England seemed not to have been in danger. Yet, the flight of one French evangelical to escape the dragnet of Francis I’s repression would help to change the confessional landscape of western Europe in the decades to come. The remarkable career of Jean Calvin and the equally dramatic history of the city of Geneva sent a second shockwave to rock the foundations of the Roman Catholic Church. Often called “the Second Reformation,” the Calvinist movement roared into France and the Low Countries, unleashing a series of religious civil wars in the former and an uprising against Spain in the latter. In England, the regrouping of Protestantism after the Catholic interlude of Queen Mary assumed an increasingly Calvinist character, thereby slowly transforming the Anglican Church, with its heavy Catholic vestiges, into a national Protestant Church during the long reign of Elizabeth. In Italy, Calvinism seduced some influential intellectual and clerical elites, before it was crushed in the 1550s in the cities of northern and central Italy. Even in Lutheran Germany, the Calvinist Reformation won allegiance, thus igniting bitter intra-Protestant strife that lasted until the eve of the Thirty Years’ War. But it was in eastern Europe that the Calvinist Reformation gained the most brilliant though impermanent success: of short duration as it turned out in Bohemia, before being crushed by Emperor Ferdinand II after 1619; of great fashion among the Polish nobility, before Jesuit devotion won back the elites of the nation in the mid-seventeenth century; and of endurance in Hungary-Transylvania, where Calvinism became the confession of the ruling dynasties of Transylvania into the late seventeenth century and the allegiance of Hungarian communities down to the present day. This complex development in eight countries of Europe is told in Part III, where readers can discern the parallel trends in eastern and western Europe.

Unscathed by the Protestant Reformation, the Iberian kingdoms of Spain and Portugal emerged to become bulwarks of the Catholic renewal. In these staunch Catholic lands, the history of religiosity evolved without any perceptible breaks; and the ready reception of the decrees of the Council of Trent signified not so much reform but an affirmation of Catholic allegiance. This Catholic energy was manifest above all in the founding of new religious orders, both male and female, positive energy one may say, but also in the impulse to control and repress, as exemplified by the institution of the Holy Office, the Inquisition. While this papal institution remained in clerical hands in Italy (with the exception of Venice), in the Iberian peninsula it functioned as a royal institution with judicial competence extending to the far corners of the Spanish and Portuguese dominions from Lima to Goa. These developments, scrutinized in the chapters of Part IV, also included the large-scale international confessional struggles of the early seventeenth century – the Thirty Years’ War and the English Civil War. Together with the French religious civil wars and the Netherlands Uprising, the 90 years from 1560 to 1650 were indeed the age of religious violence.

Extending across the confines of the oceans, it seemed as if God had rewarded the Catholic faith of the Iberian nations with maritime conquests. The Reformation world, as the chapters in Part V remind us, was no longer confined to the quarrels
between Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and Catholics. The titanic struggle between Christian confessions and the bloody martyrdom of religious dissenters played alongside an equally dramatic story that unfolded on the world historical stage. An earlier generation of historians and missiologists used the term “spiritual conquests” to describe above all the Catholic conversion of the Spanish Empire. Long discarded for its Eurocentric and restricted ecclesiological perspective, historians of religion are exploring new topics in the history of early modern global Christianity. The stories of Latin America, India, China, and Japan were different tales that constituted a single discourse: the encounter of Catholicism and non-European religions and cultures developed in different contexts of power relations. Whereas Christianization accompanied Hispanization or Lusitanization in the Americas, with its relatively dense network of colonial institutions and settlements, the Spanish and Portuguese religious dominions were much more tenuous in Asia. The south Asian case highlights the dependence on a single Portuguese stronghold – Goa – and the steady dilution of Portuguese colonial and cultural goals the further Christian conversions worked away from the enclave. Likewise, the Catholic missions in China and Japan developed into independent mission fields only loosely bound to the anchor of Portuguese Macao. That Catholicism suffered horrific martyrdom in Tokugawa Japan in the seventeenth century while suffering a slow decline in eighteenth-century Qing China are stories that edified and entertained generations of pious European readers.

And finally, after the long peregrinations of chronology and continents, we reach the further shores of Part VI, which provides an anchor for the tired passenger after the multiple crossings of the vast oceans of historical events. “Structures of the Reformation World” offers readers some central themes common to both Protestant and Catholic Europe in the course of the early modern centuries. Some common developments were bloody and violent: the campaigns to control popular uses of magic and repress witchcraft led to persecutions stretching from Calvinist Scotland under James VI to the Catholic bishoprics of Central Germany. Likewise, religious violence made martyrs out of all Christian confessions, thus highlighting the structural parallels of their bloodletting while maintaining different martyrological memories built out of doctrinal disagreements. Amidst the shouts of truth and clamors of religious arms, the Reformation world also experienced more reassuring moments of peace. From the start of the religious civil wars in France, communities of their own accord concluded local and regional peace treaties to escape the larger madness, mirroring at a lower level of society the larger religious peace treaties that settled abiding differences. The colloquies and religious peacemaking of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a reminder of the lingering legacy of the leading Christian humanist Erasmus, for whom true Christian piety lay not in doctrinal precision and ceremonial observance, but in charity and peace.

In the ruins of this new Reformation world, the fragments of Old Christendom were used to build the new parishes of the contending confessional churches. Drawing tighter boundaries against one another, the churches also bound their faithful closer to ecclesiastical control through bookkeeping and moral discipline: the parish registers, visitations, synodal admonition, and sanctions by secular authorities complemented the picture of a new parish clergy, gaining in intellectual and moral rigor, and standing more aloof from the common folk. Discipline could only coerce
so much religious conformity. Lest we think of the Reformation world as one in which the early modern states used the confessional churches to make disciplined and obedient subjects of all, we need to remember the sheer force of apathy, passivity, and inertia that thwarted the goals of social discipline. Together with a sense of practicality and tolerance, seemingly widespread in all confessional settings, a regime of peaceful religious coexistence provided an alternative to the religious conformity imposed by the state. In time, this was even extended to the Jews, who of course stood outside the arena of fierce Christian confessional competition and suffered relatively little, in comparison to their lot in the Christian Middle Ages, from renewed Christian religiosity, even in the tense initial years of the German Reformation.

The 29 contributions to this volume come from scholars working (or who have worked) in the United States, Britain, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, Portugal, France, India, and Japan. Several are retired senior scholars; others are still on the first path of their career. Together, they reflect a wide spectrum of national scholarship, as well as generational and gender perspectives. Their vastly different historical backgrounds and styles are amply reflected in the contents of the essays. Far from wanting to impose an intellectual or theoretical agenda of my own, I see the diversity of historical scholarship represented in this volume as one of its strengths. It mirrors the complexity and creativity of the Reformation world and its peoples, eschewing both the restrictions of ecclesiastical discipline and the limitations of hegemonic theories; and it provides detailed guides for readers in their own explorations of this world.

NOTES

3 Cited and translated in Sigrun Haude, In the Shadow of “Savage Wolves”: Anabaptist Münster and the German Reformation During the 1530s (Boston/Leiden, 2000), pp. 67–8.
PART I

On the Eve of the Reformation
One

Dissent and Heresy

Euan Cameron

“There was hardly a period in the second millennium of ecclesiastical history which accepted with less resistance the Catholic Church’s absolutist claims in matters of dogma” (Moeller, “Religious Life,” p. 15). Moeller’s verdict, however applicable to Germany, does not apply equally to the rest of Europe. Dissent there certainly was: however, it was generally localized, diverse, and uncoordinated. Few would now argue that the Reformation followed upon a crescendo of rising protest against the spiritual and dogmatic claims of the Catholic Church. Many of the strongest movements of medieval religious protest had died down considerably from their previous intensity; the Cathars, in western Europe at least, had died out (Lambert, Cathars, pp. 291–6; Cameron, Waldenses, pp. 172–3). One might even ask whether, in most of Europe, the remaining flickering embers of dissent represented the barest residual level of discontent and disobedience, which no system of religious harmonization or repression could be expected to stamp out entirely. Nevertheless, the perennial question of “medieval heresy and the Reformation” cannot be answered so simply. In various parts of Europe medieval dissent and early modern Protestantism overlapped, met, conversed, and mingled with each other. These encounters repay study and comparison.

Many, though not all, movements of religious dissent originated with an intellectual founder or “heresiarch,” who possessed both the learning and the confidence to raise his voice in protest against the received pieties, and inspired the less articulate to follow in his footsteps. Any such potential leader from the theological elite would, however, normally expect to face the challenge of “heresy” long before breaking out, or being forced out, from the academic citadel. The accusation of “heresy” at times meant nothing more than a particularly aggressive ploy in the game of theological disputation. Few academic theologians, in the half-century or so before the Reformation crisis, were willing to air their disputes in public. Wessel Gansfort questioned some conventional wisdom in pastoral theology and on indulgences, but in a paradoxical and profoundly inaccessible scholasticism (Oberman, Forerunners, pp. 93–120; Cameron, European Reformation, p. 86). Johann Rucherat of Wesel challenged the persistently inflated claims made for indulgences, and was hauled back
into line in 1479 (Ritter, “Romantic and Revolutionary Elements,” p. 27; Oberman, *Harvest*, pp. 403ff.). Konrad Summenhart even dared argue that withholding tithes might not after all be a mortal sin: but did so discreetly and in Latin (Oberman, *Masters*, pp. 115–24). By the later fifteenth century, the theological elite seemed sure that academic explanations of theological points ought not to be aired in front of a lay public, let alone any disagreements over them. “In the affairs of the faith, skilled spiritual men are said to understand: the rest of the people only simply to believe,” wrote Thomas Netter of Walden, with the damaging effects of the Lollard heresy at the forefront of his mind (Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, p. 234; cf. Cameron, *European Reformation*, pp. 83, 450 n. 23).

In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, it had briefly seemed possible for the debates of philosophers and theologians to strike fire among a broader community. In Oxford and Prague, a revival of realist Aristotelianism brought renewed certainty that “universals” were real entities rather than semantic abstractions. If there were, as Hus had reportedly argued, a universal donkey, then there was also a universal church, whose attributes could be discussed and compared against those of the real, visible church (Betts, *Essays*, pp. 29–62, 86–106, 132–59, 176–235; Oberman, *Forerunners*, pp. 208–37; Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, p. 232). In this scenario, *via antiqua* realism became the ideology of challenge and protest, *via moderna* nominalism or “nominalism” the underpinning for fideism and acquiescence in the status quo. However, after ca. 1450, if not before, the distinctions within scholastic theology proved far too subtle for such subversive potentialities to be realized. A new form of neo-Thomism grew up, exemplified by Johannes Capreolus (ca. 1380–1444) and represented in Luther’s era by such pillars of orthodoxy as Tommaso di Vio Caietanus and Jakob van Hochstraten. Neo-Thomists habitually argued that divine power inhered in the traditional rites of the church, whereas nominalists regarded the link between the divine plan and its earthly manifestations as a matter of convention or *pactum* (Oberman, *Harvest*, passim). While theological disagreement and dissent might in theory have spilled over into the squares and marketplaces, such disagreement was so confused by cross-currents, interconnections, and jargon that it remained, for practical purposes, confined to the academy.

So, across western Europe, and even to some extent within Bohemia, dissent tended to become intellectually proletarianized. This process makes the sources for popular heresy problematic. Late medieval heresy and dissent offer different facets, which are not always easy to relate to each other. Judicial records reveal the evidence of heresy needed to secure conviction, usually in the form of epigraphic statements admitted by the accused, which may be internally inconsistent and lack explanation of their underlying beliefs. Because interrogators looked for a “complete” confession, these statements can sometimes homogenize and exaggerate the nature of heretical dissent. The behavior and conduct of heretics, as important to the historian as their alleged beliefs, may have to be deduced from fragmentary references. On the other hand, literary remains also survive for popular Lollardy and popular Waldensianism. Sermons, pastoral tracts, catechetical materials bear witness to a stern moralistic piety, whose roots were as often from within the shared medieval culture as from within authentic dissent. Though reasoned argument and continuous discourse are present, it is not clear who owned such manuscripts on the eve of the Reformation, how they read them, and what they made of them.
The Geography and Taxonomy of Heresy in Europe

The oldest surviving heretical movement in Europe on the eve of the Reformation was that which churchmen called by the name “Waldensian.” In the writings of medieval theologians, and of most historians since, this movement was traced back to the spontaneous movement of self-abnegation, voluntary poverty, and vernacular preaching initiated and led by Valdesius of Lyon in the 1170s. In its origins it was nothing more than an obstinate insistence that its members preach in public, whether the hierarchy approved or not. It became gradually transmuted, as organized inquisition took shape ca. 1230–50, into a variety of wide-ranging anticlerical and antisacerdotal protest movements, led by itinerant, celibate pastors or “brethren” and conserved amongst sedentary lay followers or “friends.” Other dissenting strands, especially in Lombardy, surely cross-fertilized and reshaped the movement; but the relative silence of the sources makes any clear narrative impossible.

From ca. 1260–1300 onwards Waldensian dissent was persistently and continuously entrenched in specific areas. In some of its earliest milieux, in Quercy and the west-central Pyrenean regions of present-day France, it was wiped out by the middle of the fourteenth century. However, a successor movement rooted itself in the southwestern Alps and became immovably fixed on both sides of the mountain passes. The Waldenses of Piedmont-Savoy and the Dauphiné emerge into the light of the historical record shortly before 1300, their origins unclear. From their tenacious and successful defense of their mountain valleys, it is most likely that they were native peoples of the region, and that the idea of dissent was brought to them from outside. Although locally based inquisitors and bishops made the Waldenses their business from the 1330s at the latest, the difficult terrain and the fierce self-defense of these communities frustrated ecclesiastical justice over and over again. A coalition of ecclesiastical and secular officials finally obtained a crusade bull from Pope Innocent VIII and attacked the Waldensian lay followers of the Dauphiné with armed force over the winter of 1487–8. A total of 160 people were killed; perhaps ten times that number were dragged through the humiliation of ritual penance. Yet even this did not subdue them. They made full (and surprising) use of all legal means to seek redress: after a 20-year legal process they obtained from a special ad hoc royal-cum-papal tribunal at Paris the cancellation of the acts of the inquisition and the crusade made against them (Cameron, *Waldenses*, pp. 11–95, 151–200). Meanwhile it appears that their Piedmontese cousins were not even attacked.

The Alpine Waldenses established links with similar groups further north in France, around Valence, and sent out colonies of Franco-Provençal speakers into parts of Apulia inland west of Manfredonia, and part of Calabria just inland from the port of Paola. A particularly large and important wave of migrations established Waldensian communities in the Luberon, east of Avignon in Provence, in the fifteenth century. Another important early heartland of Waldensian protest was in central northern Italy, in Lombardy, and possibly some regions further south. However, these groups vanished into all but impenetrable obscurity well before the end of the Middle Ages (Cameron, *Waldenses*, pp. 200–6). In the Marche d’Ancona and Spoleto they may have met or interacted, in the second half of the fifteenth century, with the fugitive remnants of the Fraticelli “of the opinion.” These were vehemently antisacerdotal, though hostile ecclesiastical reporting makes ascertaining their precise beliefs and

It is fairly certain that the Lombard Waldenses promoted the spread of their heresy northwards into what is now Austria and eastern Germany in the early thirteenth century. Waldensian heretics were settled in many small communities along parts of the Danube valley no later than the 1260s and remained at least until ca. 1400; their evangelizers carried the message northwards into the German communities of southern and central Bohemia, and into the Brandenburg Mark along the River Oder. Despite many defections of their leaders in the 1360s and 1390s, and the attentions of some exceptionally dedicated, effective (and surprisingly merciful) inquisitors, a small remnant of dissenters were still receiving ministrations from heretic pastors of some sort in the second half of the fifteenth century. Meanwhile, in a somewhat different fashion, growths of Waldensian protest had appeared around 1400 in several southern German towns and cities, notably Mainz, Augsburg, and Strasbourg, also Bern and Freiburg im Uechtland (Fribourg) in the Swiss Confederation (Cameron, *Waldenses*, pp. 96–150 and refs.). Even this geographical diversity may underrepresent the Waldensian presence: reports compiled of some heretics in Hungary and Bosnia in the middle fifteenth century listed “errors” in many respects similar to those of classic Waldensianism, though some importations from late Hussite rhetoric ensure that these groups defy classification.

England remained untouched by Waldensianism properly so called. However, by the end of the Middle Ages the indigenous heretical movement, the Lollard heresy, had established itself as a vehicle for lay anticlerical and antisacerdotal protest, almost a parallel evolution to Waldensianism. Lollardy arose from an intellectual protest against prevailing theological trends. The Oxford arch-realyst John Wyclif (d. 1384) united a firm belief in the reality of universals with a strict predestinarianism and a conviction that only those who were in a state of grace could validly bear dominion and exercise ministry in the church. Applied in the real world, these beliefs led some academic followers of Wyclif to inspire others to bypass the hierarchy through a ministry of traveling “poor preachers.” These men, canonically ordained Catholic priests, took the vernacular Scriptures to laypeople and disseminated a morally earnest Gospel, which (if realized in practice) would radically have simplified the ritual and cultic life of late medieval Christianity. They produced a large vernacular literature of sermons and scriptural exegesis, some of it written in massive tomes more appropriate to settled ministry in a church pulpit than to clandestine teaching in private houses (Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 225–69; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 60–173; Hudson and Gradon, *English Wycliffite Sermons*; Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*). Sporadic ecclesiastical persecution, the failure of some ill-conceived efforts at political revolt in 1414 and 1431, and the progressive defection of their learned leadership caused Lollardy to dwindle into a movement based on informal gatherings in private houses for reading and discussion by the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Any real threat to the structural institutions of the English Church was by then long past.

After a “dip” in the quantity of documentary evidence for Lollard heresy in the middle fifteenth century, trial records reappear in large quantities from ca. 1480 to ca. 1520, and in many of the same areas as before, especially Kent, London, the Thames Valley and Chilterns, and around Coventry and Bristol. Despite such
geographical and possibly personal continuity, the Lollardy found in England ca. 1500 was different from that seen during the heroic decades of the early 1400s. The traveling ministry of ordained priests ceased: no new ministers were ordained to replace those who died off in the 1440s. In its place less-well-educated lay evangelizers carried around contraband English books and maintained contact between the conventicles of (mostly) small-town artisans where Lollard beliefs persisted. Secondly, no new devotional, educational, or homiletic works can definitely be proved to have been written within this later period (Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 269–83; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 446–507; Thomson, *Later Lollards*). The sermons and Bible translations were still circulated; some Lollard tracts would even find their way into print in the sixteenth century. However, it is not known who owned the quite numerous still-surviving manuscripts nor what use they made of them. Paradoxically, for a movement grown from the work of an inaccessible academic, Lollardy’s intellectual proletarianization does not seem to have led to inevitable atrophy. The clearer, cruder, antisacerdotal protests of the later period may even have been easier for lay hearers to comprehend.

The great Czech movement of dissent, the Hussite heresy, was beyond question the most formidable challenge to the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the later Middle Ages. Alone of the movements to be discussed in this chapter, it succeeded in supplanting the priesthood and the worship of the Catholic Church, over a large part of Bohemia. It alone included a recognizable functioning “priesthood,” which offered something resembling a complete religious service to its adherents. However, here as elsewhere, an earlier heroic phase had been followed by decades of mutual acrimony, compromises, and schisms. The picture of Hussitism on the eve of the Reformation is therefore complex.

The Hussite movement had arisen out of a fortuitous confluence of three spiritual strands. From the late fourteenth century a succession of vigorous, accessible preachers at Prague had inveighed against sin, especially the sins committed by the most materialistic and corrupt of the clergy. Secondly, Czech academics had striven to restore the prestige of the Czech “nation” within the Charles University in Prague against the institutionalized preponderance of ethnic Germans. Thirdly, Wyclif’s philosophical ultra-realism was imported both as an intellectual counterweight to German nominalism and as underpinning for a sharp denunciation of moral abuses in the church. As reforming preacher, philosophical realist, and Czech nationalist, the theologian Jan Hus combined all three strands. However, Jan Hus was not Wyclif, and Hussitism was not Lollardy. In his theological writings Hus did not teach a neo-Donatist rejection of the sacramental ministry of sinful priests as Wyclif did. Hus became a martyr, and an inspiration to a range of diverse religious movements, because his cause was entangled in the complex and shifting ecclesiastical politics at the end of the Great Schism. The king of Bohemia, Václav IV, first encouraged the Czech reformists at the university to secure its adherence to the Pisan papacy, then abandoned their cause when the fathers of the Council of Constance made their hostility to Hus clear. Hus was burned, by the cruelest of ironies, because he refused to recant errors which (he claimed) he never held in the first place and were not present in his writings: he was therefore, in canon law, an obstinate and unrepentant heretic (Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 284–316; Fudge, *Magnificent Ride*, pp. 1–88; Kaminsky, *Hussite Revolution*, pp. 7–23, 97–140).
The Hussite movement was led, in spirit, by a “heresiarch” who was no longer there to direct its course, and who almost certainly would have disapproved of many of the forms which it took. At the risk of oversimplification, one can identify four strands to mid-fifteenth-century Hussitism. Most conservative and hieratic were elements within the Czech priestly and academic elite who insisted, on the inspiration of Hus’s colleague Jakoubek of Stríbro, on giving lay communicants the chalice of consecrated wine in the Eucharist: laypeople had traditionally been refused the chalice in western Catholic practice in the Middle Ages. These “Utraquists” (who gave communion \textit{sub utraque specie}, in both kinds) rapidly formed a separate allegiance within the Czech clergy, supported by a regional nobility outraged by the slur on their nation caused by Hus’s condemnation and burning. In most other respects, socially and liturgically, the Utraquists were conservatives. A second strand was represented by the radical urban protest which flared up among the lesser guildsmen and artisans of Prague at the preaching of the former Premonstratensian canon Jan Želivský: by force of pulpit oratory and popular insurrection he exerted decisive influence in Prague until a coup led to his overthrow and execution in 1422 (Lambert, \textit{Medieval Heresy}, pp. 316–26; Kaminsky, \textit{Hussite Revolution}, pp. 141–264, 434–94; Fudge, \textit{Magnificent Ride}, pp. 90ff.).

The third strand, on which Želivský depended but which outlived him, was the radical, millenarian reformism of the so-called “Taborites.” To the alarm of the university masters and the aristocracy, these fervent apocalyptic believers gathered together at five towns designated as gathering-places of the elect, and set up a new order, social as well as religious. Under Jan Žížka (d. 1424) they became an astonishingly effective fighting force: their victories undoubtedly saved the entire Hussite enterprise against repeated Catholic crusades during the 1420s. In their liturgical life they practiced the utmost simplicity, in contrast to the relative conservatism of the Utraquists (Lambert, \textit{Medieval Heresy}, pp. 323–4, 328–32; Heymann, Žížka; Kaminsky, \textit{Hussite Revolution}, pp. 310–433; Fudge, \textit{Magnificent Ride}, pp. 95–107, 140–1). In their so-called “little bishop” Mikuláš of Pelhřimov they possessed a theologian who articulated their founding documents and gave them some continuity. Ultimately, the Utraquists came to find the church-in-arms of the Taborites an encumbrance as they negotiated with the fathers of the Council of Basel. A coalition of moderate Utraquists and their allies defeated the Taborites in battle at Lipany (May 30, 1434) and outflanked them in negotiation, shaping an agreement with the Council of Basel known as the \textit{Compactata}. This document gave some quasi-legal status to the Utraquist Church within the Roman communion, though problems over the ordination of priests and the apostolic succession dogged it for decades. Taboritism persisted in its hilltop fortress of the Hradiště (renamed Tábor) until it surrendered to the Hussite King of Bohemia George of Podebrady in 1452. The Utraquists, meanwhile, consolidated their position in the Kutná Hora agreement of 1485, which was made permanent in 1512 (Lambert, \textit{Medieval Heresy}, pp. 344–8, 356–8; Williams, \textit{Radical Reformation}, pp. 317–20; Odlozilik, \textit{Hussite King}; Heymann, \textit{George of Bohemia}).

Although Taboritism was a spent force by the Reformation, it influenced the fourth strand of Hussite dissent, the politically pacifist but theologically radical “Unity of Brethren.” Petr Chelčický (ca. 1380–ca. 1467), formerly called Peter of Zahorka, became disillusioned with the Taborites because of their dependence on