



Hazlett, I. (2017) Editorial. *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 19(1), pp. 2-4.

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Deposited on: 17 August 2017

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## EDITORIAL

This Issue represents a gesture of homage to *Irena Backus* whose academic activity has been halted after suffering a sudden affliction. The Foreword by one of her Genevan colleagues, Maria-Cristina Pitassi, captures the nature, scope and significance of Irena Backus's overall and voluminous research output. Here we just want to add that connected with her Polish-British background and her education in England along with the personal contacts that entailed, Irena Backus was one of those involved from the start with the creation of this journal, particularly the principles determining its aims and character. She contributed characteristic studies to the earliest volumes – RRR 1 (1999), RRR 2.1 (1999), and RRR 3 (2000). She has also been a member of the Editorial Board since that time – through which her exemplary role as a willing, keen and exacting peer reviewer has unfortunately been invisible due to the anonymity principle. She was also closely involved with the drafting of the terms of the Douglas Murray Prize, and on one occasion was on its adjudication panel. All in all, then, RRR owes Irena Backus a lot, and we wish her the optimum in her continuing convalescence.

The contributions in this Issue are related to the theme of the 2015 conference of the UK Society of Reformation Studies on continuity and discontinuity in the Reformation. The first piece is a posthumous essay by the late David Steinmetz – another long-term backer of this journal. He had submitted this (with the conference theme in mind) not long before his decease in 2015, and it may well be his last publication. Dealing with the interactions between patristic writings, scholasticism, Christian humanism and the articulations of Protestant Reformation thinking, we have characterized it as an essay rather than a detailed research article. This is because, although grounded in life-long study and deep knowledge, his discussion is general and panoramic, embodying Steinmetz's distinctive aerial and limpid style combined with elegant phrasing, touches of humour, and mobility of vision – and in a genre which is less practised nowadays.

Damiano Acciarino's article deals with one of those wax-nose words in sixteenth-century discourse: 'bishop', and its Greek source. Once the ecclesiological battles in the Reformation era began to rage, protagonists usually had recourse to humanist aids in order to corroborate their respective, doctrinally conditioned stances. This involved foraging ancient Christian sources for original and authentic meanings of words like minister, presbyter, bishop etc. in order to legitimize one's persuasion on church polity. The wide appeal to philology, semantics and lexicography became part of the proof – the trouble was that the

proofs and even the sources were discordant, so that ancient disparities were continuous. The debates between concepts of hierarchical episcopacy and ministerial parity took place later chiefly in Reformed circles in England, Scotland, France and Geneva – but this article also provides a reminder of internal Catholic debate at the last session of the council of Trent on episcopacy and the source of its authority.

The Reformation in Wittenberg has not usually featured much in ‘urban Reformation’ studies. They usually focus on the struggles within imperial free cities, city republics, Hanseatic cities, some west-European capital cities and commercial centres and so on. Natalie Krentz’s archives-based study suggests that this has something to do with the familiar narrative of the religious changes in the town – a magic-wand, quasi-Pentecostal reformation within a year or two following uproar and disturbances in response to the sparks ignited by Luther. The author recalls that the context in which this occurred was actually very traditional – a small town with a new university nestled around the palace of the Saxon electoral duke. The civic administrative council was largely free of power-hungry elites and oligarchies. The other institutions were the castle, the castle church, the parish church, and the university. Krentz does not confirm the force of sudden and miraculous change *ex nihilo* in this scenario – rather she sees transformation in the context of pre-existing, late-medieval, pre-Reformation competing claims for authority in religious affairs between a bishop elsewhere and the various other ecclesiastical and secular authorities in the town. Furthermore, these tensions continued well after 1522, enabling the fresh theology to live and flourish within the anatomy of medieval urban and church structures and its multiple local authorities.

The absence of the Jesuit Order in Ireland did not particularly diminish the prospects of Catholic resistance and revival among the population there in the face of decreed official Protestantism similar to that sponsored by the Crown in England & Wales. John McCafferty’s article, however, shows that in the Reformation era the observant Franciscans in Ireland (who were not completely brushed away, but continued to exist and even thrive in straitened circumstances) became the iconic monastic witnesses to Catholic loyalty and drivers of re-energised mission among the Gaelic-Irish mass of the population, especially its chief and aristocratic families linked to the order. While there are several seventeenth century MS accounts of the Franciscan friars’ activity in Ireland in a publicly hostile political and religious environment, this study is largely grounded in one written by Donatus Mooney, a leading Irish Franciscan based latterly in Louvain and who also visited Ireland as provincial. McCafferty’s analysis of this account taken together with related new narratives of national

origins and destiny suggests that some Franciscans helped create an ideology which was to have a big future in the country: the fusion of ethnic, essential Irishness, Roman Catholicism (especially Franciscan-mediated) and political national consciousness in the face of historic English and then new English and British Protestant intrusion. That said, McCafferty departs gently from predominant academic historiographical tradition by ascribing priority to religious conviction as against negative politics and cultural dressing up.

Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin's article deals not so much with the securing of counter-Reformation piety and devotion grounded in Catholic tradition in a context of oppression, as with Catholic controversial theology and history confronting Protestant advance on the opposite flank of European Christendom: Hungary. It is an interesting example of how the interpretation of cataclysmic events divided the Catholic and Protestant spirits. The trauma for Hungarians in the second decade of the sixteenth century was the invasion of the Ottoman Turks and the subsequent threefold partition of the territory along with the wrecking of the Catholic Church compounded with the spread of Lutheranism and Calvinism. At the beginning of the seventeenth century a Protestant (Calvinist) writer claimed that the Turkish woes had befallen Hungary as divine punishment for long-standing Catholic false worship. Ó hAnnracháin's study focusses in the riposte from an ex-Calvinist and future leading Catholic churchman, Pázmány, who argued that on the contrary, divine wrath had been provoked by factors preceding the Ottoman invasion, namely the incursion of Protestant heretical ideas and practices. This episode intimates the accelerating confessionalization in the seventeenth century of not only religion and theology, but also politics and history.

Lastly, Søren Thomsen studies two Danish prayer books from before and after the Reformation. He argues that there was a demonstrably marked shift from an all-inclusive, unclipped humane and compassionate devotion stimulated by the bodily agonies of Christ – as especially expressed by Mary as exemplar – to a more male-orientated, stoical, patriarchal style of piety in which tones of doctrinal rectitude, socio-religious obedience and duty predominated. This is accounted for by the Danish adoption of catechetical literature from Lutheran Germany along with a general Reformation cultural development (justified by appeal to New Testament Epistles) silencing and marginalizing women in the Church – leading to a usurpation of the faith by the male gender in Protestantism. Thomsen sees Luther as very much contributing to this trend. But a further question still has to be asked or resolved: why did Luther blot out, or if not, sanitize his early stress on the broken body of Christ on the cross for all as the ultimate object of Christian meditation and tuning in with salvation?