

Fondazione Bruno Kessler

Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento

Jahrbuch des italienisch-deutschen historischen Instituts in Trient

Contributi/Beiträge 33

I lettori che desiderano informarsi
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The Protestant Reformation
in a Context of Global History
Religious Reforms and World Civilizations

edited by

Heinz Schilling / Silvana Seidel Menchi



Società editrice il Mulino
Bologna



Duncker & Humblot
Berlin

FBK - Istituto storico italo-germanico

The PROTESTANT

reformation in a context of global history : religious reforms and world civilization / edited by Heinz, Schilling, Silvana, Seidel Menchi - Bologna : Il mulino ; Berlin : Duncker & Humblot, 2017. - 225 p. ; 24 cm. - (Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento. Contributi ; 33 = Jahrbuch des italienisch-deutschen historischen Instituts in Trient. Beiträge ; 33)

Scritti di vari. - Nell'occh. : Fondazione Bruno Kessler

ISBN 978-88-15-27407-6 - ISBN 978-3-428-15322-0

1. Riforma I. Schilling, Heinz II. Seidel Menchi, Silvana

270.6 (DDC 22.ed.)

Cataloging in Publication record: FBK - Biblioteca

Composition: FBK - Editoria

Translations by Korshi Dosoo, Alyssa Evans, Ralph Nisbet, and Mark Roberts

Texts revised by Mark Roberts

This book is published with the financial support of the Provincia autonoma di Trento / Autonomous Province of Trento

ISBN 978-88-15-27407-6

ISBN 978-3-428-15322-0

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Preface

by *Heinz Schilling* and *Silvana Seidel Menchi*

1. *Introductory remarks*

The present volume offers the papers of an international conference held in Trento from October 28 to 29, 2016, at the Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico (ISIG). It faced the task of using the occasion of commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, so as to reconsider the events within Latin Christianity in a comparative perspective and to consider them globally. The universal religious sociology of Max Weber was used and evaluated in the light of the new theoretical and methodological conditions of interdisciplinary and international research.

This also sets a memorial-political emphasis for the 500th year of Remembrance. If the earlier centennial celebrations were concerned with the recognition of the Protestant identity in the national German framework, or at most the European and North American one, in 2017 it turned to inner-Christian inter-confessional and the inter-religious comparison in a global-historical perspective. It is only the inter-religious and trans-civilizing comparison, as show the lectures of the Conference of Trento, published here, that are capable of reliably determining the particular and memorable aspects of the Lutheran Reformation, as well as the reach and limits of its imputed “world-effects”. And last but not least, a diachronic comparative perspective from the past to the present opens up, which may serve to understand better the complex, often irritating, religious fundamentalist and political conditions of our time.

In contrast to a hundred years ago, a great scholarly-sociological approach from a universal-historical perspective can hardly be worked out by a single scholar. Today, a diversified international and interdisciplinary research landscape of specialists is obligatory. In addition, Eurocentric questions are increasingly replaced or supplemented by global-historical

Translation by Mark Roberts

perspectives. Thus, renowned experts on distinct world-religions and particular world-civilizations discussed in Trento the religio-historical and sociological problems raised by Martin Luther's Reformation in an inter-religious and international comparative mode. Certainly, it regards only those specialists who are willing to admit systematic and comparative questioning.

The conference location was doubly favorable, because of long years' experience of ISIG with transnational and interdisciplinary questions, and because of the *genius loci* of the city of the Council of Trent, where comparison between the double Christian Reformations—the one from Wittenberg and the Tridentine—and well beyond, is almost unavoidable.

The pages that follow pursue the double objective of offering the reader an initial orientation in the structure of the volume and its various components, and of drawing attention to certain thematic links between these latter.

2. *Balances and perspectives*

The question *Globalisation of Religion?* posed by Wolfgang Reinhard at the opening of this book confronts the reader with the historiographical and methodo-theoretical foundations, with the irradiation, with the ramifications of Max Weber's epochal work as a sociologist of religion; but it also reveals the limits of his construction.

The grand narrative of Protestant culture as the basis and matrix of what we call "modernity" or "the modern world" was born and flourished in the decade and a half between the epoch-making publication of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/05) and the appearance of the essays *On the Sociology of Religion* (1920/21); but its effects were long-lasting. In the theory of the Axial Period advanced by Karl Jaspers, in the paradigm of the "multiple modernities" of Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, in the updatings and adjustments of the Axial Age idea by Robert N. Bellah, in the doctrines of Hans Joas that are still being elaborated, Reinhard sees as many attempts at constructing a universally applicable sociology of religion.

Although he makes a severe, indeed corrosive, analysis both of Weber's theory—criticized as Eurocentric, and for applying Western categories

to non-European realities such as Asian cultures—and of the paradigm of the Axial Age as promoted by Jaspers and his intellectual heirs—criticised for the unilaterality and arbitrariness of its chronological and spatial divisions—Reinhard nevertheless does not hesitate to espouse a synthesis that demonstrates the efficacy and irradiation of the principle of Reform at a global level. The omnipresence of Luther as an icon of renewal and regeneration—the present volume demonstrates that no culture has been immune to the fascination of this myth—is only the most glaring aspect of that “distant comparison” whose methodological validity Reinhard recognizes, and which he successfully employs in tandem with “close comparison”.

The essay concludes with a challenge to the imagination and flexibility of today’s and tomorrow’s historians. Reinhard recognizes, today, an urgency to the religious dimension of individual and collective experience that would have been unthinkable twenty years ago. That process of secularization which the historiography of the time judged to be irreversible has today become an obsolete interpretative resource. On the other hand, the present recrudescence of religion—understood also as “transcendence” or “auto-transcendence” (Hans Joas)—confers socio-cultural importance on esoteric movements that traditional historiography defined as superstitious or peripheral.

Since the scholarly itineraries of Paolo Prodi and of Wolfgang Reinhard have several times intersected and have influenced one another, the juxtaposition of their voices had been envisaged right from the first planning of the conference. Prodi, however, did not appear at Trento to read the text that he had in good time sent to the Institute he had founded¹. *Europe in the Age of Reformations. The Modern State and Confessionalization* was his last composition. With it he entrusted to the editors of this volume a profession of faith that is at the same time a historico-political testament of great drama and pathos. It will be up to future historians to locate this testament in the context of Prodi’s work and to judge whether the Bolognese master did not here reach the absolute zenith of his power of synthesis and of his intensity of writing.

To juxtapose Prodi and Reinhard means—in the economy of this volume—to put Prodi in dialogue with Max Weber. The entire work

¹ The editors of this volume thank Massimo Rospocher for his forceful reading of Prodi’s paper at the conference.

of the Italian historian may be regarded as a development and a correction of the theses elaborated by the German sociologist. The very foundation of the Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento responded to the need to update and expand Max Weber's discourse—flanking Protestantism with Catholicism as an equally decisive factor in the genesis of the modern world. “The Council of Trent as the Crossroad of European politics”—the theme with which the newborn Institute launched in 1973 its program of conferences—already adumbrated that equation of Protestant “Reformation” and Catholic “Reformation” that finds its definitive codification in the title of the essay we publish here.

He bases his paper on three conceptual foundations, that is to say: 1) the theory of “confessionalization” and its corollaries², 2) the principle of “osmosis” or of reciprocal influence between the religious and the political sphere, and 3) the dialectic of sin and crime.

In a few pages Prodi concentrates his vision of European history from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, while at the same time running through his own career as a scholar from the 1960s until the eve of the conference, which in his eyes must have appeared an opportunity to draw up a balance of his life's work.

This powerful synthesis is characterized by an apocalyptic tone. Historiography suffers shipwreck—we read in these pages—because history suffers shipwreck (or vice versa?); the West commits suicide; the historical cycle that generated “our” Europe comes to an end; the foundations of our society collapse. The essay is filled with metaphors of death, destruction, and defeat. It will be for future historians to decide whether and to what extent these pages document also, and especially, the diagnosis that a historian who was pre-eminently a *homo politicus* made on the nation to which he had devoted his energies, his intelligence, his faith.

In *Politics, Theology, and Religion in the Reformation* Thomas Kaufmann formulates in lucid and compelling fashion the question “why”. Why

² On the paradigm “confessionalization”, which has been developed by Wolfgang Reinhard und Heinz Schilling during the late 1970s and the 1980s, cf. J.M. HEADLEY et al. (eds), *Confessionalization in Europe 1555-1700*, Aldershot 2004, pp. 1-36; S. EHRENPREIS - U. LOTZ-HEUMANN, *Reformation und konfessionelles Zeitalter*, Darmstadt 2008, 2nd ed., pp. 62-79; H. SCHILLING, *Konfessionalisierung*, in *Staatslexikon*, 8th ed., Freiburg i.Br. forthcoming.

was the Reformation? Why is the Reformation? How could a movement that defied all the European powers of the time survive and consolidate itself? The “connection between theology and politics”—what Prodi called the dialectic between religion and state structures, the osmosis between faith and power—was the concerted action that made of a Saxon monk the founder of the church that celebrates this year 500 years of life. Kaufmann’s paper is the demonstration that an interpretative instrument such as Prodi feared and deplored would be rejected by historians is in fact perfectly functional.

The traditional utilitarian reasons advanced for the massive lay adhesion to the pro-Luther movement—first of all the desire of the German territorial princes to possess themselves of the lands and estates of the religious foundations—appear crude and inadequate in the face of this rigorous and differentiated analysis. We see the ranks of lay supporters enlarged and diversified: the territorial princes are accompanied by local politicians, jurists sitting on city councils, officials of princes’ chancelleries, counsellors to the princes. In parallel Kaufmann evaluates, against the utilitarian considerations, powerfully involving immaterial motivations—such as the invitation to lay folk to assume spiritual responsibility in the church, and their co-opting into the sacerdotal organization—, emphasizing well documented cases in which a political role as a prince’s counsellor became an intense spiritual experience (Georg Spalatin).

In the most narrowly historical and documentary sense this analysis concentrates on two turning-points of the early Reformation narrative: the appeal *To the Christian Nobility of German Nation* of 1520—“the Magna Carta of the German Reformation” (Kaufmann)—and the *Confessio Augustana* of 1530. The trump card of religious and political interaction was played, in this decade, sometimes by the Reformer himself but sometimes, more than once, by the politicians contrary to the expressed wishes of the churchman and theologian.

In *Devotion and Institutions in the Age of the Reformations* Pierre Antoine Fabre, a specialist in the history of the Jesuits and the role of Christian images in Europe and the Catholic world, addresses the theme of the Reformation from the perspective most familiar to him, that of the Council of Trent. His earlier researches induced him to question conventional historiographic understandings of an initial mission of the Council, suggesting that the Council is an exception to the rule,

wherein the “rule” in question involves solutions of continuity between dogma and discipline, discourse and practice, the poles around which the Council attempted to organize theological and ecclesiastic coherence.

Fabre thus circulates in a landscape with three different kinds of reality: institutions, devotions, and the relentless inscription of Europe onto a world that Europeans have discovered and that simultaneously reveals to them what they are. On these three realities his contribution to the present volume is centered. The heart of his inquiry concentrates on the difficulty of taking into account for the early modern period what he calls the people of devotions (as opposed to “popular” devotions) and of understanding what he calls the historiographic “depression” around the study of devotional practices between the end of the Middle Ages and the end of the Ancien Régime.

According to Fabre, the joint theological presence of Catholic and Protestant Churches just after the Reformation had a double consequence. On the one hand, Protestant theologians denied to Catholic religious culture any vital articulation between its discourse and practices, considering the latter the vestiges of a faith that was extinct. Conversely, Catholic theologians rejected in Protestant theology, whose autonomy it denied, any possibility of justifying new practices. At the same time both sets of theologians simply took for granted the natural articulation of their own *doxa* and *praxis*. Hence these articulations ended up “forgotten”, in a period during which they were simultaneously under challenge by the general upheaval of Christian society, of *christianitas* in its medieval definition, both by the European crisis of reforms and by the redefinition of the boundaries of the known world. The result was a series of devotional traditions for which their contemporaries did not provide key theoretical elaborations.

Pierre Antoine Fabre conveys the long-term historiographic effects of a historical denial and persists on locating in recent research ways to rediscover this world, at once “ancient” and “new”.

3. *Distant comparisons, close comparisons*

The four essays in the second part of the volume verify the applicability of the basic comparative paradigm to four specific religious cultures: Greek / Russian Orthodox Christendom, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism.

In *Reform Movements in Russian Orthodoxy* Martin Tamcke traces a panorama embracing five centuries. The robust reform movements that shook the Russian Orthodox Church from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century demonstrated, on one side, the existence of aspirations and longings common to the different religious cultures of Christendom, evidencing however, on the other side, the strong internal cohesion of the eastern community of believers and the cohesive power of its devotional traditions.

Reforming ideas and watchwords that pervaded the medieval and modern Church of central and western Europe—the struggle against simony, the opposition to ecclesiastical property-owning, the aspiration to subtract the Church from political influence, even principles of precise theological connotation such as the universal priesthood of believers—successively animate groups of reformers operating within the Russian Church in the fourteenth century (the Strigolniki movement), in the earlier sixteenth (non-possessors), in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and later (Old-Believers). On the other hand, the close relationship between church and crown, and the minute attention paid by the Russian Church to ritual matters—whether to use two or three fingers in making the sign of the Cross—lend support to the author’s concluding judgement: in comparing these two Christian churches, the Orthodox and the Protestant, he reveals two paths fundamentally independent of one another, despite the presence of certain influences of the latter on the former.

Placing Roni Weinstein’s essay *Jewish Culture in Early Modernity. The Global Turn* next to Tamcke’s essay is to juxtapose a case of close comparison to a case of distant comparison. The messianic movement, on which Weinstein focuses his attention, was strongly influenced by Protestantism, and even more by post-Tridentine Catholicism. For this reason, the paradigm of confessionalization turns out, in Weinstein’s judgement, to be perfectly homogeneous and functional for the analysis of the society and political culture of the Israelite community, and also of the Ottoman Empire into which it was inserted.

The messianic movement headed by Sabbetai Zvi during the second half of the seventeenth century swept the entire Jewish world. It indicated well that by this time the Jewish culture and religious traditions acquired a marked global aspect. The major factor dominating this shift

from local basis to globality was the Iberian diaspora, because of its economic, political, and cultural advantages over other Jewish traditions, and certainly because of its international networks.

The early modern period was characterized by intensified encounters between various Jewish traditions, as testified in some cities (Livorno, Amsterdam, Salonika, Istanbul, Cairo) where major Jewish communities were established. It was all the more true in the case of the small Galilean city of Safed, where major intellectual figures from the entire Jewish world were active. This multi-traditional melting pot encouraged a cultural and religious synthesis, crossing religious and political borders between Ottoman Islam and Christian Europe. In short, Safed turned into a “laboratory of modernity”.

The motivation behind this wave of religious creativity, and especially the renaissance of mysticism (“Kabbalah”), was a renovation and reform and religious tradition enhancing religious devotion and piety, in a manner echoing similar changes taking place in Europe (both in Catholic and Protestant contexts) and in the Ottoman Empire.

There were several aspects of this religious reform of global dimensions, encompassing the entire Jewish world during early modernity:

- the rise of “a Jewish Saint” as a source of religious authority, alongside the classical figures of Rabbis and religious scholars;
- the printing revolution, allowing larger portions of the Jewish population access to the entire classical rabbinic canon;
- tightening control over individual consciousness and ideas;
- the appearance, unprecedented in a Jewish context, of well-structured and comprehensive theology, occupied with major themes in Jewish tradition, and especially in regard to religious practice;
- institutionalized battle against figures and ideas considered as dangerous or “heretical”;
- unification of religious law, mainly in the codes of law composed by R. Joseph Karo—whose pioneering role is stressed by Reinhard—intended to be applied over the entire Jewish diaspora;
- the increasing occupation with sin and repentance, as a major component of religious devotion.

With *Renewal and Reform in Sunni Islam* Gudrun Krämer opens to the reader the horizon of the Arabic Middle East in two directions. The first is that of analogy. Between Sunni Islam and Christian Europe there exist transverse links that Krämer reveals and evaluates:

- the phenomenon of confessionalization, understood as the link between religion and state-building,
- the dialectic between faith and works—between interior conviction and exterior conduct—and the consequent applicability to Islam, by analogy, of the principle of *Lebensführung*.

On the opposite side, however, Krämer authoritatively warns against facile comparisons and superficial analogies: reference to the Protestant Reformation and its effects in the West, she observes, is more useful for evidencing the differences than the similarities between the two cultures. Among the absences that distinguish Sunni Islam from Christianity we find:

- the absence of an autonomous ecclesiastical structure, able to make binding decisions regarding doctrine and morality,
- the lack of an institutionalized clergy holding a monopoly on the exercise of the sacred,
- the rejection of the notion of “reform”, since Islam is conceived by its followers as a religion that manifested itself in absolute perfection, one that in consequence cannot be reformed but only brought back to its original purity.

Among the positive principles that specifically characterize Islam, she lists:

- the coexistence of different, even opposite, interpretations of each single commandment, including concrete prescriptions such as the prohibition of alcohol and drugs;
- the absolute pre-eminence of the legal dimension and of moral and behavioral prescriptions over the doctrinal and theological dimension.

When she comes to the modern and contemporary age—from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century—Krämer introduces into her evaluation three concepts that provide three keys to interpreting the present. The encounter between Sunni Islam and the Christian West, which connotes the present time draws its explosive force from:

- the defense of Muslim identity (identity being a concept that will be closely examined by Marco Ventura),
- the watchword of resistance to western colonialism (a phenomenon that plays a key role in the essay by Brian Pennington),
- the appeal to the renewal of Islam through a return to the original purity and unity—including military force—which the community of believers knew in the time of Muhammad, and the political and educational project in which such an appeal takes form.

Krämer concludes her vibrant synthesis with a note that deserves a moment of reflection. Referring to Egypt, and in particular to the Muslim Brothers, she observes that the exponents of this reforming movement have failed in their objective “if this entailed freeing Muslims from Western hegemony in the political, economic, and cultural fields”.

None of the landscapes evoked in this volume has been marked so strongly and so controversially by Max Weber’s paradigm as has India in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Brian Pennington, in *Reform and Revival, Innovation and Enterprise. A Tale of Modern Hinduism*, examines the “Protestantisation of India” as a politico-educational program of profound effect. The Protestant ethic—understood as a combination of asceticism, of disciplined professionalism and of “legitimised capitalistic accumulations” (Pennington)—supplied British India with an ethico-cultural model. Out of it developed a bourgeoisie intended to assist the British in administering the subcontinent.

A program of this kind involved the imposition of western categories to Indian society and an intromission of Christian values into Indian culture—the watchword “reform” affected both the one and the other—which from the nineteenth century aroused a series of political and cultural reactions based on a program of revival. This revival promoted a narrative of an ancient golden age marked by non-idolatrous ritual practice and equitable social arrangements that became eroded as Muslim invaders and other foreigners penetrated the subcontinent.

Pennington argues that this historical framework maps a European history of reformation and counter-reformation onto India’s experience of British colonialism and consequently overlooks the inventive and tactical intercessions that shaped modern Hinduism. Against a narrative of India modernizing under European influence, it proposes a reading of

reforming Hinduism as social and religious innovation. Twentieth-century debates that eventually produced legislation abolishing the dedication of young girls as *devadāsīs*, or temple courtesans, illustrate the manufacture of historical narrative and social practice that works strategically in the historical present in order to fashion creative associations with the Indian past and to achieve contemporary ends. More than reformers restoring ancient practice or revivalists reasserting indigenous authority, these actors functioned as innovators and entrepreneurs in a fluid and contested present.

4. *Events of 1517, accents of 2017*

Recent history has conferred a terrible topicality on the historical memory of religions and religiosity. Religion has recaptured, unexpectedly³, an urgency and a capacity to involve our society at all its various levels such as the earlier centenaries did not know⁴. All the contributors to this volume are marked by the shift of emphasis to the historiographical agenda. The perspective of 2017 is particularly evident in the essays that we have placed in this third and final section of the proceedings.

It was recent events that suggested to Silvana Seidel Menchi *Martyrdom* as the subject of her paper. As a transcultural and diachronic phenomenon, martyrdom lends itself to a comparative analysis because the facing-off between faiths always feeds the culture of self-immolation. In the confessional conflict to which 1517 gave rise, martyrdom acquired an imperative character and self-immolation became an omnipresent behavioral model. The author's aim is to compare the doctrine of martyrdom in the three monotheistic religions.

The essay is divided into two parts. In the first, Seidel Menchi reviews the various registers of the exaltation of martyrdom in sixteenth-century

³ W. MONTER, *Religion and Cultural Exchange 1400-1700: Twenty-first-century Implication*, in H. SCHILLING - I.G. THÓTH (eds), *Religion and Cultural Exchange in Europa, 1400-1700*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 3-24; T. HANF - K. EL MUFTI (eds), *Policies and Politics of Teaching Religion*, Baden-Baden 2014; R. CIPRIANI (ed.), *Religions sans frontières?*, Roma 1993; J. HABERMAS, *Glaube und Wissen. Friedenspreisrede 2001*, in J. HABERMAS, *Zeitdiagnos. Zwölf Essays*, Frankfurt a.M. 2003, pp. 249-262.

⁴ D. WENDENBOURG, *Vergangene Reformationsjubiläen. Ein Rückblick auf 400 Jahre im Vorfeld von 2017*, in H. SCHILLING (ed.), *Der Reformator Martin Luther 2017. Symposium des Historischen Kollegs im November 2013*, München 2014, pp. 261-281.

Europe. In a chorus of celebrations of death as the supreme form of testimony, knowing no confessional boundaries, Seidel Menchi identifies a single dissenting voice (1530). It counterbalances, and in tendency prefers, the testimony of a virtuous life to the testimony of death, cautiously placing Christians on guard against the “raptus” of self-immolation. That this was a risky operation at the level of ecclesiastical policy—and also a very farsighted intuition—appears from the fact that the author, the most famous humanist in Europe at that time, considered it opportune to publish his text under a false name, choosing as his pseudonym a personage who also acted as a protective shield: Saint Cyprian, a Father of the Church and an apologist for martyrdom, who had himself died a martyr.

In the second part of the essay, the viewpoint extends from Christianity to the other two Abrahamic religions. In Judaism, as in Islam, Seidel Menchi identifies a divarication between a culture that exalts the testimony of blood and a culture that relativizes it. In both these cultures, the supreme testimony of faith did not necessarily coincide with death. The dimension of conscience, on the other hand, which in the Christian cultures replaced the dimension of martyrdom especially in the period of the Reformation, has some parallelisms in Jewish culture, but a more controversial role in Islam. On this specific point, however, it would be necessary to interrogate the most recent results of research, and even of research that is still in progress.

Freedom of conscience already appears in the opening essay of this volume as a distinctive feature of “modernity”. According to the viewpoint expressed by Wolfgang Reinhard, freedom of conscience is the long-matured fruit of a Protestantism that contrasts, in this respect, with the “Catholicism of the Paganic Age” (1791-1958), which had “deliberately emigrated from the modern world”. References to the Protestant matrix of freedom of conscience appear in some of the later essays, in combination with the theme of freedom of religion. In *Faith v. Identity: The Protestant Factor in Contemporary European Freedom of Religion or Belief* Marco Ventura develops, with the rigor of a jurist, a theme that underlies this entire collection of essays. The change of emphasis from “freedom of conscience” to “freedom of religion” is imposed by the perspective that Ventura—a major contributor to the international debate on human rights—has made his own.

European jurists and public policies now use the formula “freedom of religion or belief” in preference to “freedom of conscience”, because the former expression is socially inclusive—encompassing theistic as well as atheistic and non-theistic beliefs—and better responds to the socio-cultural dynamic of the post Twin Towers age. Communities or individuals who do not subscribe to the principle—of Protestant connotation—of “freedom of conscience” can invoke the neutral notion of freedom of religion or belief. On this former principle, the conclusion of the essay casts the shadow of a historical condemnation: Protestant-style freedom of conscience has functioned—Ventura suggests—as “a missionary tool, a vehicle of conversion and neo-imperialism”.

Ventura’s argument rests on a crucial distinction, which juridical science has distilled from today’s experience: the distinction between “faith-based religion” and “identity-based religion”. The former emphasizes the individual experience of the sacred, the interior journey of the individual believer, and regards only secondarily the devotional traditions and the continuity of belonging guaranteed by the profession of faith; the latter emphasizes belonging to a specific cultural community, ritual continuity, devotional practices as reinforcement of identity, and tradition as a basic existential factor. These two types of religion correspond to two models of religious freedom, the first type being a weak social binding-agent, more tolerant of alterity and of apostasy, while the second type is strongly socially cohesive, intolerant of deviations and defections. Making use of documents such as treaties and directives of the EU (2007 and 2013), and sentences of the US Supreme Court (2009 and 2014) and of the European Court (2011), Ventura argues that faith-based religious freedom and identity-based religious freedom are today in opposition with one another, indeed in conflict with one another, and that the former—and with it the Protestant-type freedom of conscience—is rightly losing ground to the latter.

In his concluding remarks *Reform, Reformation, Confessionalization. The Latin Christian Experience*, Heinz Schilling argues that the change in the German memorial culture of the Reformation from monarchist authoritarian Protestant triumphalism during the last centuries to a democratic, ecumenical, and trans-national perspective provides an opportunity for a new evaluation of Luther’s and the Reformation’s impact on world history. Contrary to the nineteenth-century interpretation of Protestantism as the key player in the process to capitalism,

democracy and modernity, and to Adolf von Harnack's statement in the 1920s that "modernity ... was initiated by the hammer blows to the doors of the castle church in Wittenberg", the essay extends the perspective for the year 1517 itself beyond Wittenberg into the wider world. It shows that Luther's "hammer blows" alone were not responsible for the deep changes that transferred Europe and the world from medieval to early modern and modern status. In a global perspective, Europe's departure to modernity was the result of a kind of syndrome with three leading forces at its center: the revival of ancient culture by Humanism and the Renaissance; the new knowledge of a wider world; and the reformations of Christianity, provoked by Martin Luther.

Consequently, Schilling qualifies the idea that non-Christian world religions need a Luther to keep up with Western civilization as too simple to capture the complex European experience in developing from pre-modern to modern civilization. In opening the historical perspective beyond the traditional national and European boundaries, it becomes evident that there is no reason to privilege the Protestant Reformation as 'the' key impulse for fundamental, modernizing change.

At a moment when the debate not only in Germany is focusing on Luther and his ninety-five theses, the editors are proud to offer to the international public a volume that in addition to the Wittenberg magnifying glass uses the global telescope to understand the meaning of reforms or reformations in history and present times.

5. Acknowledgements

The editors are most grateful to the authors, who were willing to enter into the comparative debate during the conference, especially for their generous willingness in preparing their articles for the press. In addition, they would like to thank the Auswärtige Amt in Berlin and the Generalkonsulat der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Milan for financial support of the conference.

The Fondazione Bruno Kessler's Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento was an amiable host and our thanks go in the name of all participants to its members and staff. We send our warmest greetings and deepest respects to the former Director of the ISIG, Prof. Paolo Pombeni, who supported the project with energy and courtesy—from