

Zürichs gelebte Reformation / Zurich's Lived Reformation

Veranstalter: Francisca Loetz, Historisches Seminar, Universität Zürich

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The 500-year anniversary of the Reformation in Zurich, Switzerland has been celebrated in numerous popular and theological publications, even including a film release. But the historical dimensions of this development remain under-researched, prompting Francisca Loetz to organize a conference at the History Department of the University of Zurich to investigate the lived, rather than institutional, history of this Reformation. How did the city's inhabitants experience this momentous event 500 years ago, and was it really so world-shattering? The balance between change and continuity was of central importance during the conference, some speakers arguing for a clear break with tradition, others emphasizing practices and beliefs that endured throughout the Reformation, or changed only very slowly. Spaces, sacral and profane, sexualities, normative and deviant, and texts, written, translated, read, performed, and archived, were also of key interest.

ANDRÉ HOLENSTEIN (Bern) provided a political and spatial framework for the conference by demonstrating how various agreements and connections within and beyond the Swiss confederation created a Catholic wedge between the Reformed strongholds of Basel, Zurich, and Bern. However, despite this sharp rift, these tensions actually functioned to bind the Catholic regions to the Swiss Confederation more strongly. Thus, interconfessional conflict served as communication, and clarified the relationships between the Swiss factions rather than further dividing them.

The conference then addressed the theological and pastoral aspects of the Zurich Reformation, and the question how these seemingly well-researched fields can be revitalized in the context of a lived Reformation. BRUCE GORDON (Yale) showed how despite the removal of the sacraments and other theologi-

cal changes, Zurich pastoral care continued to be based on medieval models. In fact, while priests were given the choice to leave their parishes due to their beliefs or remain as Reformed pastors, most stayed, and after a generational change, the role of pastor even became a family business. However, pastors remained poor and at odds with their communities. PETER NIEDERHÄUSER (Zurich) expanded this perspective by demonstrating that in the countryside, the faithful set specific, wide-ranging demands of their clergy and of the Reformation, hoping for changes such as the right to participate in the selection of pastors, the elimination of tithing and bonded labor, and higher income for priests. However, these demands usually went unfulfilled, and the status quo persisted. Thus, the expectations of the rural faithful were often disappointed, just as the pastors' were.

Theology was not only lived in the sense that it was preached and practiced, but because it was negotiated and discussed throughout all levels of Zurich society.

FABRICE FLÜCKIGER (Neuchâtel) analyzed the staging and argumentation of the Zurich disputations, showing that their configuration was supported by and supported Swiss self-conceptions, specifically the idea that collectives were better equipped than individuals, even such exalted individuals as popes and kings, to decide over weighty matters, up to and including the highest religious questions. Thus, the goal of the disputations was less to prove specific theses than to legitimize the form of debate itself. NICOLE ZELLWEGER (Zurich) provided a contrast to these learned disputes by focusing on religious arguments in taverns. She demonstrated that between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, these lay discussions moved from an emphasis on Zwingli as a symbol of the Reformation to an emphasis on theological topics, as well as from insults attempting to destroy the Reformation to dialogues that betrayed the speakers' knowledge of both confessions.

In the context of the Reformation's focus on the Bible as the written word of God, it is clear that theological debate did not only occur on an oral level. Thus, several speakers emphasized the importance of written texts. First,

ANJA LOBENSTEIN-REICHMANN (Göttingen) examined the Zurich Bible itself, showing how the Zurich translation differed from others, especially the Luther translation, in a semantic war between Reformed groups. Luther's Bible, which was supposed to be universally understandable, was argued to be incomprehensible for Alemannic readers, requiring a different translation. Furthermore, the Zurich and Luther Bibles differed in their methods of translation, which also changed their interpretations and resulting texts significantly. Moving from writing to reading, MICHAEL EGGER (Bern) discussed literacy in early modern Switzerland. Reading was encouraged as part of the myriad inter-confessional contentions and rivalries, since increased theological knowledge could be used in religious arguments. Therefore, reading and learning were seen as positive religious acts, and pastors lent or gave away books and encouraged laypeople to buy their own, even covering up the existence of any unorthodox reading materials.

From this discussion of arguments and written works, the conference turned to the way that changing, or unchanging, religious values and norms affected people's sexualities and sexual experiences. JOSÉ CÁCERES MARDONES (Zurich) showed that bestiality was not just considered a bodily sin: it was seen as one of many possible immoral alternatives to heterosexual sexual activity. It was commonplace but not normal, and could be learned from others or prevented through marriage. Many perpetrators were executed, sometimes along with the animal involved, but others were sent to the Zurich hospital or back to their communities. Furthermore, the phenomenon was viewed in terms of actions, rather than identities or perceptions and self-perceptions. MARKUS BRÜHLMEIER (Zurich) argued that same-sex sexual activities were viewed similarly, as courts focused on bodies and actions, specifically male actions such as penetration, rather than on participants' identities. In fact, many authorities hoped that by prosecuting sodomy less often, less sodomy would occur. He demonstrated that official responses to same-sex sexual activity did not change in the course of the Reformation, and that especially women's same-

sex activities were not acknowledged. According to ADRINA SCHULZ (Zurich), while laws and institutions related to prostitution changed during the initial stages of the Zurich Reformation, through the creation or intensification of mandates against adultery and fornication, and through the closure of the municipal brothel, changes to prostitutes' daily lives came much later. Around the turn of the seventeenth century, these new laws began to be carried out and prostitutes and their clients began to be punished for individual sex acts.

Theological changes have long dominated research on both the Zurich Reformation and the period more broadly. In order to go beyond traditional historiography, when discussing theology, conference participants focused on the relationship between beliefs, institutions, and lived experience. EVELINE SZARKA (Zurich) showed that while conceptions of the afterlife changed during the Reformation, this change was not as complete as is often portrayed – belief in ghosts continued to be officially condoned. However, although purgatory was eliminated from the Reformed cosmology and Reformed authorities insisted that ghosts were not the returning souls of the dead but instead evil spirits, many afflicted individuals continued to turn to old explanations and traditional methods of ghost-elimination. LEE P. WANDEL (Wisconsin Madison) argued against the historiographical division of theology and everyday experience into separate categories. She demonstrated that these facets of the Reformation were in fact deeply interconnected by analyzing changes in the sensory, spatial, and temporal experience of the Eucharist. For instance, while old daily rhythms, altar arrangements, and forms of prayer were voided, the Reformed Eucharist was considered no less real for its lack of corporeality.

Institutional spaces themselves were also sites of religious conflict and change. CAROLA JÄGGI (Zurich) spoke on images in Reformed Zurich churches, arguing that while the general Reformed attitude towards images was negative, it was also nuanced. Pictures and statues in churches where the danger of idolatry was minimal were not removed and others were altered to make them acceptable. Therefore, images were not all

treated in the same way, and neither were audiences: ignorant audiences were considered to be in more danger of being misled by these depictions than learned ones. Regarding a different Reformed institution, the Zurich hospital, ALINE STEINBRECHER (Zurich) showed how religious practices such as prayer and penance were used as medical treatments, since sickness was seen as a punishment from God. In contrast, she pointed out that individual patients saw their own actions, such as moaning or psalm-singing, as praise of God rather than as signs of illness, thus contesting official interpretations of these activities.

Other speakers focused on how historical sources were produced and archived. KIRSTIN BENTLEY (Basel) discussed early modern Zurich ego documents, a varied genre including multi-volume journals, one-page resumes, and heterogeneous family books. This form of writing, which developed out of saints' lives and funeral sermons, boomed in Reformation Zurich, especially in contrast with Catholic areas. Bentley showed how these documents complicate typical narratives of confessionalization and confessional identities, and called for further research into the many unedited and unstudied texts, especially those by little-known authors. RANDOLPH HEAD (Riverside) described how documents of the Reformation, specifically letter exchanges, were stored and assembled into text corpora. These letters went through three stages, as they were first written, read, and stored, then archived, and finally collected and edited to become a text corpus. Head argued that the collecting of these letters, just as much as the initial writing of them, turned a series of moments into a period of change. Thus, the speakers analyzing the various aspects of the Zurich Reformation's literary production demonstrated that the translating, reading, writing, and archiving of theological works, autobiographies, letters, and other types of texts were both a way of creating the Reformation and of experiencing it.

The final talks discussed choral music in churches and theatrical performances, disputing traditional stereotypes of Reformation Zurich. HILDEGARD ELISABETH KELLER (Zurich) showed that, although it is com-

monly thought that theater was discouraged or disapproved of during this period, in fact school theaters flourished, especially under the leadership of Jakob Ruf, better known for his medical works. These theatrical practices connected pre-Reformation and Reformation practices, such as through the timing of the performances. These often anti-Catholic productions were used to praise the city and to teach a broad audience, including women and students. JAN-FRIEDRICH MISSFELDER (Basel) and FRANCISCA LOETZ (Zurich) focused on choral music, arguing against typical questions and prompting an investigation into what the faithful expected or wanted from music in churches. Reformers disapproved of choirs where people sang in groups without understanding what they were singing, as this public piety contradicted biblical instructions to pray privately and contemplatively. However, church singing was introduced in Reformed Zurich by the city council with the aim of setting political and confessional boundaries, and became quite popular. This change in musical praxis was also part of the sacralization of everyday space and the totalization of religion to encompass all aspects of believers' lives.

Thus, the different aspects of the lived Reformation discussed during the conference, including performance, space, doctrinal conflict, text production, and more, interrelated in their effects on the experiences of the faithful. These broader transformations sometimes deeply altered constituents' daily lives, such as the changes to the liturgical calendar that transformed conceptions of time. Nevertheless, sometimes no change occurred, shown by the continued belief in ghosts and their natures. In still other cases, change occurred only slowly, for example the delayed, seventeenth-century prosecutions of prostitutes and their clients, or do not match with typical images of the Zwinglian Reformation, such as the new types of theater that sprung up. Conversely, conference speakers used these interconnected facets to shed new light on theological, political, and institutional aspects of the Reformation. They encouraged the posing of new questions and the use of new perspectives, highlighting that there is far more research to be done on Reformation

Zurich, especially on the history of sexuality and gender, on sensory and spatial history, and on several genres of source materials, such as legal investigations and ego documents. The speakers will elaborate on these topics in text form, as a book on the findings of the conference will be published in 2021.

Conference overview:

André Holenstein (University of Bern): Bündnispartner im Stress. Eidgenössische Krisendiplomatie (16.-18. Jahrhundert)

Bruce Gordon (Yale Divinity School): From Priest to Pastor. The Formation of a Reformed Ministry

Fabrice Flückiger (University of Neuchâtel): Streit unter Theologen. Disputation und Inszenierung

Peter Niederhäuser (Zurich): Die Kirche im Dorf. Die Beziehungen von Pfarrer und Gemeinde auf der Landschaft

Nicole Zellweger (University of Zurich): Streit unter Laien. Konfessionelle Auseinandersetzungen im Wirtshaus

Anja Lobenstein-Reichmann (Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities): Das Wort Gottes auf Deutsch. Zürcher- und Luther-Bibel im Vergleich

Michael Egger (University of Bern): Das lesende Volk. Alphabetisierung, Lesestoffe und Volksbildung

José Cáceres Mardones (University of Zurich): „Bestialität“. Abweichende Sexualität unter besonderer Beobachtung

Markus Brühlmeier (Zurich): Der Skandal der „Stummen Sünde“. Reformation und Homosexualität

Eveline Szarka (University of Zurich): Wütende Teufel und wandelnde Tote. Leben mit Gespenstern

Lee P. Wandel (University Wisconsin Madison): Christ's Presence in the Eucharist in Zurich

Carola Jäggi (University of Zurich): Bilder im reformierten Zürich – ein No-Go?

Aline Steinbrecher (University of Zurich):

„Psalmen singen und fleissig beten“. Gelebter religiöser Alltag im Zürcher Spital

Adrina Schulz (University of Zurich): After the „Frauenhaus“: What became of Zurich's Prostitutes?

Randolph Head (University of California Riverside): Archiving the Zurich Reformation. Organizing Records and Creating Traditions

Kirstin Bentley (University of Basel): Konfessionelle Identität? Glauben verhandeln in Zürcher Selbstzeugnissen der Frühen Neuzeit

Hildegard Elisabeth Keller (University of Zurich): Theaterpraxis in Zürich (1529 und 1558)

Jan-Friedrich Missfelder (University of Basel) / Francisca Loetz (University of Zurich): Gottesdienst ohne Sang und Klang? Gemeindegang in der Stadt und auf der Landschaft

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