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Doctrine and Politics in the Latin Biblical Poetry of Philip Melanchthon's Silesian Disciples*

This article deals with selected works by Philip Melanchthon's Silesian disciples who studied in Wittenberg in the years 1545–1560: Jacob Kuchler from Jelenia Góra (about 1526 – about 1572), Joannes Seckerwitz from Wrocław (about 1529 – about 1583), Thomas Mawer from Trzebiel (1536–1575), Caspar Pridmann from Głogów (1537–1598) and Laurentius Fabricius from Ruda (1539–1577). The article's focus is on the doctrinal and political meaning of the works used as a tool in fighting the Catholic Church and in spreading Protestantism in the stormy era of the religious struggle waged in Silesia and in the entire territory of Central and Northern Europe. The texts analysed here also aimed to promote and spread Protestant doctrines and principles (*sola gratia, solus Christus, sola fide, sola Scriptura*, predestination, the repudiation of priesthood and celibacy) across the Empire, Poland, Prussia and Livonia.

Key words: Protestant doctrines, Latin biblical poetry, Reformation, Philip Melanchthon, Jacob Kuchler, Joannes Seckerwitz, Thomas Mawer, Caspar Pridmann, Laurentius Fabricius

Luther's close associate and a leading theologian and politician of the Reformation, Philip Melanchthon was a teacher and mentor of many Silesians – both members of the rich families of Silesian

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nobles, patricians and aristocrats (the Rehdigers, the Haunolds, the Morenbergs, the Zeidlizs, the Promnitzs, the Nostizs) and poor students living in the region's large cities and small settlements. All of them, studying in Wittenberg, succumbed to their teacher's charms and talents. Many of them followed in his footsteps. Firm believers in Luther's teaching, they became involved in spreading it at home. Joannes Hess and Ambrosius Moiban, both from Wrocław, were Melanchthon's first Silesian disciples. Valentin Krautwald, Valentin Trozendorf and Laurent Corvin were among the reformer's friends. They became the first coryphaei of the new religion in Silesia, using schools (Krautwald in Nysa, Trozendorf in Złotoryja), churches (Hess and Moiban), and the humanistic literature as forums for preaching what they regarded as "pure dogmas". However, Melanchthon's impact can't be conceived of as having been limited to particular individuals, for his activity charted a new direction in the field of humanistic education in almost all Protestant schools (in Brzeg, Wrocław, Zgorzelec and Złotoryja) and universities (in Frankfurt on the Oder river, Greifswald, Heidelberg, Jena, Königsberg, Leipzig, Marburg, Rostock, Tübingen and Wittenberg).¹ He also left a significant mark on the religious literature published in Basel, Greifswald, Königsberg, Leipzig, Rostock, Vienna and Wittenberg. In this article I focus my attention on the religious poetry of Melanchthon's Silesian students, the one which, in my opinion, is both confessional and political.

Jacob Kuchler (about 1526 – about 1572)

Among the Silesian poets whom one should include in the circle of Philip Melanchthon was Jakob Kuchler. An imperial poet laureate, he threw in his lot with Poland and Prussia. Born in Jelenia Góra about 1525–1526,² he matriculated at the Leipzig University in the

¹ K. Hartfelder, *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae* (Berlin, 1889), pp. 489–538.

² For a biography Kuchler's cf. J.H. Cunradus, *Silesia Togata*, ed. C.T. Schindlerus (Liegnitz, 1706; copy Wrocław, University Library [Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, hereafter: BUWr], sign. 337104), p. 47; J.S. Johnius, *Parnassi Silesiaci sive recensionis poetarum Silesiacorum quotquot vel in patria vel in alia etiam lingua musis litarunt centuria I* (Vratislaviae, 1728; copy BUWr, sign. 307200/I), p. 50; T. Wotschke, "Jakob Kuchler: ein Posener Humanist," *Zeitschrift der Historischen Gesellschaft für die Provinz Posen* 20 (1905), pp. 213–247; idem, "Zum Leben des Posener Humanisten Jakob Kuchler," *Historische Monatsblätter für die Provinz Posen* 14, no. 10 (1913), pp. 165–166; T. Grabowski, *Literatura luterska w Polsce w XVI wieku (1530–1630)* (Poznań, 1920), pp. 34–35; K. Lepszy, "Górka

winter semester of 1543. Two years later he entered the Wittenberg Academy.³ Dating from this period is his *Elegia de angelis Deo placentibus et excubias agentibus pro ecclesia*,⁴ published in Wittenberg in 1545. From this it follows that Kuchler arrived there while Luther was still alive (he died on 18 Feb. 1546), although it is difficult to say if he was introduced to the reformer, since in October 1545 he left Wittenberg and went to Mansfeld. It must have been during his stay in the first city that he became acquainted with Eustachy Trepka⁵ who later (perhaps at the request of Melanchthon himself and with the consent of Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern) recommended him to his own earlier protector, a magnate from the region of Wielopolska, Andrzej Górka (1500–1551). The Silesian taught Andrzej Górka and his brother Stanisław Latin, German, rhetoric and poetics. At the same time he remained in the service of Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern who met and corresponded with Górka. There is no doubt that Kuchler served Hohenzollern until the latter's death, maintaining frequent contacts with the court in Königsberg, as evidenced by his panegyric works.⁶ In Königsberg the poet could count on the support of his

Stanisław (1538–1592),” in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 8 (Wrocław et al., 1959–1960), pp. 416–421; A. Modlińska-Piekarz, “Kuchler Jacob,” in: *Słownik pisarzy śląskich*, ed. J. Lyszczyna, D. Rott, vol. 5 (Katowice, 2017), pp. 57–62.

³ *Album Academiae Vitebergensis*, ed. K.E. Förstemann (Leipzig, 1841), p. 227.

⁴ J. Kuchler, *Elegia De Angelis Deo Placentibus Et Excubias Agentibus Pro Ecclesia* (Witenbergae, 1545; copy BUWr, sign. 535395).

⁵ Until 1546 Trepka was a tutor of Górka's oldest son – Łukasz, and for some time also his younger sons – Andrzej and Stanisław, but when he was offered a post at Albrecht Hohenzollern's court he was succeeded in this role by Kuchler.

⁶ In a solemn epithalamium (titling himself the tutor of Gorka's younger sons) he extolled Duke Albrecht's marriage with Anna Maria, a Brunswick Princess. Kuchler attended the wedding celebrations (held in Königsberg) during which the work was published. See J. Kuchler, *In Nuptias Illustrissimi Principis Ac Domini, Domini Alberti Marchionis Brandeburgensis... Carmen gratulatorium a Iacobo Kuchlero... scriptum* (Regiomonti, 1550; copy Gdańsk, PAS Library [Biblioteka Gdańska Polskiej Akademii Nauk, hereafter: BG], sign. Cf 848 8° adl. 5). Eighteen years later he also extolled the death of his patron and his wife. See idem, *Carmen funebre In obitu[m] illustrissimi principis ac Domini, Domini Alberti Senioris, Marchionis Brandenburgensis, Prussiae, Stetinensiu[m], Pomeraniae, Cassubiorum et Sclavorum Ducis, Burgravij Norinbergensis. Rugiae Principis, etc. qui simul cum charissima coniuge sua Domina Anna Maria ex Illustri et veteri Ducum Brunsvicensium familia nata, ex hac mortali vita decessit 13 Calend. Aprilis, Anno aetatis suae 78. Scriptum a Iacobo Cuchlero Hirsbergen[si] Reipub. Gedanensis Secretario* (Dantisci, 1568; copy Kórnik, PAS Library [Biblioteka Kórnicka PAN, hereafter BK], sign. Cim.Qu.2535).

two friends: Melanchthon's son-in-law, Georg Sabinus and Eustachy Trepka, who was already a famous Lutheran writer. It can be presumed that Kuchler, visiting Wittenberg (including after his studies), remained in touch with Melanchthon. Thanks to these contacts, he became a coryphaeus of Lutheranism in Wielkopolska and in Royal Prussia. In November 1551 in Königsberg, shortly before Andrzej Górka's death, he published, along with a number of other works, a poem entitled *Historia Ioniae carmine elegiaco*,⁷ which he created while he was still in Poznań. Steeped in the Lutheran doctrine, the collection was dedicated to Jan Tarnowski, the Cracow castellan (1488–1561) who also remained on good terms with Duke Albert. Apart from the poem mentioned above the publication contains a elegy dedicated to Polish King Sigismund Augustus (whom the poet encourages to introduce Lutheranism in Poland), a panegyric for Georg Sabinus and an epithalamium for Eustachy Trepka (his wedding took place in 1549). Later the poet accompanied his pupil Stanisław on his travels to the universities in Frankfurt on the River Oder, where Sabinus lectured, and to Wittenberg where Górka matriculated on 10 May 1554. After only a few days he was appointed an honorary rector. Presumably, Kuchler, assisted by Sabinus, enabled Stanisław Górka to meet Melanchthon by whom he was discreetly supported in the exercise of his function and who even wrote for him a valedictory speech when he was about to relinquish the position. This was possible because of the poet's close contacts with the reformer. Their good relations were also borne out by Kuchler himself in his funeral song for his beloved teacher Philip – *memoriae optimi praeceptoris* (Philip died on 19 April 1560).⁸ The tone of the work suggests that the poet was on very close terms with Melanchthon. He called the reformer by his first name (Melanchthon allowed his students to treat him with that kind of familiarity), but also referred to him with great reverence as his teacher, father and mentor. For him, Melanchthon's death was a personal misfortune. It should be kept in

⁷ Idem, *Historia Ioniae Prophetarum carmine elegiaco tractata a Iacobo Cuchlero Hyrsbergense. Cui addita sunt alia nonnulla sacri argumenti poemata eodem autore. Anno 1551 scripta Posnaniae: in aula Illustris D. Comitum a Gorca Castellani Posnaniensis* (Regiomonti, 1551; copy Wrocław, Ossoliński Library [Biblioteka Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, hereafter: BO], sign. XVI.O.850).

⁸ Idem, *Epicedium in mortem Reverendi et Incomparabilis Viri D. Philippi Melanchtonis scriptum Posnaniae a Iacobo Kuchlero Hyrschbergensi [M.] An. 1560. Maii 15. ([s.l., s.n.], 1560; copy BG, sign. Cf 848 8° adl. 22).*

mind that after completing his studies he still remained in touch with his mentor, and Kuchler acted as an intermediary between Albrecht and the circle of the Lutherans from Wielkopolska, supporting the policy pursued by the reformer and Hohenzollern and contributing to the dissemination of Melanchthon's teachings across the region. It is known that in 1565 Kuchler already served as a secretary to the city of Gdańsk, for it was in this capacity that he signed the reprint of *Historia Ioniae*. Published on 1 January 1566, the new edition was dedicated to the Senate of the city of Gdańsk.⁹

A versed translation of the Book of Jonah, *Ionas propheta* contains a warning for the sinful city that failed to remain faithful to the divine law. As indicated by its dedications, Kuchler first addressed the Catholic Cracow (1551) and then Gdańsk (the second edition, 1566), treating the words of the biblical prophet as a Protestant response to Jan Dantyszek's Catholic work. Many years earlier (about 1535) Dantyszek addressed the paraphrase of the Book of Jonah to Gdańsk, admonishing the city, on behalf of King Sigismund the Old, to abstain from departing from the Catholic faith.¹⁰ Kuchler must have been familiar with Dantyszek's work, a significant number of which was circulating in hand-written copies. While the latter reproached the city because many of its citizens had decided to abandon the Catholic faith for Lutheranism, Kuchler urged them to convert to the new religion. Besides, in Kuchler's version those to whom his prophetic admonition was directed altered a couple of times. At first, he may have addressed the citizens of Poznań, since the text was created at Andrzej Górka's court (about 1549–1551). Górka died in December 1551 and in November Kuchler published a poem dedicated to Jan Tarnowski. However, it isn't known whether it was the latter whom the author regarded from the outset as Jonah. Jonah may have been recited while the author was still in Poznań to strengthen the position of the Lutherans inhabiting the city (the title page clearly indicates that the poem was written at Górka's court) and it was Górka

⁹ Idem, *Historia Ioniae Prophetiae carmine elegiaco tractata per Iacobum Kuchlerum, Incytae Reipublicae Gedanensis Secretarium. Amplissimo Ordini Senatorio Regiae Civitatis Gedaniensis dedicata, anno 1566. Cal Ianuarii* (Gedani: per Iacobum Rhodum, [1566]; copy BG, sign. Oe 13. 8^o, no. 161).

¹⁰ For more on a political function of this work by Dantyszek see Z.J. Nowak, "Antyreformacyjna elegia Dantyszka o zagładzie Gdańska oraz jej kariera polityczna w XVI i XVII wieku," *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 16 (1971), pp. 3–35.

(Kuchler was his courtier and client) who embodied the prophet. However, afterwards Kuchler's principals (Hohenzollern and Melanchthon) probably told the poet to cast the Catholic Cracow in the role of "Nineveh" and advised him to prepare dedication for Jan Tarnowski, the Krakow castellan (1488–1561). Not for nothing was the piece intended for Sigismund Augustus, whom the author encouraged to introduce Luther's teachings to Poland, included in the collection. One should keep in mind the political circumstances in which the work was published. Its appearance took place shortly after Barbara Radziwiłłówna's death and before the planned marriage between Sigismund Augustus and Catherine of Austria.¹¹ The king was seen as the protector and promoter of the Protestantism and even as the creator of national church – a goal which, as is known, was being pursued by Jan Łaski.¹² The next edition of *Historia Ioniae* (1566) appeared in an entirely different situation. For this reason it contains only the poem about Jonah. After the passage of fifteen years, all the other works were no longer in keeping with the existing circumstances and, as such, weren't included in the new edition. While Albrecht lived long enough to see the publication of the book, Melanchthon had already died by the time of its appearance. At the moment of its publication Kuchler assumed the post of the secretary to the city of Gdańsk and that is where he published the paraphrase containing dedication to the Senate of the city. Although the work originally didn't concern the city, it wasn't difficult to adjust it to the existing situation. The text, unlike that by Dantyszek, reflected the reformers' views and was a kind of a Lutheran paraenesis addressed to the citizens of Gdańsk. After a dozen or so years the Lutheranized Gdańsk

¹¹ In 1553 Kuchler was present at Sigismund Augustus' wedding with Catherine of Habsburg as a courtier of Jan, Duke of Münsterberg. To mark this occasion he published in Wrocław (in Krzysztof Scharffenberg's publishing house) an epithalamium in which he described the great celebrations and the guests who attended them (including Górkas and Tarnowskis). The work was dedicated to Mikołaj Radziwiłł, who in that year converted to Protestantism. See J. Kuchler, *De nuptiis Poloniae regis Sigismundi secundi Augusti et Catharinae Regis Ferdinandi filiae Epithalamion* (Vratislaviae, 1553). Information after: M. Burbianka, *Produkcja typograficzna Scharffenbergów we Wrocławiu* (Wrocław, 1968), pp. 2–30, 104. Unfortunately the authoress doesn't provide information about where the source is located. It isn't to be found in the holdings of the University Library in Wrocław. Nor is it catalogued in any other Polish Library, including digital ones.

¹² W. Krasieński, *Zarys dziejów powstania i upadku reformacji w Polsce*, trans. J. Bursche, vol. 1 (Warszawa, 1903), pp. 166–176.

was still involved in the struggle against the Catholics. The Gdańsk reprint of the book must have brought its author much acclaim among the local Lutherans, strengthening their position in the city.

Joannes Seckerwitz (about 1529–1583)

Melanchthon's disciple, Joannes Seckerwitz is included in the inner circle of famous poets (one should mention here Joannes Lotichius, Joannes Maior, Joannes Schosser, Julius Pomponius Laetus, Joannes Georgius Sadolin, Hieronymus Osius, Joannes Bocer) gathered around the reformer. Born about 1529 in Wrocław, he began his education, in all probability, at the St. Elisabeth School.¹³ On 1 May 1548 he matriculated at the University of Wittenberg and stayed there until about mid-1550s. It was at that time (1 Aug. 1550) that the paraphrase of the letters of Esau and Jacob was created.¹⁴ Then, probably on Melanchthon's recommendation, Seckerwitz went to Königsberg (the reformer often recommended his students to Albrecht in his correspondence with the duke and dispatched them on diplomatic missions). As early as 28 October 1550, during the rectorship of Andreas Aurifaber, he entered the Königsberg University (founded by Duke Albrecht of Prussia, the school was commonly known as the Albertina).

¹³ For Seckerwitz's biography and some references cf.: N. Frischlin, *Orationes insigniores aliquot* (Argentorati, 1605; copy Halle, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt [hereafter: ULBSAH], sign. 1940g9213), p. 424; Cunradus, op. cit., p. 285; S. Johnius, *Parnassi Silesiaci sive recensiois poetarum Silesiacorum... Centuria II. Accedunt ad centuriam primam quaedam supplementa* (Wratislaviae, 1729; copy BUWr, sign. 307200/II), pp. 157–158; F. Haase, *De vita Ioannis Seccervitii Vratislaviensis: olim professoris poetices Gryphiswaldensis commentatio* (Vratislaviae, 1863); G. Erler, *Die Matrikel der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg i. Pr.: Die Immatrikulationen von 1544–1656*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1910), p. 12; K. Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, Pt. III, vol. 27 (Kraków, 1929), p. 329; S. Treichel, *Leben und Werke des Johannes Seccervitius* (Greifswald, 1928); G. Ellinger, "Die neulateinische Lyrik Deutschlands in der ersten Hälfte des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts," in: *Geschichte der neulateinischen Literatur Deutschlands im sechzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1969), pp. 278–286; H. Wiegand, "Johannes Seckerwitz als neulateinischer Dichter," in: *Pommern in der frühen Neuzeit: Literatur und Kultur in Stadt und Region: [Vorträge und Referate des interdisziplinären Symposions in Greifswald vom 29.9. bis 2.10.1992]* (Tübingen, 1994), pp. 125–144; A. Modlińska-Piekarz, "Seckerwitz Johannes [Młodszy]," in: *Słownik pisarzy śląskich*, vol. 5 (Katowice, 2017), pp. 89–96.

¹⁴ J. Seckerwitz, *Duae epistolae ficticiae altera Iacobi ad Fratrem Esau, et altera responsoria Esau ad Iacobum. Quibus accessit brevis interpretatio historiae* (Wittenbergae: excudebat Ioannes Crato, 1550; copy Dresden, Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek [hereafter: SLUBD], sign. Lit.Lat. rec. A388, II).

Quick to interrupt his studies, he resumed them on 10 April 1551. His education was suspended owing to his stay in Kwidzyn, at Paul Sperat's court, the Lutheran bishop of Pomesania, and in the village of Wisła near Toruń, at the house of the land judge of Chełmno, Jerzy Sokołowski. In thanks for his visit, he published Christmas poems.¹⁵ Their Lutheran character is reflected in their praise of modest worship and in the presence of the Lutheran dogma *solus Christus* (concerning the absolution of sins only by Christ). Towards the end of 1551 Seckerwitz returned to Wittenberg to live there until 1553, excluding a six-month period spent in Torgau because of the plague which broke out in Wittenberg. And when he was in Torgau, Melanchthon was there too. Seckerwitz referred to his close contacts with the great reformer in a collection of poems *Pomeraneidum libri quinque*, emphasising Melanchthon's protective attitude and the significant role the latter played in interpreting the Bible, in expounding and propagating Luther's writings and in shaping the critical view of the Catholic Church.¹⁶ Seckerwitz didn't stay with his mentor, but conducted politico-religious missions the latter assigned him and continued his education. In October or November 1553 he enrolled at the University of Frankfurt which he left quite quickly, probably already in 1554, which we know because this was the year in which his collection *Psalmi aliquot lyricis modis*¹⁷ was published in Wittenberg. It was dedicated to Stanisław Górka whom he probably met in Wittenberg in 1554 when Górka was awarded an honorary rectorship. There is no doubt that the psalmic paraphrases were commissioned by Philip Melanchthon to honour the magnate and secure his active support for Lutheranism and for Duke Albrecht, whose advocates also included Górka's father. Sereckwitz commented on these issues in his dedication. He recalled the accomplishments of Górka's

¹⁵ Idem, *Elegia de natali Christi Servatoris nostri. Scripta ad Reverendissimum Praesulem Dominum Paulum Speratum a Rutilis etc. episcopum Pomesaniensem. Ecloga continens colloquium Pastorum, quibus Angelus annuntiavit Nativitatem Domini. Scripta ad nobilem et generosum virum Georgium Socolofsky, terrae Culmensis iudicem, per Ioannem Seckerwitz Vratislaviensem* ([s.l., s.n.], 1551; copy BG, sign. Cf 848 8° 3 adl.).

¹⁶ Idem, *Pomeraneidum Johannis Seccervitii libri quinque: quorum priores tres heroico, posteriores duo carmine elegiaco conscripti sunt: index materiarum, in singulis libris, sub finem operis est adiectus* (Gryphiswaldiae, 1582; copy München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek [hereafter: BSBM], sign. Asc. 4451), fol. 202rec.–203rec.

¹⁷ Idem, *Psalmi aliquot lyricis modis versi ac dedicati d. Stanislao comiti a Gorca* (Witebergae, 1554; copy BSBM, sign. 4 L.impr.c.n.mss. 1024).

father, stressed Melanchthon's role at the university and indicated the benefits derived by the Pole from his studies and from the honorary rectorship he held. He gave the psalms, paraphrased in the lyrical metre, a Lutheran interpretation, alluding to the religious struggle the Lutherans waged with their Catholic opponents.¹⁸

Seckerwitz's literary activity continued far beyond Melanchthon's lifetime and so did the influence exercised by the latter's doctrine on the poet who disseminated it in his works. One of the earliest works by Joannes Seckerwitz was *Duae epistolae ficticiae altera Iacobi ad Fratrem Esau, et altera responsoria Esau ad Iacobum*. Published in 1550, during his studies in Wittenberg, it was written in the elegiac distich and dedicated to Joannes Morenberg. Referring to the Holy Scripture (Gen. 25:29–34; 27:1–45; 32:2–24, 33:1–16; Hebr. 12:16f.) the work consists of two letters: from Esau to Jacob and from Jacob to Esau. Jacob wrote his letter when he was returning home after running away from his father-in-law Laban. The work follows the model of the *Heroides*, with *topoi* typical of the genre: the brothers accuse each other of the injustices they both suffered, point out to each other the mistakes they committed and air their grievances, just like Ovid's heroines. Seckerwitz obviously didn't hesitate to substitute men for women. In an unusual way he turned historical figures into allegories, including in his work the prefiguration of Christ and references to the creed: Jacob was made to symbolize the new Lutheran Church while Esau represented the old Catholic institution which had lost its privilege of priority. The idea of the poem was based on analogies drawn between biblical and allegorical figures. The relations between the brothers were designed to epitomize the conflict between the Lutherans and the Catholics. The choice of the topic wasn't accidental. Determined by the theological doctrine of predestination, it was beyond any doubt inspired by the fragment *De servio arbitrio* (1525) in which Luther, just like St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans, recounted the story of Esau and Jacob as an illustration of God's act of choosing, which the reformer additionally linked to the doctrine of predestination and the man's unfree

¹⁸ At the same time an analogous work dedicated to Górká was published by Melanchthon's other Silesian student who was also at that time studying in Wittenberg, see M. Severus, *Duo Psalmi carmine redditi, in honorem Generosi et Magnifici Domini Stanislai a Gorca etc. Inclytæ Vuittebergensis Academiae Rectoris* (Wittebergae: excudebat Ioannes Crato, 1554; copy BSBM, sign. B. Metr. 301 h).

will.¹⁹ The biblical brothers were used to prove that God had chosen those whom he had wanted to save and those whom he had decided to condemn and that people didn't have the right to judge His choices. They also shouldn't rebel against them; no rebellion could change anything if everything was decided beforehand. That is why even the legitimate arguments that can be put forward in Esau's favour (which aren't omitted) are irrelevant in view of the God's decision that resolved the dispute in advance. From this perspective, people can't be judged for what they do because it is God who is responsible for their actions. When He wants something specific to happen, He causes them to act in a certain way. Referring in this regard to the fraud committed by Jacob and Rebecca (Jacob wrapped his hands with goatskin in order to deceive his blind father into taking him for his older son and giving him his blessing) the author argued that they couldn't do otherwise because they were guided by God's will. This is the line of argument to which Jacob turned to force his brother to renounce his right of seniority.²⁰ Esau was accused of failing to bear humbly everything that was happening to him, even though it wasn't happening in vain: "Nec patienter habes, quae non fieri irrita possunt".²¹ The goatskin ruse was also part of the realisation of God's plan. For this reason Jacob considered himself innocent of any wrongdoing and advised Esau to abandon himself to God's verdicts:

Cede Deo, fatiq; meis, fastusq remitte [- -]
 Cede, repugnando non unq; victor abibis!
 Cede repugnantes oprimi ipse Deus.²²

The message sent by Seckerwitz in his *Heroid* is thus as follows: resign yourself to God's will because you are unable to change it and those who rebel against it are always subdued by the Lord! The use of the argument of the divine will typified Lutheran and Calvinist preachers. The author believed that it was necessary for people to reconcile themselves to God's decisions. Any attempt to resist His power was in his opinion pointless. People couldn't control their destiny because their fate was preordained. These views reflected the author's embrace

¹⁹ M. Luther, *De servo arbitrio... ad Erasmus Roterodamum* (Wittembergae, 1525; copy BSBM, sign. Polem. 1694), fol. P8ver.-Q1rec.

²⁰ Seckerwitz, *Duae epistolae*, fol. A3ver.

²¹ *Ibidem*, fol. A4rec.

²² *Ibidem*, fol. A4ver.

of the Lutheran idea of humility and submission to God's will, which he conceived of in terms of God's plan for the Holy Church. The Lutherans contended that the emergence of the advocates of the new religion was part of the plan established by God. The demand to obey His will became one of the essential elements of the Lutheran doctrine.²³ Although similar to Calvin's idea of predestination, the view presented above isn't to be fully identified with it. Referring only to the history of the Church and the salvation of the entire mankind, it leaves untouched the issue of saving or condemning particular individuals. There is clearly the Lutheran fatalism involved here. Under the Calvinist interpretation, it crystallized into the dogma of double predestination. Seckerwitz's statements certainly bear close resemblance to it. After all both confessions, including their key doctrines, permeated each other and the boundary separating them was so thin that it was easy to cross it, even unintentionally. Apart from some differences, Luther's and Calvin's teachings regarding the free will and the idea of predestination had much in common, both in terms of the grace needed for salvation and with regard to God's eternal verdicts and the man's earthly fate.

Worthy of mention are also the references to the events of the day which the work contains. At the end of the letter Jacob seeks reconciliation with his brother even though he knows that Esau enjoys a numerical advantage in troops:

Tu fateor praestas validis in bella lacertis,
Saepe tuo frendens ense feritur aper.²⁴

This is certainly a reference to a real situation. At that time the Lutheran camp had already experienced the bitter taste of defeat, but, having recovered its strength, hadn't lost hope of victory in the future, which actually came shortly afterwards. Stating that God's infallible prophecy of victory concerned Jacob (that is the Lutheran camp) and that the old father (that is, the emperor) was praying for peace, the

²³ "The submission of one's will to the will of God is considered by Luther to be the ultimate goal of any moral action; if this submission is, because of one's fear or one's hope for reward, just a means of achieving selfish goals, either on this earth or in the afterlife, it loses all its moral value. In view of the commandment that imposes on us obligation conceived of as a Divine Law, any religious and moral merit is out of the question". Quoted after B. Bauch, "*Luther und Kant* (Berlin 1904) [review]," *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 8, no. 3 (1905), p. 280.

²⁴ Seckerwitz, *Duae epistolae*, fol. B1rec.

author proved his good knowledge of the political climate.²⁵ He was right in his prediction that the emperor would be unwilling to fuel the conflict between different Christian groups. The conclusion of the Peace of Augsburg and the establishment of the principle *cuius regio eius religio* (very beneficial to the advocates of the Reformation), elevating Lutheranism to the position of the second official religion in the Empire, came just five years after the creation of the work. When writing *Duae epistolae...*, the poet was aware of the fact that the Lutheran camp's situation was still difficult. That is why he compared Jacob to a sick sailor navigating his boat across the rough seas. However, he added that the boat wouldn't sink in the depths of the ocean.

Ut premar, ut rapido quassa tam turbine puppim
 Aeger agam, nullo gurgite mersa cadet
 At tu tanta tuo qui vindicis arma tumultu
 Irritas, ne quam vim patiare cave.²⁶

To hearten his fellow believers, he “foretold” the victory of Jacob's offspring, that is, the next generation of the advocates of the new religion:

Ille vel ad seros pertingat tela nepotes,
 Haec dabit in natis facta luentur aevi.
 Et victor nostro populus de sanguine surget
 Qui gerat in vestram sceptrata verenda domum.²⁷

Such views, expressed in the form of a prophecy or a devout supplication for victory, were quite common in Protestant poetry, especially in psalmic paraphrases which used allegories conveying different religious and political meaning.

The work *Carmen de Abrahamo tentato* (Wrocław, 1574) was also one of those in which Joannes Seckerwitz raised significant doctrinal issues.²⁸ The story of offering Isaac frequently appeared in sixteenth-century literature. Lutheran and Calvinist preachers used it to illustrate the idea of God's eternal choice and the man's unfree will. In the Lutheran doctrine the sacrifice of Abraham's son represented the patriarch's unshakable faith and God's grace. The story

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ Ibidem, fol. B1ver.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ J. Seckerwitz, *Carmen de Abrahamo tentato: scriptum ad illustrissimum principem... Ioannem Fridericum, ducem Stetini, Pomeraniae...* (Vratislaviae, 1574; copy BUWr, sign. 395733).

was quickly adapted for the needs of Calvin's teaching on predestination (thanks to the interpretation it was given in Theodore Beza's French tragedy *Abraham Sacrifiant* (Geneva 1550)).²⁹ Although its Latin translation by Joannes Jacomot appeared in print as late as 1597, there were some earlier Latin translations of it (not necessarily poetic) circling around, especially in Calvinist and crypto-Calvinist communities. It seems almost certain that Silesian poets gathered around Joannes Crato, who corresponded with Beza, relied on this text, or even on the original version of it.³⁰ This aspect of Calvinist spirituality figures prominently in Seckerwitz's work, as can be seen especially in its emphasis on the motif of destiny (which is characteristic of both Lutheran and Calvinist spirituality). To throw it into relief, the author made frequent use of the word *fata* and of other words conveying similar meaning. He also found the prior knowledge of the future course of events to be God's attribute. Thanks to the elements mentioned above, the Old Testament story was given the interpretation congruent with the idea of one's preordained destiny. Just like in the story about Jacob and Esau we are dealing here with two brothers, but Ismael was born illegitimate and he is referred to by the poet as *male grata propago*. Because of his illegitimacy he wasn't endowed with God's grace, as opposed to Isaac who (according to God's promise) was going to father the Saviour.³¹ The author used the motif of Abraham's sacrifice in order to ask questions regarding the possibility of the changeability of God's plan:

Quis rigor hic Superis, quaeve inconstantia mentem
Aeternam, atque fidem veraci in Numine mutat?³²

²⁹ Beza's work was inspired by Buchanan's tragedy *Jephtes* which hadn't yet been published, but Beza corresponded with Buchanan and was given its handwritten copy, See D.K. Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley, 1998), p. 160. The example of Abraham's story was used by Beza not only in the tragedy genre, but also in his teaching on Calvin's doctrine about predestination and God's prior choice. His way of interpreting Abraham's story became embedded in theological works, for example in *De praedestinationis doctrina* (1582). See T. de Bèze, *De praedestinationis doctrina et vero usu tractatio absolutissima* (Genevae, 1582); cf. T. Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza: The Reform of the True Church* (Genève, 1978), p. 145.

³⁰ S.M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (Oxford, 2013), p. 293.

³¹ Seckerwitz, *Carmen de Abrahamo tentato*, fol. A4rec.

³² *Ibidem*, fol. A4ver.

God's promise, if it is to be true, must be stable and permanent. This appears to be a reference to the argument regarding the issue of God's prior knowledge and God's choices which Luther used in his defence of the validity of the view of God's predestination and the man's unfree will. The reformer urged people to accept God's verdicts and everything that He wills and that comes their way. Thanks to their unshakable faith, both the father and the son, ready to sacrifice not only their happiness and but also their lives, become an exemplification of the heroic and humble acceptance of God's decisions.³³ The angel, too, by stopping the patriarch, stated that Abraham had passed the exam of his obedience to God:

iam pectore solo
sat fatis, fideique datum, tibi caetera Numen
indulget [- -].³⁴

The motif of God's will, taking priority over the man's, figures prominently throughout the whole work. By providing an example of a heroic father and a heroic son, the author attempted to say that people were best advised to submit to God's will.³⁵ The poet wondered if anyone would be able to emulate Abraham's example and believe against all the odds.³⁶ Answering this question a couple of times, he explained that God the Father was the prefiguration of Abraham sacrificing his son and the Son of God who, in compliance with his Father's will, suffered the Passion and died for people's sins was the prefiguration of Isaac accepting his father's will. The ram sacrificed in place of Isaac symbolised Christ's sacrifice.³⁷ Seckerwitz drew many parallels between Isaac and Christ,³⁸ and in doing so, he presented the reader with a kind of pre-knowledge regarding the events to come (in relation to Abraham's times). We know that God's promise to give people their Saviour was fulfilled. Seckerwitz drew the reader's attention to God's sacrifice by comparing it to Abraham's: like Abraham didn't save his son, like God the Father sacrificed Christ for people's sins.³⁹ In Seckerwitz's work, the figurativeness of the picture of

³³ *Ibidem*, fol. B4ver.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, fol. C1rec.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, fol. B1rec.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, fol. C2rec.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, fol. C3rec.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, fol. B3ver.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, fol. C3ver.

sacrifice was used as a means of presenting a multidimensional pre-figuration of Christ and His sacrifice, the interpretation of which was entrenched in the Church tradition (Father offering his son as a sacrifice to save mankind). However, it is evident that besides its adherence to the traditional Christian view, the biblical text was given the interpretation congruent with the Protestant teaching about predestination and the man's unfree will. The picture of Isaac submitting to God's will was designed to bring to one's mind Christ himself and his absolute obedience to God the Father. The point of the example was to present the absolute devotion to God, who pre-ordained the fate of every man, as the best possible way of life. Encouragement to persevere in one's obedience to God stemmed from the unshakable faith which the chosen were granted as God's grace.⁴⁰

Seckerwitz's other piece *Elegia de divite epulone et mendico Lazare*⁴¹ is a grievance written in the form of querela. The inspiration to use the biblical motif of the wretched Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) probably came from George Macropedius' drama. Engaging in a polemic with the Catholic dramatist, the author gave his querela almost the same title.⁴² However, it was given a Lutheran interpretation and was written in a different genre. The way in which the evangelical parable is presented is certainly original. The story about a rich glutton and the poor Lazarus is told by a dog that licked the wounds of the latter and saw how both the poor and rich man died. Repulsed by the stink of Lazarus, the rich man wants him to be killed or go out of sight. To this the dog responds by saying that even though he is an animal deprived of faith and honour he feels – contrary to the people with hearts as cold as iron – love and concern. His view of man is corroborated by the behaviour of his owner who not only refuses to help the poor man but also prevents his dog from taking pity on him. The rich reveller might offer help to Lazarus, but he prefers to

⁴⁰ Seckerwitz supports the idea of predestination in his other works, for example in w *Elegia de nativitate*, in which, recalling the census of the population ordered by Caesar, he states: "Inscius his Caesar fatis inseruit et eius / Utitur imperio provida cura Dei" (idem, *Elegia de natali*, fol. A3ver.).

⁴¹ J. Seckerwitz, *Elegia de Divite Epulone et Mendico Lazaro, desumpta ex Evangelicis historiis* (Coloniae: apud Maternum Cholinum, 1556; copy BSBM, sign. A.lat.b. 352).

⁴² G. Macropedius, *Lazarus Comoedia sacra de Epulone divite et Lazaro mendico, ex Lucae capite 16. Desumpta* (Coloniae: In aedibus Petri Horst, 1550; copy BSBM, sign. Res/P.o.lat. 1687 e).

spend the nights carousing, having his mind set on gold, precious jewels, purple fabrics, marble, ivory and horse ornaments. The wailing cries of the poor are no bother to him. Although he could content himself with the fruits of the land, the luxury blinds him to what is really important and his lavish way of life deprives him of a chance to secure salvation in Heaven.⁴³ The dog predicts eternal life for Lazarus and Hell for the soulless rich man. And indeed, when both of them die the animal sees a clean and healthy Lazarus wearing a white robe and standing happy by the side of the Lord, surrounded by the eternal Spring. The rich glutton, on the other hand, is sent into Hell filled with monsters, sorrow, loneliness and suffering. The dog mocks the rich man who can't buy freedom from Hell with his earthly wealth, seeking help from Lazarus whom he once despised. When the rich man tries to warn his brothers, the dog, referring to God's words, states that the rules regarding salvation are to be found in the Holy Scripture:

Pagina que cunctos, quae te quoque sacra monebat,
 Illa tuis monitrix fratribus aequa manet.
 Hac ducente malum, quo tu derperditus haeres
 Si modo crediderint, exuperare datur.⁴⁴

The loose paraphrase of the last sentence of the parable (Luke 16:31, the biblical text tells about Moses and the prophets) was used evidently with a view to recalling the Lutheran principle *sola Scriptura*, confirmed here by Christ himself.

Ultimately, the author explained that the story was told to show two Churches: the poor and humble one (Lutheran), attended by the faithful committed to the true faith, and the rich and proud one (Catholic).⁴⁵ The message of the work is thus multidimensional. First, the author offered an allegorical juxtaposition of two competing persuasions. An ardent adherent of the Lutheran Church, he placed it on a pedestal as an embodiment of all virtues. His Church was humble, modest and truly devoted to God. To underscore what he considered to be the mental and spiritual gulf existing between the two religions, he offered a deeply contrasting view of its Catholic adversary by providing it with the traits of the rich man who, as we know, was

⁴³ Seckerwitz, *Elegia de Divite Epulone*, fol. B3ver.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, fol. B6ver.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

godless, proud, rich, deprived of mercy for the poor, deaf to God's word and interested only in earthly pleasures. And without the acceptance of the "true dogmas", its members could hold out no hope of salvation. Second, the text is propagandistic in character. Intended for the poor people, it was supposed to encourage them to identify with the Lazarus Church which understood their needs and problems, since it was itself humble and poor. Third, the text contains a fervent request to wealthy patrons to support this Lazarus Church (the request concerned the financial help for the coryphaei of the Lutheranism and for the Lutheran camp during the religious wars that still continued in the Empire).

Ferte laboranti pro vero dogmate turbae,
Auxiliatrices, obsecro, ferte manus.⁴⁶

Thomas Mawer (1536–1575)

Thomas Mawer was another Silesian poet whom we should include among Melanchthon's direct disciples. On 10 February 1558 he received his master's degree from the University of Wittenberg where, following his enrolment on 12 May 1556, he studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew. In Wittenberg he published an epic poem entitled *Historia creationis, lapsus et reparationis hominis pio studio elegiaco carmine contexta*.⁴⁷ The acclaim it earned him was so great that in 1559 he was introduced to Emperor Ferdinand.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibidem, fol. B7rec.

⁴⁷ T. Mawer, *Historia creationis, lapsus et reparationis hominis pio studio elegiaco carmine contexta* (Witebergae, 1558; copy ULBSAH, sign. 004974 59x).

⁴⁸ In 1560 he served as rector of the school in Aschersleben and Zerbst, and in 1565 was appointed rector of the school attached to St. Michael Church in Lüneburg (Lower Saxony). There he married a daughter of Lucas Lossius (1508–1582), a known humanist, musician and teacher from Melanchthon's circle. He worked as a parish of St. Michael Church in Lüneburg. Then he served as superintendent at the dioceses in Verden and in Lübeck and was involved in negotiating the Wittenberg catechism. With regard to the issue of original sin he took the side of the Gnesiolutheran. Just like his father-in-law, Lossius, he was a Protestant musician (he composed music for four voices to epicidium on Melanchthon's death published in Wittenberg). For a biography Mawer's and some references cf. *Album Academiae Vitebergensis*, p. 318; K.E.H. Krause, "Mawer, Thomas," in: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 20 (Leipzig, 1884), p. 716; J.M. Reu, *Quellen zur Geschichte des kirchlichen Unterrichts*, vol. 2 (Hildesheim, 1976), p. 812.

Written in the elegiac distich, *Historia* concerns itself with the following issues: the creation and fall of the first men and the rectification of their error by Jesus Christ. Mawer dedicated his poem to the king of Hungary and Bohemia, Archduke Maximilian II (In the epigram attached to the work he was recommended to the ruler by Melanchthon himself). The young ruler was at that time friendly disposed towards the Protestants owing to his first teacher Wolfgang Stiefel (Luther's and Melanchthon's student) and the court preacher Sebastian Pfauser (Melanchthon's friend), who for a long time served as his mentor in matters of the Protestant theology.⁴⁹ Although Ferdinand removed him from the court in 1554, Pfauser corresponded in secret with Maximilian, sending him Protestant materials⁵⁰ which may have included Thomas Mawer's text, written specifically with a view to "lutheranizing" the Reich's future emperor.

The work begins with a description of the creation of the world and ends with Christ's ascent to heaven. The author talks about the beginning of the fall of man. *Historia* also contains the motives of an infernal meeting (known from Claudian's *In Rufinum*, Marco Giorolamo Vida's *Christias* and Hieronim Ziegler's *Protoplast*) Satan's opposition to God's orders and infernal figures' conspiracy to destroy man's world.⁵¹ The author believes that Satan is driven by the jealousy of the gift of God's grace that sanctifies the spirit of man, fills the human heart with an unshakable faith and establishes harmony between God and the first people. However, Satan conceals from his companions the real cause of his anger, drawing their attention to the threat Adam and Eve supposedly pose for the infernal kingdom. The dark angel knows well that Adam's descendant, that is, Christ, will destroy his Kingdom.⁵² After describing the scene of the temptation and fall of the first parents, Mawer presents the conference of the Holy Trinity. Referred to in its course are the central tenets of the Lutheran teaching about redemption. In Mawer's interpretation it is God the Father who, in trying to find a way of saving the world, turns to his Son for help.⁵³ The Son of God agrees with his Father's

⁴⁹ J. Janssen, *History of the German People at the Close of the Middle Ages*, trans. A.M. Christie, M.A. Mitchell, vol. 7 (s.l., 1966), pp. 331–332.

⁵⁰ C.E. Vehse, *Memoirs of the Court, Aristocracy, and Diplomacy of Austria* (London, 1856), p. 220.

⁵¹ Mawer, *Historia creationis*, fol. B4ver.

⁵² Ibidem, fol. B4ver.–B5rec.

⁵³ Ibidem, fol. B7ver.

will and offers himself as sacrifice. At the same time, he is the one who, contrary to the biblical original, reveals himself to Adam and Eve and announces his birth, his Passion, his death and his resurrection and victory over Hell.⁵⁴ The particular importance of the scene lies in its exposition of the Lutheran teaching on redemption. The author ends the conversation of the divine persons with an assurance that the decision was taken by the Holy Trinity.⁵⁵ Also of importance is the image of God as a benevolent and merciful father taking pity on sinners. It doesn't appear often in the Protestant poetry. More frequent is the vision of severe God the Father, in which the initiative of delivering people from the hands of Satan is left to the Son of God who shows compassion to sinners and asks his harsh Father to save them from Hell in exchange for his sacrifice. Both visions serve the same purpose of highlighting two basic Lutheran principles: *sola gratia*, *solus Christus*. The reader is led to see that God the Father and his Son decide to save the fallen men who thus owe their salvation only to Christ and his sacrifice and not to their merits and the intermediation of their priests. It is worth noting that Satan, guilty of men's fall, epitomizes the pope who, according to the author, denies the fact of finding salvation only in Christ and objects to men's marriage (this concerns of course the celibacy of priests). Such an interpretation is supported by the explicit references to the religious struggle against Catholicism (e.g. "Non tibi papatus domata falsa canam"⁵⁶). For example, the closing part of the poem, in which Thomas Mawer describes Christ's descent into Hell⁵⁷ and His fight against Satan and his Kingdom, provides a clear allegory of the contemporary fight between the good (Lutheran) religion and the bad (Catholic) one.⁵⁸ The terrified Satan, referred to as Plato, delivers a fervent speech to Hell's inhabitants, ordering them to defend their underground world. They are warned of a danger of falling under the yoke of a satrap from Galilee – Jesus, the Saviour, foretold by prophets as the conqueror of Hell.⁵⁹ Satan urges them on to fight, promising a reward.⁶⁰ But then God's powerful voice rings out, ordering Hell's gates to open.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, fol. B8rec.–B8ver.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, fol. B8ver.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, fol. B1ver.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, fol. E2rec.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, fol. E2ver.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, fol. E3rec.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, fol. E3ver.

All the infernal forces are made to yield.⁶¹ The poet paraphrased here verses 7–10 of Psalm 24. There is also a direct fight between Christ and Satan whose defeat is tantamount to the fall of papacy.

Romanae, sequiitur mortem, lapsus ipse cathedrae,
 Bestia quae nomen Pontificale tenet.
 Tempora triplicibus cuius sunt cincta coronis,
 Et spinis nexum, qui diadema gerit.
 Ipsius abraso capitis de vertice pendent.
 Eumenides laniant huius et ungue genas.
 Post papam veniunt maledicta catharmata mundi
 Veste cucullata rasau[e] monstra, lupi.
 Hanc seriem tandem vastator Turca secutus,
 Sub praesens Christi cogitur ire iugum.
 Ordine digestos omnes recitabo nec hostes,
 Damnati poenas qui subiere graves.⁶²

After his victory, Jesus arrives in an abyss where he meets Adam who thus witnesses the fulfilment of God's promise. The motif of meeting Adam is an important element, both formally and substantively, of the whole work. It binds the whole story of salvation together – the promise given to Adam is finally fulfilled. The picture is rather untypical. Other authors usually described the scene in a cursory fashion, avoiding the inclusion of encounters with purgatory figures. Mawer did the opposite, modelling the crowd after the dead whom Aeneas saw in the underground. In other interpretations of Christ's descent into Hell, we find only descriptions, composed of mythological metaphors, of infernal monsters; men saved by Jesus are only mentioned or completely omitted.

Caspar Pridmann (1537–1598)

The circle of Melanchthon's students included Caspar Pridmann, a pioneer of the Lutheran poetry in his home city of Głogów.⁶³ He enrolled

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² Ibidem, fol. E8ver.

⁶³ For a biography Pridmann's and some references cf.: Cunradus, op. cit., p. 222; M. Hanke, *Vratislavienses Eruditionis Propagatores, Id est Vratislaviensium Scholarum Praesides, Inspectores, Rectores, Professores, Praeceptores; Tabulis Chronologicis comprehensi, ... Cum Annotationibus & tribus Indicibus* (Vratislaviae, 1767; copy ULBSAH, sign. Ga.4114), pp. 65–66, 119; S.J. Ehrhardt, *Presbyterologie des Evangelischen Schlesiens*, Pt. 1 (Liegnitz, 1780), p. 106; J. Soffner, *Geschichte der Reformation in Schlesien* (Breslau, 1886), pp. 298, 300; G. Förstern, *Analecta Freystadiensia oder Freystädtische Chronica*, Pt. 3 (Lissa, 1751), par. 176, p. 346;

at the University of Wittenberg on 2 October 1556. In the years 1558–1560 he studied in Vienna where, in 1560, he received his master's degree. For a short time (1561–1562) he served as rector of the Lutheran school in Koźuchów and, in the years 1564–1573, under the rectorship of Joannes Ferinarius, as its conrector. At the same time, beginning in 1566, he held the post of the head of the Lutheran school in Głogów.⁶⁴ Interestingly, the city council, appointing Pridmann to the position of the head of the school, assigned one of the basements of the town inn to serve as home to the newly founded institution.⁶⁵ Initially, then, he wrote for a handful of students who, after completing their education at an elementary level, could continue it at the schools of higher level – for example, in Złotoryja, Wrocław and Brzeg. In the years 1573–1577, the number of the students attending the school was probably greater and it could be officially recognized. There is no doubt that the poet's appointments to this honourable positions was possible because of his studies at the University of Wittenberg and his acquaintance with Melanchthon's friends – Joachim Cureus and Joannes Crato.⁶⁶

G. Bauch, *Geschichte des Breslauer Schulwesens in der Zeit der Reformation* (Breslau, 1911; Codex Diplomaticus Silesiae, vol. 26), pp. 319–325; D. Dolański, *Najspokojniejszy Kościół. Reformacja XVI wieku w księstwie głogowskim* (Zielona Góra, 1998), pp. 61, 63, 103.

⁶⁴ Some sources contain information that he was appointed rector of Gymnasium in Głogów as late as 1573. However his publications are evidence that he started to work as teacher in Głogów much earlier. Their titles indicate that they were written specifically for the school and were recited during classes. In 1566 he signed himself as moderator of the school in Głogów. In 1568 he already referred to himself as *ludiliterarii Glogoviensis rector*, that is, rector of the elementary school. In 1573, which is where his rectorship dates from, he referred to himself as rector of boys' studies in Głogów. Cf. C. Pridmann, *Carmen de morte et resurrectione Iesu Christi in schola Glogovensi recitatum. Illustri et Magnifico Domino, Domino Stanislao, Comiti et Domino a Gorka, Capitaneo in Busko et Kolo et Domino Regalim in Gnesna, Uscze, Pila, Moschina etc. Dicitum autore* (Gorlicii, 1566; copy Lublin, Catholic University [Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, hereafter: KUL], sign. XVI.534); idem, *Carmen Sapphicum de puero Iesu in Schola Glogoviense[!] recitatum...* (Lipsiae, 1566); idem, *Carmen de veteri et nova Pentecoste in schola Glogoviensi recitatum* (Lipsiae, 1568; copy KUL, sign. XVI.541); idem, *Ecloga de puero Iesu scripta a Casparo Pridmanno Glogoviensi gubernante studia pueritiae in urbe Glogoviensi* (Witebergae: excudebat Ioannes Crato, 1573; copy BUWr, sign. 532323).

⁶⁵ J. Blaschke, *Geschichte der Stadt Glogau und des Glogauer Landes* (Glogau, 1913), p. 203; Dolański, op. cit., p. 63.

⁶⁶ As stated by Dolański (op. cit., p. 63), it was Joachim Cureus who was responsible for Pridmann's appointment, based on this publication, to the position of

Created during Pridmann's stay in Vienna, the song *Carmen hexametrum bucolicum* (1560)⁶⁷ was given the form of a conversation between Thyrsis and Corydon warming themselves by the fire in winter season and holding pastoral *colloquia sacra*. This is a reference to Vergil's IV pastoral which contains the motif of the golden age placed in the context of the birth of Messiah. The author seems to allude here to political events which took place after the conclusion of the peace of Augsburg (25 September 1555). Given the fact that from 1553 on Jan Łaski,⁶⁸ Melanchthon's friend, was actively engaged in promoting the unification of the Protestant camp and that the idea was ardently advocated by Philip himself, it can be presumed that Pridmann wrote the song on commission from these two reformers. It is also worth noting that the pastoral was composed⁶⁹ during the Council of Trent (1545–1563) whose decisions were treated by the Protestants as a threat requiring their immediate unification. The call for the Protestants to join forces figures prominently in the text. It can be seen in the very conversation of the poor shepherds whom the Protestant poetry identified with the members of the "poor Church".

Corydon suggests to Thyrsis that they should join their herds and hold a conversation by the fire.

Lungite vos niveis vicini Thyrsidis agnis,
Lungite sic iunctis fiet grex omnibus unus.
Conunctis etiam gregibus metuenda luporum

the rector of the Głogów school in 1573, and given the fact that he published school works as early as 1560 r. (from 1566 r. mainly for this specific school), it is evident that he had for a long time been designated for this position. The status he achieved in Koźuchów and Głogów, and his effectiveness as a teacher were later appreciated – he was offered a good post in Wrocław. From 29 May 1578 until his death on 8 VIII 1598 he worked there as moderator at the St. Magdalene school. Unfortunately none of the works raising biblical topics he wrote while in Wrocław are surviving, although, as noted by Ulrich Schober, he taught his students to write this type of works. See idem, *Poematum libri III* (Thorunii, 1592), fol. A3rec. Information after: S. Tync, "Z życia patrycjatu wrocławskiego w dobie renesansu," *Sobótka* 8 (1953), pp. 93–94.

⁶⁷ C. Pridmann, *Carmen hexametrum bucolicum in natalem Iesu Christi* (Vienna Austriae, 1560; copy BUWr, sign. 355359).

⁶⁸ H. Kowalska, "Łaski Jan (Joannes a Lasco)," in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 18 (Wrocław et al., 1973), pp. 242–243.

⁶⁹ The publication appeared probably at the beginning of 1560, that is, before Melanchthon's death, since it contains no information about his death. It concerned the Christmas of 1559.

Est minus in campis rabies at vulnere saepe
Dispersi sensere greges hostilia nostri.⁷⁰

Joining the herds, according to the author, was to ensure protection against predatory wolves (symbolizing here the Catholics). The bonfire is used here as a symbol of love, unity, safety and concord. To dispel all the doubts as to who is the real enemy, Corydon talks about constant wars provoked by Popes.

Quis precor amissi non norit tempora Regni,
Quod cum Pontifices ferro defendere vellent
Regnandi studio, quos non movere tumultus?
Haec res saepe meis fuit exitiosa capellis;
Saepe etiam nostros crudeli pectore miles
Et vastavit agros et vulnere multa minatus.⁷¹

At the end the angel choir praises the Lord who sent Messiah, and exhorts peace and fraternal unity.

Uniat humanas concordia foedere mentes
Aeternum pacis studium, fraternaue verus
Pectora iungat amor, partes Concordia primas
Obtineat, veluti vero dilexit amore
Sancta Dei soboles mortalia pectora Christus [- -]
Nam cum nulla prius duris pax ossibus esset,
Et vix languentis fruerentur munere vitae,
in variis morbis, vario discrimine rerum:
nunc pater aeternus coeli terraeque Monarcha,
Deplorata videns quid sint exilia, Christum
Esse Redemptorem voluit, LYTRON quia nemo
Aequivalens potuit delictis solvere tantis.⁷²

Pridmann's work clearly reflects the fear of the Catholics' possible growth in strength and the consequent desire of the accord between the Protestants, to be unified on the basis of Luther's teaching on the justification. The Greek word *lytron*, which in its basic meaning denotes Christ's sacrifice, was used here as a symbol of the doctrine of justification. The theme of Christmas was clearly treated as the pre-text and background for discussing significant problems of the Protestant Church.

⁷⁰ Pridmann, *Carmen hexametrum*, fol. A2rec.

⁷¹ Ibidem, fol. A3rec.

⁷² Ibidem, fol. A4rec.

In *Carmen de morte et resurrectione Iesu Christi* (1566), in turn, Pridmann offered a detailed description of the last days of Christ's life. Presenting Jesus as a hero, he stressed his grandeur and heroism. The work also contains the motif of the descent into Hell and the resurrection of the dead who then appear in Christ's homeland. Among those whom Jesus brought to life from the abyss of Hell is Eve – the first mother. After her resurrection she meets Mary and tells her and her Son the story of her fall. From the moment of committing her sin, she says, she hoped for the advent of the Saviour capable of defeating Satan. She beats her breasts and takes full responsibility for man's fall. Jesus seeks to comfort her – it is Him who as her descendant defeated Hell and delivered people from eternal death. Mary says that everyone who has fallen can ask for God's grace and that nobody will be refused it. Eva calls on people to listen to Jesus' mother and find their way back to God. The motif of Eve's conversation with the Virgin Mary seems to have been introduced with a view to strengthening the arguments regarding the Lutheran principle *solus Christus* and addressed to the Catholics. It should be kept in mind that the work was dedicated to Górká, which means that it was intended for Poles, known for their attachment to the cult of the Virgin Mary. The motif was used to preach Jesus' redemptive mission in a way consistent with the doctrine of justification. The biblical events are given here a casual interpretation (there appear apocryphal themes), which is different from its canonical version in, for example, its exposition of the conversion of Roman soldiers absolved of any responsibility for Christ's death. The author also justifies Pilate himself (a clear influence of the Gospel of Nicodemus), attributing responsibility for Christ's death to the Jewish priests whom we are led to view as an analogy to the Catholic ones. The narrative aims at emphasising the motives of their actions, including especially the fear of Jesus' teaching and the loss of power over ordinary people. Here are some of the statements of the priests accusing Jesus of lying:

Quid sibi vult novus iste Deum mentitus Iesus?
 Germen mentitus coelo se ducere ab alto?
 Non Deus est illi genitor, fabrilia tractans
 Est illi pater, obscurus, quae lumina captat?
 Quas imposturas hominum diffundit in ora?
 Quam nostros per agros, quam nostra per oppida famam
 Captat?⁷³

⁷³ Ibidem, fol. A3ver.

They attack him for spreading the new religion, to which they didn't give their consent.

Non miser in populo certare veretur
Religione nova gaudens sine numine nostro?⁷⁴

Christ is told not to stand in their way and not to look down on them because they are in power of defining dogmas and, by God's will, they are in possession of the temples.

Principiis obstare iuvat, te magne magister
Maiores nos esse puta, nos sacra tenemus
Dogmata, nos templum regimus, quod numinis alti
Nobis forte datum est, tractes fabrilia fabri
Filius et vivas patriae non degener artis.⁷⁵

It is worth noting that the word *pontifex* is often used in reference to priests responsible for Jesus' death: "fraudumque dolique pontificum, pontifici scelerum, pontificum scelera". The repeatedly used phrase: "pontificum scelera et fraudes" was designed to invite an association with the Pope and Catholic priests, undermining their authority and leaving the reader convinced of the crimes they committed. Just as Jewish priests wanted to kill Jesus to protect their interests, so Catholic ones struggled to maintain their influence. The question is why Pridmann wasn't explicit in expressing this accusation? Perhaps allusive language better resonated with the properly oriented readers. Although they could draw their own conclusions, their thoughts were tending in the direction marked out by their mentor. There is no doubt that the author created the poem to promote the Lutheran faith among the Catholics. It wasn't addressed only to his fellow worshippers.

Laurentius Fabricius (1539–1577)

A young Laurentius Fabricius Raudensis enrolled at the University of Wittenberg on 19 July 1558.⁷⁶ In about 1553–1557 he, it seems,

⁷⁴ Ibidem.

⁷⁵ Ibidem.

⁷⁶ For a biography Fabricius's and some references cf.: R. Curicke, *Der Stadt Danzig historische Beschreibung: worinnen von dero Ursprung, Situation, Regierungs-Art, geführten Kriegen, Religions- und Kirchen-Wesen ausführlich gehandelt wird* (Amsterdam and Danzig, 1687), p. 323; L. Rhesa, *Kurzgefasste Nachrichten von allen seit der Reformation an den evangelischen Kirchen Westpreussens angestellten Predigern* (Königsberg, 1834), p. 41; A. Charitius, *De viris eruditus Gedani*

attended the St. Elisabeth school. It must have been during his stay in *Elisabethanum* that he got in touch with his later patrons: Nicolaus and Thomas Rehdiger and Joannes Morenberg, the superior of the Elisabeth school. Their protection determined his main goal in life – the promotion of Lutheranism advocated by the Wrocław magnates. They enabled the poor student to start his education at the University of Wittenberg. *Historia diluvii Noae*,⁷⁷ dedicated to Thomas Rehdiger, who was studying at that time in Wittenberg, was written probably in 1558. At the end of his studies Fabricius published *Carmen de passione Domini nostri Iesu Christi*,⁷⁸ which was in turn dedicated to Nicolaus Rehdiger. In 1561 Wrocław saw the publication of his *Canticum Canticorum Salomonis et Threni Hieremiae prophetae elegiaco carmine*,⁷⁹ written, it seems, for use at the school to which he went. A elegy included in *Cantinum* and dedicated to Adam Siber – a famous Lutheran humanist and poet with ties to Melanchthon, Georgius Fabricius and Jacob Mylius – provides a number of significant details concerning the author's life. Fabricius proudly reveals that he listened to Melanchthon's lectures and recalls his funeral:

Discipulus quando flumen ad Albis eram
Audiremq[ue] pium cygnea voce Philippum
Tharsensis doctos explicuisse libros.

ortis, speciatim in iis qui scriptis inclaruerunt (Vitembergae, 1715), pp. 51–52 [note]; E. Praetorius, *Danziger Lehrer Gedächtniß, bestehend in einem richtigen Verzeichniß der Evangelischen Prediger in der Stadt und auf dem Lande* (Danzig and Leipzig, 1760), p. 5; H. Freytag, "Die Beziehungen Danzigs zu Wittenberg in der Zeit der Reformation," *Zeitschrift des Westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins* 38 (1898), p. 127; idem, *Die Preussen auf der Universität Wittenberg und die nichtpreussischen Schüler Wittenbergs in Preussen von 1502 bis 1602* (Leipzig, 1903), p. 106; A. Modlińska-Piekarz, "Fabricius Raudensis Silesius, Laurentius," in: *Słownik pisarzy śląskich*, ed. J. Lyszczyna, D. Rott, vol. 3 (Katowice, 2013), pp. 26–32.

⁷⁷ Unfortunately the date and place of publication are absent from the title page. However, its vignette is identical as the materials printed in Wittenberg in 1558 and in Laurentius Schwenck's publishing house. Cf. i.a. Z. Praetorius, *Liber Christiados* (Witebergae: excudebat Laurentius Schwenk, 1558; copy KUL, sign. Ł. 113 adl.).

⁷⁸ L. Fabricius, *Carmen de Passione Domini nostri Iesu Christi scriptum ad Nicolaum Redingerum Senatorem Inclytae Reipublicae Vratislaviensis, Dominum & Mecoenatum suum* (Vitebergae, 1559; copy Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek [hereafter: HABW], sign. A 58.1 Poet. 191).

⁷⁹ Idem, *Canticum Canticorum Salomonis et Threni Hieremiae prophetae* (Vratislaviae, 1561; copy BUWr, sign. 382758).

Funus Pegasides cecinere sorores,
Pulchricomae Charites, Pallas, Apollo, Heli[ades].⁸⁰

Shortly after the appearance of this publication Fabricius left Wrocław and, on 9 August 1561, entered the University of Königsberg.⁸¹ As a university student, he published, in 1562, a paraphrase of Psalm 37 (written in the elegiac distich) and Psalm 39 (written in the hendecasyllable).⁸² The publication of other paraphrases which involved the poetic interpretation of 15 gradual psalms (120/119–134/133),⁸³ that is, songs praising pilgrims' entry into the church, appeared in the same year. Fabricius dedicated them to Senior Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern, which is evidence that for some time he stayed in the duke's court and that the duke, as we are explicitly told, was his patron. Fabricius' psalmic paraphrases,⁸⁴ along with other religious works he created,⁸⁵ echo the religious struggles and various political issues of the day. Particularly noteworthy, however, is an epos entitled *Adamus* (Königsberg, 1566)⁸⁶ and dedicated to Gotthard Kettler. It was created with a view to marking the occasion of Kettler's wedding with Anna of Mecklenburg (24 Feb. 1566).⁸⁷ As can be inferred from the content of the work, the author saw the court of the duke of Courland in Mitawa. He must have been invited to take part in

⁸⁰ Idem, "Elegia ad clarissimum virum et poetam rarissimum Dominum Adamum Siberum scholae Grimmensis Rectorem," in: *ibidem*, fol. D3ver.

⁸¹ *Die Matrikel (und die Promotionsverzeichnisse) der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg in Preußen. 1544–1829*, ed. G. Erler, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1910), p. 29.

⁸² L. Fabricius, *Psalmus XXXVII Noli aemulari in malignantibus etc. carmine elegiaco et Psalmus XXXIX Dixi: custodiam vias meas carmine phalaecio compositi a Laurentio Fabricio Raudensi Silesio* (Regiomonti Borussiae, 1562; copy BUWr, sign. 53564).

⁸³ Idem, *Psalmi quindecim qui cantica graduum dicuntur variis carminum generibus redditi* (Regiomonti Borussiae, 1562; copy Toruń, Copernican Library [Książnica Kopernikańska, hereafter: KKT], sign. B.4° 27adl. 20).

⁸⁴ A. Modlińska-Piekarz, *Votum Davidicum. Poetyckie parafrazy psalmów w języku łacińskim w XVI i XVII wieku* (Lublin, 2009), pp. 139–156.

⁸⁵ The poet's other works: L. Fabricius, *Elegia de discrimine sacerdotum Veteris Summi Sacerdotis Novi Testamenti ex Epistola ad Hebraeos Laurentii Fabricii Raudensis Silesii* (Regiomonti Borussiae, 1562; copy HABW, sign. A: 254.20 Quod. /12/); idem, *Elegia in natalem Iesu Christi Filii Dei et Mariae Virginis Salvatoris nostri* (Regiomonti Borussiae, 1563; copy BUWr, sign. 533088); idem, *Collatio Paschatis Veteris et Novi Testamenti carmine composita* (Regiomonti Borussiae, 1567; copy KKT, sign. B. 4 o 27 adl. 13).

⁸⁶ Idem, *Adamus* (Regiomonti Borussiae, 1566; copy KKT, sign. B. 4027 adl. 3).

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, fol. A2ver.

the wedding ceremony, which he did probably as a member of Duke Albrecht's retinue. This fact is crucial for the proper interpretation of the work. Fabricius stressed the extraordinary circumstances in which the wedding took place and wished the young couple many children whom he envisioned as Courland's future rulers defending the rights of its inhabitants against external enemies: the Swedes and Moscow. According to the poet, the duke avoided the "papal error" and didn't teach that good deeds were indispensable for salvation. This view ran counter to the idea of being redeemed solely by Christ:

Sic nitet historias inter descriptio lapsus
 Quem tacita serpens fraude fefellit Adae.
 Horribilem pandit malesani criminis ortum,
 Quod sit iter quod nos ducat ad astra docet.
 Impia subvertit Romani regna papatus
 Et meritis robur detrahit omne bonis.
 Et iubet innocua Christi sperare salutem,
 Morte, licet renuat credere vana caro.⁸⁸

Given the historical context the fragment also indicates the pointlessness of living a monastic and celibate life. The poet's words seem to suggest that Gotthard and Anna, united in marriage by God, will be blessed with offspring and start, despite the Pope's objections, a new dynasty:

Sic tua te faciat numerosa prole parentem
 Megalburgi semine creta Ducum,
 Inclyta quos magnis virtus heroibus aequat,
 Horrifero bello pacificaque toga.
 Et genitrix Sponae est regali sanguine nata,
 Nam pia Teutonici neptis Achillis erat.⁸⁹

Given the above it is easy to understand why Fabricius gave the issue of the creation of woman and of her role in man's life more attention than it had received in the biblical original.⁹⁰ The author attempted to explain why Duke Gotthard had broken his vows of chastity and married Anna of Mecklenburg. It isn't a mistake to relate the poem to the couple's wedding, since Fabricius wrote it specifically to celebrate the event, of which he informed the reader in the

⁸⁸ Ibidem, fol. A2rec.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, fol. A2ver.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, fol. A4ver.

dedication work mentioned above. The poet attempted to justify the marriage, arguing that lonely life was devoid of charm. He went so far as to refer to sexual communion. Woman was also expected to offer help in dealing with everyday problems (and yet the first men living in paradise couldn't have any). This is a clear reference to the duke's decision, which, one might add, was consistent with Luther's thought. The reformer stressed that sexual needs determined man's life and that man's relationship with woman enabled him to have children and prolong his family line. The same view is to be found in Fabricius. The poet offered a detailed description of how Adam sank into a deep slumber and how God took the rib from his side and then, miraculously and painlessly, filled it with flesh. By the will and power of God's word, woman was created from that rib. Fabricius vividly, but in accordance with the existing convention, described her extraordinary beauty. To this description he added the motif of her surprise at the world which she saw for the first time. Although the motif is absent from the Bible, it seemed logical to assume that the first woman, having found herself in paradise, looked with admiration at all the plants and animals that surrounded her. The author modernised this motif by likening Eve's enchantment to the enchantment of those who were for the first time watching ducal court, gilded roofs, paintings and carpets. This must be a reference to the admiration the poor poet felt when he saw the wealth of Gotthard's court. Another amplification, intended to highlight the meaningfulness of the married way of life, also served the need of the moment. Fabricius used an argument derived from the biblical story of creation to justify the duke's decision to abandon celibacy. God, so the argument goes, didn't want Adam to be alone and with no children. The author didn't hesitate to refer to sexual intimacy.⁹¹ By God's will man and woman were made to form a great and pure alliance. God created their sacred union, finding it good and pure. Their bond is not only spiritual but also physical. The ability to procreate is considered to be the greatest gift men received from God, and it is this gift of which Satan became jealous. In return for this gift, Adam offers a thankful speech in which, apart from phrases known from the Bible, he stresses the meaning of marriage, its purity and its sacred character. The reader is made here to believe that, since God created Adam and Eve to be married, their relationship is sacred and pure. We also find

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, fol. B2rec.

Adam addressing his wife with words that were used by newlyweds during the wedding ceremonies.⁹² The marriage of the former master of the Livonian Order also caused the author to include in the story about the first men the motif of Satan's rebellion. Satan is shown to have opposed God not only because man became God's exclusive eternal descendant (*aeterna soboles*), but also because God gave man what even the wisest and most powerful angel in heaven didn't have: home, wife and children. The awareness of this fact drove Satan wild with fury. The offspring Adam and Eve were likely to have what the one who couldn't enjoy the gift of parenthood was jealous of. One should presume that it is the pope whom the author had in mind here.⁹³ As an enemy of human marriage Lucifer epitomizes the opposition of the Catholic Church and Pope Pius V to the secularization of the Livonian Order by its last Grand Master who converted to Lutheranism and married Anna of Mecklenburg. The line of argument provided by Fabricius contains not only quasi-apocryphal picture of the rebellion of angels, calculated to add colour to the poem, but it is also a kind of a political insult to the head of the Catholic Church, who, in opposing the relationship in question, is shown to have been driven by the jealousy of the couple's sexual bond and the offspring they might have, both of which he was deprived. Fabricius' reasoning also aimed to encourage other Catholic priests to abandon celibacy. It can be argued that the author, following Luther's teachings, considered the abstemiousness of priests and monks to be unnatural and bad (contrary to God's will). He believed it to arouse great sexual desire, causing people to sin outside marriage. Convinced of the legitimacy of the arguments of the Father of the Reformation, the Silesian poet adjusted the myth of Lucifer's fall to his own vision, the creation of which was motivated by the problems of the day. His was an allegorical view of marriage meant to mark the beginning of a new Courland dynasty. Relying on simple associations, the author drew an analogy between contemporary events on the one hand and biblical ones on the other: as an enemy of marriage, Lucifer was supposed to epitomize the pope pressing clergy to live in celibacy, while Eve

⁹² Ibidem, fol. B3rec.

⁹³ Dispelling any doubts as to the correctness of this interpretation is the poem mentioned above. This example shows that the work proper was often closely connected with the dedication preceding it, whether it was prosaic or poetic. Such a dedication often served as a prologue explaining the context in which the work is set.

and Adam were Gotthard and Anna, a God-loving couple enslaved by sin. However, they didn't have to be afraid of condemnation because Christ redeemed their sins through his sacrifice. Commemorative in nature, the text was written in support of the policy pursued by Kettler's court. It was meant to improve his public image and justify his conversion to Lutheranism and the choice of a new life path. This argument can also be placed in a broader context and interpreted as an encouragement to get married and abandon celibacy which the Lutherans treated as a needless yoke and not a merit. It can also be presumed that among those whom Fabricius wanted to convince of the righteousness of choosing marriage over celibacy were the monks and priests from the secularized Livonian Order and Lutheranized churches who now had to adapt to a secular life. The work openly attacked the Catholic Church. It should also be kept in mind that the author remained in the service of Albrecht Hohenzollern and that it must have been the latter who commissioned him to write a propagandistic work to mark the occasion of which the ruler wanted to make use to further his own political goals. In this connection it is all the more surprising that Fabricius decided to include in his work the myth of Lucifer's rebellion. The inclusion of the myth allowed him to create not just a common insult, but an effective literary analogy. It is also worth noting that although Fabricius wrote it far away from home it also could fulfil its propagandistic function because it served the political and religious purposes of Hohenzollern whose power extended to a number of Silesian duchies. The Protestants' struggle against Catholic orders continued. Attempts were probably made to secularize them, including through encouragement to abolish celibacy. The epos in question reveals four layers of meaning to be detected in the biblical story. The first concerns the etiological interpretation of the creation of the world and the explanation of the causes of sin, the second refers to the universal Christian exegesis, the third is bound up with the Lutheran interpretation of the falling and sinful man who is unable to recover from sin by himself and the fourth involves the allegorical interpretation of a specific political event. The work fulfils the function of a poetic exegesis, but it is certainly something more than just a poetic translation and a theological interpretation of the biblical original.

Conclusions

The examples of the poems created by Melanchthon's Silesian students support the following conclusions. Most Wittenberg students endowed with literary talent began their teaching and writing career at schools, universities and churches of the Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Prussia thanks to Melanchthon's recommendation or based on the fame of being one of his close students. Studying under the Reformer determined the topics and character of the works they created, as well as the way in which they interpreted biblical themes. Most of their works were designed to demonstrate, in a poetic form, different elements of the Lutheran doctrine such as the principles *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, *sola Scriptura*, the cult of poverty and predestination. The poetry created by the subjects of this article shows their deep involvement in the religious struggles of the day. The most sophisticated and elaborate way of using biblical themes to spread religious propaganda was based on the use of the figurative representation of biblical characters and events. Such an approach allowed the authors to create quasi-analogies between their own world, embroiled in religious wars, and the world of the Bible. Their texts contain references to specific political events. Of course the employment of biblical prefiguration rested on a long Christian tradition, clearly reflected in the works of Silesian poets, of biblical studies. However, the process of the creation of their works involved the use of methods employed in literature. Silesian authors sought situational analogies, created brief, symbolic pictures conveying common or similar message, and used words best suited to the expression of particular ideas. In doing this, they followed the ancient maxim *verba docent, exempla trahunt*. When such an example concerns a story of a biblical character, who is assumed to represent an analogy to the situation of the Lutheran Church and its members, the reader has no difficulty identifying with it, and is led to make a specific choice (that is, to take sides), thus reaching the outcome which the author planned in advance. Not always were such measures valuable in literary terms. Much of what was written were clichéd works, based on popular rhetorical figures. However, some works stood out in their originality and artistic refinement. Among the latter one can include Fabricius' epos. From the literary point of view it can be regarded as one of the best poetic eposes which, addressing the issue of the fall of the first men, emerged in the era under consideration. Fabricius'

presentation of the topic, popular among sixteenth-century humanists, leaves the reader marvelling at the rich imagery, the complex play of meanings and the originality of approach. Noteworthy is also the way in which the author, by his recourse to the prefigurative use of Adam and Eve whom he shaped into a representation of the ducal couple (Gotthard Kettler and Anna of Mecklenburg), modernized the biblical content, giving it a more courtly tone. However, the author also dealt with theological issues. His aim in writing the work was both political and practical. He was supposed to offer a justification for Kettler's decision to break his vows of chastity and get married. Such a justification encouraged others to follow the duke's example. The epos was certainly commissioned by Fabricius' patron, Albrecht Hohenzollern. For the Prussian duke the secularization of the Livonian Order and the start of a new Protestant dynasty was a political and religious success. This isn't the only case where we find a Silesian poet pursuing propagandistic goals of his patron. Some of the works of Silesian authors not only contain references to the politics of the day, but are entirely devoted to specific political events. A case in point here is Caspar Pridmann's eclogue promoting the unification of the Protestant camp. Melanchthon's students often wrote works that aimed to support the policy pursued by the reformer and Protestant dukes and magnates who worked closely with Melanchthon and who were the adherents of Duke Albrecht, his relatives and allies in Silesian Duchies, Saxony, Brandenburg, Pomerania, Mecklenburg and in Poland, that is, wherever they sought to win the support for the Reformation. Apart from *Adamus* by Fabricius, of particular note is a number of works by Joannes Seckerwitz. With his fondness for biblico-religious analogies, he achieved excellence in drawing biblical pictures. Surprising in their incredible ingenuity, they bear references to a variety of issues. Particularly praiseworthy is the querela (lamentation) about Lazarus and the rich man and the intricate concept of the fictitious letters of Jacob and Esau who, arguing over priority rights, epitomize two conflicting religions. Both works stand out in their original approach to their respective topics, in the abundance of meaning, in the rhetorical proficiency accompanied by the power of persuasion and in their vivid imagery. There is no doubt that all Melanchthon's students were able to transform biblical stories in a way consistent with the religious and political doctrines of their patrons.

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze selected works by Philip Melanchthon's Silesian disciples who studied in Wittenberg during the last years of the life of the great Protestant reformer (1545–1560). Some biblical poems by Jacob Kuchler (ca 1526 – ca 1572), Joannes Seckerwitz (ca 1529–1583), Thomas Mawer (1536–1575), Caspar Pridmann (1537–1598) and Laurentius Fabricius (1539–1577) were elaborated. The author aims to demonstrate the political and religious meaning of the works in question, paying special attention to the role they played in the religious struggle against the Catholic Church and in the propagation of Protestant doctrines: the doctrine of justification by grace, the doctrine of justification by Christ alone, the doctrine of predestination and the repudiation of priesthood and celibacy. The poetry analyzed in the article was intended not only for the Germans and Silesians, but also for the Poles, Prussians and Livonians.

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