

GEISTLICHER GESANG IN DER REFORMATIONENZEIT. LIEDER
UND GESANGBÜCHER IN DER OBERLAUSITZ, IN BÖHMEN UND
NIEDERSCHLESIEŃ, ED. DIETRICH MEYER

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In 2013 the Akademie Herrnhut für politische und kulturelle Bildung organised a conference devoted to vernacular hymns (Kirchenlieder) in Upper Lusatia, Lower Silesia and Bohemia during the Reformation ('Kirchenlied und Reformation im Grenzraum Oberlausitz, Niederschlesien, Böhmen', 14–16 November 2013). The emphasis on those historical regions was in line with the cultural mission of the Akademie, an institution based in Herrnhut (in modern-day Saxony) which focusses on Upper Lusatia and its relations with other Central and Eastern-European regions.¹ In 2019 some of the contributions delivered at the conference were brought together in a collection entitled *Geistlicher Gesang in der Reformationszeit: Lieder und Gesangbücher in der Oberlausitz, in Böhmen und Niederschlesien*, edited by Dietrich Meyer and published by Neisse Verlag, a publishing house based in Dresden whose catalogue deals with Lusatia and more generally with the relations between German, Polish and Czech cultures.

With regard to the thematic and geographical focus of the volume, one can only praise the publication of essays devoted to the history of vernacular hymnody

in the above-mentioned Central European regions. Although the Kirchenlied repertory is of fundamental importance to our understanding of early modern musical cultures, scholarly interest in its formation and development has declined in recent years. It no longer seems to attract the attention it deserves, hence any publication that brings it into focus is most welcome. Furthermore, research into border regions such as Lusatia, Silesia and Bohemia allows us to highlight the Kirchenlied's multifaceted history, which is sometimes simplistically represented as a 'revolution' initiated by one specific person (Martin Luther), and relevant for one confession only (Lutheran). It goes without saying that the history of the Kirchenlied is much more complex, and the contributions collected in this volume draw attention to different strands of its tradition. The Lutheran Kirchenlied is obviously featured, but the authors repeatedly address also the hymn culture of other Christian denominations such as the Unity of the Brethren and the Schwenckfelder. Those churches cultivated vernacular hymnody too, but their role in developing and disseminating such repertory is not always sufficiently thematised in modern accounts of European music history. Thus, one of the most positive aspects of this book consists in highlighting the cross-fertilisations

¹ See <https://www.akademie-herrnhut.de>, accessed 1 October 2020.

between different hymn traditions, as well as the existence of very popular repertoires with an international circulation next to more specific and local ones.

Such coexistence emerges clearly already in the first contribution of the book, 'Hymnologische Spuren in den schlesischen Gesangbüchern der Reformationszeit' by Anna Mańko-Matysiak (pp. 11–45). Mańko-Matysiak's essay is devoted to the hymnbooks published in Silesia during the sixteenth century, discussing reprints of popular hymnbooks (such as Adam Dyon's edition of Maler's *Enchiridion*)² next to less obvious original publications such as Valentin Triller's *Ein Schlesisch singebüchlein*.³ The essay summarises the findings that Mańko-Matysiak already presented in her monograph *Schlesische Gesangbücher 1525–1741: eine hymnologische Quellenstudie* (Wrocław 2005), the first comprehensive study of the topic. Although I do not agree with some of her hypotheses,⁴ Mańko-Matysiak's essay represents a good point of departure for anyone wishing to delve into hymnbooks of Silesian origins.

Hans-Otto Korth's essay 'Die Bedeutung des deutschen Gesangbuches der

Böhmischen Brüder von 1531: Fenster einer Sangeskultur' (pp. 46–65) is also of an introductory character. It deals with the famous hymnbook *Ein New Geseng buchlen*, edited by Michael Weisse, a priest of the Unity of Brethren, and published in Jungbunzlau (now Mladá Boleslav, Czech Republic) in 1531.⁵ Korth begins his contribution with a rhetorical question, asking whether Weisse's hymnbook still needs any introduction (p. 46). A legitimate question indeed, since this source has been repeatedly addressed by hymnologists. Beyond specialist circles, however, it might not be as well known as one might think, and Korth appropriately takes a didactic approach that makes his essay especially suitable for readers unfamiliar with the subject. There are two points that I find particularly important in Korth's argumentation. While discussing vernacular hymns based on Latin models, he highlights how different versions of a hymn tune could mediate between the 'model' and the contrafactum (see for instance pp. 52–53). This urges us to contextualise Kirchenlieder within different versions of the same hymn tune, be they Latin or vernacular.⁶ Furthermore, Korth underlines how hymnbooks, even very important and successful ones such as Weisse's, are merely windows onto a 'culture of singing' ('Sangeskultur'): they are not self-contained entities but parts (or even fragments) of composite musical and religious traditions (pp. 64–65).

Ute Evers's contribution ('Die wahren Erben der Böhmischen Brüder – Zur Rezeption der Brüdergesangbücher bei den Schwenckfeldern', pp. 66–86) deals with the hymn repertoire of the Schwenckfelders, a spiritualist movement that owes its name to its initiator, the Silesian reformer Kaspar Schwenckfeld (1490–1561). Until the 1520s,

2 *Eyn Gesang Buchlien geystlicher Gesenge* (Wrocław: Adam Dyon, 1525), RISM B/8 1525-04 (see also vdm 188 and 266 in the *Catalogue of Early German Printed Music*, <http://www.vdm16.sbg.ac.at>). On this hymnbook, see also Anna Mańko-Matysiak, *Eyn gesang Buchlein Geystlicher gesēge Psalmē ... das älteste Gesangbuch Schlesien – Breslau 1525*, Wrocław 2004. Available online at <https://www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/dlibra/publication/79>, accessed 1 October 2020.

3 *Ein Schlesisch singebüchlein* (Wrocław: Crispin Scharffenberg, 1555), RISM B/8 1555-07. For a detailed discussion of this source, see Antonio Chemotti, *The Hymnbook of Valentin Triller (Wrocław 1555). Musical Past and Regionalism in Early Modern Silesia*, Warsaw 2020. Available online at <https://epub.uni-regensburg.de/43464/>, accessed 1 October 2020.

4 At pp. 26–27, for example, Mańko-Matysiak supports Norbert Hampel's hypothesis that Triller's hymnbook was intended for use by the common people ('das einfache Volk'), a view against which I argued in A. Chemotti, *The Hymnbook of Valentin Triller*, pp. 61–62.

5 *Ein New Geseng buchlen* (Jungbunzlau: n.n., 1531), RISM B/8 1531-02.

6 I argued in a similar direction in A. Chemotti, *The hymnbook of Valentin Triller*, pp. 96–97.

Schwenckfeld and his followers were part of the Lutheran Reformation, but in the following decades they broke with the Lutherans because of radically diverging views on the sacraments. This led to their isolation and ultimately to their persecution by the Lutheran authorities, who saw them as heretics threatening the unity of the Church.⁷ Evers summarises the most important features of Schwenckfelder hymn repertory (a topic she analysed in detail in her PhD dissertation⁸), showing the fundamental role that Brethren hymnbooks played in the formation of Schwenckfelder repertories.

One of the most interesting aspects of Evers's essay is that it moves beyond the Reformation, discussing printed and handwritten sources produced by Schwenckfelders who emigrated to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century following intensified persecution in their homeland Silesia. It is particularly fascinating to observe the historical awareness that Schwenckfelders had of the development of their hymn corpus. Evers shows that in the mid eighteenth century the Schwenckfelders still knew (and probably sang from) Brethren sources such as Weisse's hymnbook, mentioned above,

although by then those sources were more than two hundred years old (pp. 71–72). Evers shows that such interdenominational reception of hymns did not happen without adaptation, and she discusses interesting text revisions that reveal the adjustment of Brethren hymns to Schwenckfelder theology (pp. 76–77).

While the essays discussed so far focus on music sources, Thomas Napp's essay 'Das Kantorat als städtische Musikinstitution in der frühneuzeitlichen Oberlausitz' (pp. 87–101) adopts a very different perspective, examining the institutions and the socio-economical networks of Upper Lusatia that made sacred music possible in the first place. Furthermore, Napp highlights the position of Upper Lusatia as a 'Transfer-region' between Central European regions: while being administratively and politically linked to Bohemia, after the introduction of the Reformation it had strong ties with Saxony, a state of affairs that heavily influenced Lusatian religious and educational institutions.

The last essay in the volume, by the editor of the collection, Dietrich Meyer, is entitled 'Martin Behm (1557–1622), seine Predigten und seine Lieder. Eine Einführung in die Edition seiner ersten "Hundert Reim Gebetlein"' (pp. 103–126). As stated in its title, this contribution accompanies an edition of selected hymns from Behm's *Centuriae tres precationum rhythmicarum, Das ist, Drey Hundert Reim-Gebetlein*.⁹ Behm, a Lutheran pastor born in Lauban (Pol. Lubań, then in Upper Lusatia), is nowadays known primarily for his hymns, but his literary output spanned different genres, including historiography, sermons and plays. Meyer gives a survey of Behm's education and career, which took him to Vienna and Stras-

7 There is extensive secondary literature on Schwenckfeld, his theology and the spiritualist movement he initiated. See especially Horst Weigelt, *Spiritualistische Tradition im Protestantismus. Die Geschichte des Schwenckfeldertums in Schlesien*, Berlin 1973; Horst Weigelt, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Friedrichs II. von Liegnitz — Seine Stellung zu Caspar von Schwenckfeld und dessen Anhängern', in: *Dziedzictwo reformacji w księstwie legnicko-brzeskim / Das Erbe der Reformation in den Fürstentümern Liegnitz und Brieg*, eds. Jan Harasimowicz and Aleksandra Lipińska, Legnica 2007, pp. 63–75; Horst Weigelt, *Von Schlesien nach Amerika. Die Geschichte des Schwenckfeldertums*, Köln 2007; Gabriela Wąs, *Reformacja i władza: reformy chrześcijaństwa w nurcie reformacji a spory o władzę na Śląsku w XVI i w pierwszym dwudziestoleciu XVII wieku*, Kraków 2017, pp. 19–65.

8 Published as Ute Evers, *Das geistliche Lied der Schwenckfelder*, Tutzing 2007. Available online at <https://opus.bibliothek.uni-augsburg.de/opus4/3293>, accessed 1 October 2020.

9 *Martini Bohemi Lauba. Lusati[i], Centuriae Tres Precationum Rhythmicarum, Das ist: Drey Hundert Reim-Gebetlein* (Wrocław: Fellgiebel, 1658 or 1659), RISM B/8 1659-01.

bourg before he settled in his native Lauban as a teacher, preacher and finally the main pastor of the town (pp. 104–108). The biographical sketch is followed by an analysis of selected sermons and hymns which illustrate the breadth of topics expounded by Behm.

More than half of the book is devoted to the above-mentioned edition of hymns from Behm's *Centuriae tres precationum rhythmicarum* (pp. 127–288). Interestingly, the hymns are accompanied by rubrics that specify the relation to the liturgical year and the corresponding scriptural readings. Thus, they allow us to investigate the interconnection between hymnody and the preaching of the Holy Scriptures. Given the scholarly interest of this collection, it is regrettable that there is no real introduction to the edition, besides a few words in the foreword by Albert Löhr (pp. 8–9), who explains that only those hymns that have musical notation in the original source are transcribed in the modern edition, but no further information is given on the settings and the edit-

ing process. Editorial rules are not clarified, and the reader is left wondering about the meaning of some elements of the graphic presentation. The first hymn, *Wir dancken dir Herr Jesu Christ*, for instance, is set for four parts, with tenor and alto printed in a smaller font (pp. 127–129). Does this indicate that these parts were added by the modern editor? If so, why are other hymns set for two parts only? This is all the more frustrating in that the original source is not easily accessible, since it is not yet available in either a facsimile or an online digital reproduction. It appears that the editors envisioned that the edition would be used for practical music making rather than research (as suggested in the foreword, p. 9), but even so it would have been advisable to give performers some information enabling them to better understand both the edition they are using and the music they are performing.

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