



Gijsbert van den Brink | Gerard den Hertog (Eds.)

Protestant Traditions and the Soul of Europe



Protestant Traditions and the Soul of Europe

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Protestant Traditions and the Soul of Europe

Edited by Gijsbert van den Brink und Gerard den Hertog



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INTRODUCTION

Protestantism and European Culture

An Introduction

“The cultural significance of Protestantism is undoubtedly a reality, but one that is extremely difficult to describe in detail.”¹

1 Comenius and Europe

In which ways did Protestantism contribute to the formation of what might be referred to as the common European mindset and identity? Conversely, to what extent did developments in European culture, such as modernization, shape the ways in which Protestant traditions changed over time? In short, which connections, lines of influence or patterns of interaction can be discerned in Protestantism’s longstanding symbiosis with European culture? These were some of the central questions that were discussed at the ninth Comenius Conference of Central-European and Dutch Theological Faculties that took place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from June 25–29, 2014. This volume contains revised versions of most of the papers presented at this conference.

The Comenius Conference has been held biannually since 1998, bringing together academic theologians of various sub-disciplines – bibli-

¹ ERNST TROELTSCH, *Das Verhältnis des Protestantismus zur Kultur. Überblick*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften* 4, Tübingen 1925, 191 (“Die Kulturbedeutung des Protestantismus ist eine unzweifelhafte, aber im einzelnen überaus schwer zu umschreibende Tatsache”).

cal scholars, church historians, systematic and practical theologians – as well as other scholars with a professional interest in religion from both sides of the former Iron Curtain. One of the participating institutions, alternately in Central Europe and in the Netherlands, typically serves as a venue for the conference. Senior and junior scholars as well as graduate students are invited to hand in proposed papers well in advance. The proposals are then assessed and selected by the Comenius Committee, consisting of representatives of each of the participating theological institutions. Recent conference themes have included the transformation of traditions in times of transition and the theological significance of the concept of family, both in the past and in our contemporary culture of autonomy.²

The reference to Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670) was only recently added to the name of the conference. It serves as an acronym, though only in Dutch: **Commissie voor Oost-Midden Europese en Nederlandse Inter-Universitaire Samenwerking**. (Committee of Central-East European and Dutch Inter-Academic Cooperation).³ Best known for his strenuous efforts at pedagogical reform, Comenius was also a famous theologian.⁴ Born and raised in Moravia (the Eastern part of what is now the Czech Republic), Komenský, as his original name was, travelled extensively throughout Europe in the course of his life. Mainly as a result of religious persecution he faced because of his Protestant convictions, Comenius – who was an ordained minister of the Moravian Brethren – had to move from country to country. He lived and worked in Germany, Poland, Sweden, England, Hungary and the Netherlands. Comenius stimulated educational improvement wherever he came, making sure that people from all venues of life could take advantage of education. A European citizen *avant la lettre*, he lectured in Sárospatak, had a debate with Des-

² Cf. GERARD DEN HERTOOG & JAN ROSKOVEC (eds.), *Familie: Verwandschaft, die den Unterschied macht/Family: Kinship that Matters*, Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau 92, Leipzig 2012; ELOD HODOSSY-TAKÁCS & LEO J. KOFFEMAN (eds.), *Wichtige Wendepunkte. Verändernde und sich ändernde Traditionen in Zeiten des Umbruchs/Pivotal Turns. Transforming Traditions in Times of Transition*, Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau 98, Leipzig 2014. For previous conference themes and venues, see *Wichtige Wendepunkte*, 7.

³ Another drawback is that the acronym lacks what is most distinctive for the Comenius Conference, viz. that it brings together academic institutes for Protestant theology.

⁴ A recent biography of Comenius (in Dutch) is H.E.S. WOLDRING, *Jan Amos Comenius. Zijn leven, missie en erfenis*, Budel 2014. See also DANIEL MURPHY, *Comenius: A Critical Reassessment of his Life and Works*, Dublin 1995.

cartes in Leyden, and developed his mature views in Amsterdam, where he passed his final years. His name being connected to various cities from Western and Central Europe where contemporary participants of the Comenius Conference come from, the Czech Protestant theologian became the ideal patron of our club.

Furthermore, as a Protestant who influenced the shape of European culture, and its educational tradition in particular, Comenius also serves as a model for the theme of the present volume.⁵ It is important to keep in mind though that Comenius was quite an idiosyncratic Protestant, especially for those of us who tend to associate Protestantism primarily with Luther and Calvin. Although Comenius had studied at Reformed institutions in Herborn and Heidelberg, and shared the main commitments of the magisterial Reformation, from his student years onwards his spirituality was characterized by utopian thought and a millennialist eschatology more in line with the radical reformation. According to him, by working along with God, humans were about to achieve salvation on earth and therefore should strive towards this goal. Comenius also attached great value to mystical experiences, such as dreams, visions and prophecies, publishing those of others and prophesying himself. His “pan-sophist” ideal of universal wisdom presupposed that everything should be taught to everyone so that the universe’s divine harmony was fully comprehended.

Comenius’ example shows that Protestantism was by no means a homogeneous entity. Accordingly, in this volume, as well as at the conference itself, we have decided to speak of Protestantisms in plural, focusing on Protestant traditions rather than on Protestantism as a monolithic unity. In line with this, in most contributions particular varieties of Protestantism have been selected for analysis and research.

2 Protestantism and Europe: Some Trends in the Scholarly Debate

Does it still make sense to study the impact of Protestant traditions on European culture, now that many European countries have largely become secular and are drifting towards post-Christian forms of spirituality? We are convinced that it does – and we might refer the reader who doubts this to the essays published in this volume. It is almost undeniable that aspects of not only the traditional Protestant ethos but of its

⁵ Cf. NORBERT KOTOWSKI & JAN B. LÁŠEK (eds.), *Johannes Amos Comenius und die Genese des modernen Europa*, Fürth 1992.

very theology continue to be pervasive in many places in Europe – and not only places that have seen large Protestant communities.⁶ Even contemporary atheists can sometimes rightly be characterized as typical “Protestant atheists,” and distinct from, for example, Roman Catholic ones.⁷ And there is a rich diversity of cultural phenomena that comes to mind when we try to chart the continuing impact of Protestant traditions on contemporary Europe.

German sociologist Hans Joas has recently gathered no less than six different scholarly “Thesen” about Protestantism’s impact on the emergence of modern Europe from the older literature.⁸ They are briefly listed here in chronological order, leaving aside the subtleties in their precise elaborations (simple monocausal claims are usually avoided), and following Joas in naming them after their inventors or most influential exponents:

- the Jellinek-thesis, according to which the notion of *human rights* originated in the North American free church tradition;
- the Weber-thesis, which traced the spirit of *capitalism* to particular branches of Calvinism;
- the Hintze-thesis, ascribing the modern *bureaucratic state* to the influence of Calvinism;
- the Troeltsch-thesis, arguing for a strong (though indirect) influence of the Protestant Reformations on the cultural process of *individualization*;
- the Merton-thesis, claiming that Puritanism highly facilitated the emergence of *modern science* in England and Scotland.

⁶ Cf. GIJSBERT VAN DEN BRINK & HARRO HÖPFL, Calvin, the Reformed Tradition, and Modern Culture, in: VAN DEN BRINK & HÖPFL (eds.), Calvinism and the Making of the European Mind, Leiden 2014, 3–6.

⁷ Cf. e.g. OLA SIGURDSON, Theology and Marxism in Eagleton and Žižek. A Conspiracy of Hope, New York 2012, who portrays Žižek as a typical “Protestant atheist” and Eagleton as a Catholic agnostic (2, 15, 200).

⁸ HANS JOAS, Modernization as a Culturally Protestant [German: kulturprotestantische] Metanarrative, in: HANS JOAS, Faith as an Option. Possible Futures for Christianity, Stanford 2014, 50–62. Cf. for the following paragraphs my paper “Calvinism and the European Mind. Pitfalls and Prospects in Contemporary Research,” in: VAN DEN BRINK & HÖPFL, Calvinism and the Making of the European Mind, 216–220.

- the Dewey-thesis (or, traced back to its origin, the Perry-thesis), situating the origins of the modern *democratic state* in, again, Puritanism.⁹

These theories did not emerge independently. Many authors knew of each other's work (Weber and Troeltsch, for example, were close friends). Joas points out that these theories from the very moment of their inception became the object of inter-confessional and nationalist conflicts. For example, American Protestants, French secularists and German Catholics all wanted to buttress their own superiority by claiming a crucial contribution of their tradition to modern achievements. It turned out to be extremely difficult to find empirical evidence to support any of the theories listed above.¹⁰ According to Joas, only the Jellinek-thesis has been confirmed by later research.¹¹

If anything, recent scholarship has made clear that given the complexity of the issues reducing historical developments to unilinear, monocausal trajectories is no longer possible. Scholarly attention has therefore shifted from general theories covering the whole of modern European history to the analysis of more localized and small-scale phenomena. This tendency leads to a more diversified and fragmented view of the interactions between religious traditions on the one hand and cultural developments on the other. For example, it has been shown that theological theories concerning the "right of resistance" to autocratic rulers were alternately embraced in Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic milieus, depending on which confession was denied freedom of expres-

⁹ JOAS, "Modernization," 53–54; references are to GEORG JELLINEK, *The Declarations of the Rights of Man and of Citizens: A Contribution to Modern Constitutional History*, New York 1901 (or. ed. 1895); MAX WEBER, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Oxford 2011 (or. ed. 1904); OTTO HINTZE, *Die Hohenzollern und ihr Werk*, Berlin 1915; ERNST TROELTSCH, many works, but see esp. *Protestantism and Progress. A Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World*, New Brunswick 2013 (or. ed. 1906); ROBERT MERTON, *Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth-Century England*, New York 1970 (or. ed. 1938); RALPH BARTON PERRY, *Puritanism and Democracy*, New York 1944.

¹⁰ "Because each of these debates fired religious passions, and, because of the fusion of religious and national identity, nationalist passions as well, in all of these cases, a whole slew of opinions has accumulated that makes it nearly impossible to produce a straightforward empirical account of the factual issues involved." JOAS, *Faith as an Option*, 55.

¹¹ Joas' scepticism with regards to the other theories listed above should not be attributed to his own Catholicism.

sion in a particular spatio-temporal constellation. Thus, Protestant traditions themselves turned out to be quite malleable, displaying a remarkable flexibility under the pressure of changing cultural and political conditions.¹² The same also applies to Roman Catholicism: the so-called “Catholic Reformation” of the 16th and 17th centuries, for example, has been perceived as catalysed and deeply influenced by the rise of Protestantism.

Considering all these factors, how can Protestantism’s significance for Europe’s economic practices, its liberal democracies, its shared moral assumptions (human rights), the role of religion in its public life, the development of the arts and its educational system be assessed? Conversely, how have traditions issuing from the Reformation been affected by their ever-changing cultural conditions in various European contexts? These questions exemplify the type of issues that are addressed in this volume from a variety of perspectives. Given the fact that scholars from Western Europe have often shown bias by focusing almost exclusively on Western Europe when looking for historical backgrounds of contemporary European culture, we are especially happy to be able to include voices and perspectives from Central Europe or, perhaps more precisely, *Mittelsüdosteuropa* in this volume.¹³ Hopefully, that will prevent an unconscious continuation of this form of cultural myopia.

3 *Contemporary Relevance: Delors’ Historic Appeal to the Churches*

Having introduced the first part of this book’s title, it is now time to briefly reflect on its second part: the “soul of Europe.” This phrase has been deliberately chosen as an allusion to a historic appeal to the churches by Jacques Delors (b. 1925), the then President of the European Commission. The appeal in question was not given in a speech, as is often thought, but in the concluding session of a one day meeting that took place on 5 November 1990 between a delegation of Protestant and

¹² JOAS, Faith as an Option, 58–59, drawing on work of Wolfgang Reinhard in: HANS FENSKE et al, *Geschichte der politischen Ideen. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Frankfurt 2001, 268–293.

¹³ Whereas many Westerners are still inclined to label countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, etc. as belonging to “Eastern Europe,” participants to our conferences from these countries have pointed out that “Central Europe” and in some cases “South-Eastern Europe” are more appropriate designations. (From a geographical point of view, it can be argued that even Ukraine belongs to these regions).

Anglican church leaders with representatives of the European Commission in Brussels. Note that this happened a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was entirely unexpected, ushering in a new era of hope for more comprehensive processes of outreach and reconciliation, binding together Western and Eastern European populations across borders in the newly formed and ever expanding European Union.

We do not have a verbatim text of Delors' appeal, but from various reports it becomes clear that Delors urged the churches

“(...) to contribute to ‘the heart and soul of Europe’ aimed at strengthening solidarity in society, at creating a sense of belonging beyond national identities, and at developing a view of a Europe with ‘meaning’ beyond a Europe (...) of the technocrats.”¹⁴

Indeed, two years later at a subsequent meeting with church leaders, this time with a delegation from the German *Evangelische Kirche*, Delors highlighted the urgency of his appeal, showing how serious he had been and still was: “Believe me, we will not succeed with Europe solely on the basis of legal expertise or economic know-how. (...). If in the next ten years we haven’t managed to give a soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning, the game will be up.”¹⁵ Delors, himself a Roman Catholic, did not look exclusively at the churches for help in facing this challenge – he asked for “a free discussion of men and women of spirituality, both believers and non-believers, scientists and artists”¹⁶ – but he explicitly included and addressed the churches. This led to a growing awareness in many churches of what was going on in Europe and to intense reflections on how to evaluate and participate in the Eu-

¹⁴ LAURENS HOGENBRINK, *Europe’s Heart and Soul*. Jacques Delors’ Appeal to the Churches, Geneva 2015. Dutch theologian Hogenbrink was part of this event and in this booklet reconstructs the meeting (including its antecedents and consequences as well as its political and ecumenical contexts) from personal notes and written sources for the occasion of its 25th anniversary.

¹⁵ EECCS/CCME/EECOD Newsletter No. 2, May 1992 (the abbreviations stand for various European Ecumenical organizations), as quoted in Hogenbrink, *Europe’s Heart and Soul*, 73. See also the larger quote in Hettema’s contribution to this volume, fn.1.

¹⁶ Hogenbrink, *Europe’s Heart and Soul*, 74; cf. Michael Kuhn, “The Appeal to the ‘Soul of Europe’,” <http://europe-infos.eu/europeinfos/en/archive/issue163/article/5918.html> (last accessed: 8 September 2016) for the risk of misunderstanding Delors’ call as a plea for the rechristening of Europe.

ropean project.¹⁷ Conversely, the need for creating a European “sense of belonging” that went beyond a shared interest in the market economy would continue to preoccupy European politics. This is clear, for example, from the “Soul for Europe” project that was generated by Delors’ wake-up call.¹⁸

Today, however, this common sense of belonging and mutual solidarity between European citizens seems further away than ever.¹⁹ In times of resurgent nationalist movements, ongoing monetary concerns and a global refugee crisis that deeply divides Europe, it appears that the attempt to create a “European soul” has failed. One might therefore be tempted to conclude that Delors’ appeal, visionary as it was, has not received sufficient response over time, and that, as a consequence, Europe now is about to fall apart more rapidly than anyone (apart from Delors himself perhaps) had foreseen. Brexit is an ominous sign of this tendency. However, one might also hope that it is not yet too late. As many of us will know from our private lives, depending on how they are dealt with, crises can have a positive outcome, forging and strengthening bonds of solidarity rather than annihilating them.

In any case, the contributors to this volume have not merely an academic interest in the emergence of European culture. As a number of contributions in this book make clear, there is also a commitment to the future well-being of Europe, whether inspired by Delors’ wake-up call – a call that is reminiscent of the Old Testament appeal “to seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you (...) and pray to the Lord on its behalf”²⁰ – or not. There is a feeling that Europe is still in need of a “soul,” a common mentality and vision orienting our lives towards the pursuit of shared values which transcend the level of economic and political self-interest. Such a soul cannot be created out of nothing, however. It can only take shape if we remember where we come from – in other words, if the spiritual traditions which have nourished Europeans throughout the ages continue to be taken seriously. For it is these traditions which (despite their decline in terms of official membership and influence) to a large degree continue to shape our identities. They make

¹⁷ Of course, this reflection was not new but had started already in the preceding decades. For a survey (running up to 1979), see LUCIAN N. LEUSTEAN, *The Ecu-
menical Movement and the Making of the European Community*, Oxford 2014.

¹⁸ See www.asoulforeurope.eu (last visited September 2, 2016; by the way, the churches are more invisible on this website than one would have imagined).

¹⁹ Cf. HOGENBRINK, *Europe’s Heart and Soul*, 69.

²⁰ Jeremiah 29,7.

us into who we are, even if these days this process takes place much more beneath the surface than it used to in the past. It is also for these reasons that in this volume, as at the conference itself, Protestant traditions are carefully screened from historical as well as contemporary perspectives. We trust that in this way we will be surprised by their remaining power and their unremitting potentialities to contribute to the future “commonwealth” – the shared good life that is really worth living.

4 *Survey of the Contributions*

Traditionally, contributions to the Comenius Conference come from various sub-disciplines that arguably constitute the encyclopaedia of theology: biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology. Given the specific theme of this ninth conference, however, it felt unnatural to include an equal proportion of biblical scholarship in its proceedings. Therefore, this volume opens with a number of historical contributions. Interestingly, the first of these contributions is written by an Old Testament scholar. *Ibolya Balla* explores the strenuous efforts of Hungarian Calvinist Reformer Péter Méliusz Juhász (ca. 1536–1572) to translate the Bible into the Hungarian language, focusing in particular on his translation of 1 and 2 Kings. Here, to begin with, we have a typically Protestant concern: enabling the various populations of Europe to read the Bible in their own languages. The effects of this endeavour should not be underestimated. All over Europe, Bible translations in vernacular languages highly contributed to the emergence of a sense of belonging among those who read them (or heard them being read), not only as people of one faith but also as a nation largely defined by that particular language. Thus, as Balla points out, Juhász’ translations played an important role in the preservation of both the Hungarian language and nation. Bonds of solidarity were no longer limited to one’s own clan, province or region, but received a wider extension.

Herman Speelman focuses on the same period in European history but shifts our attention to France. Speelman sheds light on the volatile situation that emerged when “French Calvinists deliberately enforced the dissolution of the close ties between church and state, thus preparing the way for separation of these two jurisdictions, something that has become so characteristic of ‘the soul of Europe’.” After he had become convinced that the ideal of ecclesial unity could no longer be upheld, Chancellor Michel de l’Hôpital (1507–1573) proposed an agreement which would enable the newly founded Reformed church to co-exist

peacefully with the age-old Catholic church. It had to be possible “to live in freedom with those who do not observe the same ceremonies as we do.” Although this solution was short-lived since the Huguenots were soon subjected to severe persecution, it was the first step on the way to religious pluralism and liberty in Europe. Critics of the Jellinek-thesis may be right after all in pointing out that the earliest roots of religious freedom are to be found in France rather than in North America – even though not in the French Enlightenment, as they often suppose, but in the Huguenot movement.

Recently, Roman Catholic historian Brad Gregory has added a seventh thesis to the six ones mentioned above, arguing that Protestantism at large is (although unintentionally) responsible for the “hyperpluralism,” consumerism, relativism and subjectivism that bedevil the Western world today.²¹ Critically assessing Gregory’s claim with regard to the issue of subjectivism, *Henk van den Belt* proposes a shift of attention in the direction opposite to the one Speelman suggested vis-à-vis religious liberty. According to *Van den Belt*, the real watershed has to be found in the incipient French Enlightenment (in particular in Descartes’ epistemology) rather than in the Reformation: “Descartes jumped into the subjectivity of his *cogito*, while the Reformed held on to the external certainty of the authority of Scripture as the *principium* of faith.” To be sure, Descartes influenced later Protestant theologians who, consciously or not, adopted his epistemology. Van den Belt shows that even contemporary Reformed Orthodox theologians, in spite of themselves, have been affected by the rise of subjectivism. Rather than complying with Gregory’s thesis, however, *Van den Belt* argues that we should follow Troeltsch in making a distinction between the old and the new Protestantism. “The Reformation was not the beginning of modernity. The discontinuity lies in the Enlightenment’s breach with the ancient culture of external and supernatural authority.” It is therefore the new, post-Enlightenment Protestantism that paved the way towards modern subjectivism rather than the old one.

Hans-Martin Kirm focuses on an intriguing figure who has to be situated on the fault-line between Troeltsch’s old and new Protestantism: the Dutch Reformed theologian Balthasar Bekker (1634–1698). Attempting to face the challenges of the early Enlightenment by opening up new perspectives for traditional Reformed Protestantism, Bekker was an early

²¹ BRAD S. GREGORY, *The Unintended Reformation. How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, Cambridge MA 2012.

representative of the “theological Enlightenment” – a movement that is under-represented in contemporary research as compared to the more radical secular Enlightenment. In his famous *Betoverde Weereld* (“Enchanted World”; 2 volumes, 1691–1693), Bekker advocated a disenchantment of the world by criticizing popular beliefs in spirits and demons as being superstitious. Though following others (like Cocceius) in adopting a moderate form of Cartesianism, Bekker did not just turn towards rationalism in order to reach his goal but rather put to use both biblical exegesis and natural philosophy. As to the former, he applied the existing theory of accommodation to the occurrence of spirits and demons in the Bible. As to the latter, he pointed to mechanistic and atomistic explanations for extraordinary phenomena that were often traced to demonic influences. “In short: where for a long time spirits and demons had been in mind, one should rather think of atoms.”

With *Olga Navrátilová’s* essay we move towards the 19th century and to the topic of the modern democratic state. According to Hegel, the state cannot be separated from the values and commitments that are shared within society and that are culturally and religiously formed. In particular, the rise of the modern state was greatly facilitated by the emergence of Protestantism – that final stage in the development of Christianity and of all religion. Since the Reformation discovered the importance of subjective freedom, it enabled the emancipation of all areas of human culture from the rule of the church. This “self-comprehension of humans as free in Protestantism is (...) the soil in which the modern secular state has its roots.” Indeed, as Hegel keenly observed, the state has to rely on the attitudes (*Gesinnung*) of its citizens. According to Hegel, even Protestantism cannot be fully trusted here, given its inclination towards irrationality (e.g. in its Pietistic forms). It is only religion’s *Aufhebung* in speculative philosophy that embodies complete rationality. Navrátilová concurs with Hegel in that the modern state can only flourish when there is a shared human rationality that engenders a spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

Henri A. Krop’s paper on the so-called “Protestant principle” neatly elaborates on Navrátilová’s argument by placing Hegel in the broader context of German thought in the 19th and 20th centuries. Krop makes clear that Hegel indeed reduced Protestantism in all its varieties to a single essence: “the principle of subjectivity.” By denouncing all “dead external authority,” the Reformation established an independent way of thinking characterized by subjective freedom and autonomous reason. Krop shows how Hegel utilised this “Protestant principle” ideologically for buttressing the recent union of Reformed and Lutheran churches in

Prussia (1817). He then traces the vicissitudes of this principle from von Harnack via Troeltsch to Tillich, who all responded to Hegel in one way or another. Harnack reclaimed Protestantism as a *religious* movement while being more ambivalent about its contribution to progress. Troeltsch put in doubt Hegel's claim that Protestantism was a uniform movement which directly impacted the rise of modernity, making (as we saw above) a distinction between old and new or ancient and modern Protestantism, and arguing that only the latter embodied the values cherished by Hegel. Tillich, finally, once again formalized the Protestant principle. According to him, it implies that by his own work nobody can reach the transcendent God. Thus, Tillich turned it into a critical tool against all positive religion.

With *Ad de Bruijne's* paper we continue the topic of Protestantism's relation with the state, but move from Germany to the Netherlands and from the past to the present. Writing from a systematic-theological perspective and focusing on Dutch neo-Calvinism, De Bruijne investigates how Calvinists should evaluate the nation-state in the present-day context of hotly contested attempts at European integration. He shows that original Calvinism was a profoundly European movement. Later, however, it became more localized and, like other confessions, developed strong ties with specific nation-states. This development was, in retrospective, interpreted as a sign of God's providence and calling, so that Calvinism was bound up with the nation-state theologically as well. This seems to explain why neo-Calvinist thinkers in the 20th century tended to be critical of the process of European unification. Their opposition did not stem from a static theological sanctioning of the nation-state, however, but was rather based on other considerations such as fear of the emergence of a godless empire. In our current historical constellation, there is no reason to follow their example. Instead, it may be wise for Calvinist Protestants today to support efforts aimed at building a United States of Europe.

After excursions to Hungary, France, Germany and the Netherlands, *Heleen Zorgdrager* adds a second snapshot from the central-eastern part of Europe by focusing on recent developments in Ukraine. Zorgdrager starts her instructive paper in the midst of the current political crisis around Ukraine. She then asks how Ukrainian Protestant churches assess the relations between Ukraine and Europe. How do these churches define Europe and the European project? In answering these questions, Zorgdrager distinguishes three different attitudes. Within the older generations of Ukrainian Protestants, who were still raised in the era of the Soviet Union, Europhobia is dominant: Europe is largely conceived of as

“soulless” and morally decadent. For the same reason, other Protestants – mainly Evangelicals and Pentecostals – see Europe as a large mission field, to be evangelized from the “pure” Christian heartland of Ukraine. Thirdly, younger evangelicals in particular endorse an attitude of Euro-realism and Euro-optimism, hoping to overcome easy antagonisms by serious theological reflection. Since the fault lines run between the generations, and given some grim recent experiences with Russian religious intolerance in Crimea, overall sympathy for the European project is increasing in Ukrainian Protestantism.

In the next four papers, which, in a sense, form the heart of this volume, Jacques Delors’ challenge to give Europe a soul is met head-on.

Gerard den Hertog addresses the fundamental question whether, from a Christian point of view, we should indeed endorse the notion of a *soul* for Europe, and, more generally, that of a soul for any particular culture or society. Comparing the insights of two of the most influential contemporary Christian thinkers on political theory, Nicholas Wolterstorff and Oliver O’Donovan, the author concludes that different answers can be given to this question. Wolterstorff seems to embrace the notion of a soul for (Western) society, conceiving of it as an indispensable set of convictions on the inherent *rights* human beings have. O’Donovan, on the other hand, ascribes a primary role in his political ethics to the much more dynamic concept of *judgement*. Though O’Donovan definitely recognizes a moral order, he distrusts the attempt to capture the core principle of this order in terms of rights or some other fixed “soul,” since such a concept is easily abused for ideological purposes. Christians should rather pray that God protects society from the danger of political mythology and leads them by his Spirit so that they, as well as others, can time and again make sound political judgments. Den Hertog helpfully ends his paper, however, by pointing out a number of underlying issues about which Wolterstorff and O’Donovan agree.

In his trenchant essay *Jenö Kiss* suggests that in response to Delors’ appeal for a “soul for Europe” we should not begin by looking at the future but at the past. For we cannot infuse a brand new soul in some dead entity, as God reportedly did when creating the human being (Gen. 2). What we can do is to inquire why the soul or spirit of Europe became breathless in the first place. Here, Kiss reminds us of Europe’s recent past, which is burdened with serious social and political injustice. Drawing on Martin Buber and Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, he develops the notion of an “order of being.” From a biblical-theological point of view this is the order of God’s righteousness. It is this order that plays a pivotal role

in atonement theory, since without it Christ's sacrifice at the cross would be almost impossible to interpret. When the order of being has been harmed, life can only flourish again when it has been restored. Coming back to Europe's soul, those who caused the injustices that continue to haunt many Europeans, have to restore the order by acknowledging their guilt and striving after *Wiedergutmachung*. Quoting Levinas, Kiss argues that God probably is the one who does not let history get away with its injustices. The people of Europe should not do so either, and theology can contribute to reviving Europe's soul by reminding them of that obligation.

In another essay that struggles with Delors' notion of creating a "soul" for Europe, *Theo Hettema* probes the concept of *identity*. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur, he tries to do justice to the dialectics between sameness and selfhood (we share characteristics with others *and* we are unique persons) in understanding identity, as well as to that between selfhood and otherness. What makes us into who we are is shaped both by what distinguishes us from others *and* by our openness towards "real" others. Hettema then confronts these findings with the work of Derek Parfit, according to whom personal identity is not what matters. We cannot find a "person" behind the unity of experiences, physical and mental events and the relationships between them which constitute our extension through time. What does matter, according to Parfit, is the future of humanity. In line with Parfit, Hettema argues that what matters is not our Protestant identity but what it contributes to the benefit of humanity. Following Ricoeur, however, he posits a Protestant identity beyond any sense of pride in the five *sola*'s of the Reformation – all five of which point outside themselves, towards the Kingdom of God. In the end, what matters for the formation of a soul for Europe is not a consolidated Protestant identity but bearing witness of this Kingdom.

Leo Koffeman examines the possibility that contemporary Protestantism might be contributing a very specific but crucial notion to the creation of a soul for Europe: the notion of "unity in reconciled diversity," which enabled several Protestant churches in Europe from diverse backgrounds to come together in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). This community is based on the participating churches' recognition that they are united in a common understanding of the core of the gospel, but that this understanding is unpacked in very different ways. This plurality, however, should be cherished rather than suppressed. "The foundation of the Church safeguards its unity, and therefore a plurality of shapes is possible and legitimate." In this way, it turns out that a long history of mutual condemnations could be overcome. Can

this model also help us in providing “a soul for Europe”? (If so, the reader might note that the demands of Jenö Kiss for revisiting Europe’s past injuries should be met.) Koffeman is ambivalent in his answer, however, discerning both strengths and weaknesses in this model. He concludes that Europe might indeed learn from the Protestant experience of forming a unity which respects diversity, but such an outcome would need the input of other Christian traditions as well.

The next group of essays discuss particular *aspects* of European culture in their interactions with Protestant traditions: economy, arts, morality, and (ecclesial) religion. First, *Willem van Vlastuin* revisits the famous “Weber-thesis,” which we already mentioned. Van Vlastuin does not assess Weber’s thesis in general, but examines its theological ramifications in particular. Taking the theology of John Calvin (1509–1564) as his point of departure, he argues that Weber was right in highlighting the significance of Calvin’s emphasis on the Christian’s earthly calling. However, Weber did not take into account the notion of bearing one’s cross that is at the heart of Calvin’s theology of the Christian life. This notion implies that a healthy relationship with God does not necessarily result in earthly success. Also, Weber wrongly concluded that the Calvinistic spirit will employ the earth’s natural resources until the “last ton of fossil fuel has been consumed.” Applying Calvin’s theology to our current situation, in which nature is threatened by humanity rather than the other way around, Van Vlastuin argues that new strands in Calvin’s theological thought should be underscored, such as his assessment of nature as God’s creation and his emphasis on temperance. In this way, Calvinism can contribute to an ethics of care instead of the current exploitation of ecosystems.

Also focusing on Calvin but investigating his specific take on the visual arts, *Yelena Mazour-Matusevich* investigates one particular aesthetic consequence of Calvin’s thinking: the altered attitude toward what she calls the “chaotic modality” in the West, both in Protestant and Roman Catholic regions. By chaotic modality the author understands the spontaneous, random, hectic, and dangerous side of existence. *Mazour-Matusevich* shows how Calvin radically equated chaos with evil and order with good. As a result, artistic expressions of chaotic modality became expressions of sinful viciousness. The consequences of this changed appreciation of the chaotic should not be underestimated. In a fascinating account *Mazour-Matusevich* argues that this new attitude reduced the functions of the visual arts to didactic and decorative purposes. From this point on, artistic creations were to be seen as purely

aesthetic phenomena whose proper place was behind the safe walls of museums and private collections. Also, a relentless war on chaos in all its manifestations – wild nature, the body, raw emotions, sexuality, crime and disease – became typical for the European lifestyle. In a way *Mazour-Matusevich's* essay reminds us of the Hintze-thesis, as the former suggests that Calvinist values of clarity, order and harmony deeply influenced the neat ways in which Europeans organize their space, time, speech, work and leisure.

Jasper Bosman discusses the views of Calvin and later Calvinists on the use of visual art in *worship*. Calvin valued human arts like sculpture and painting as gifts of the Spirit, but was opposed to their liturgical use since we cannot and should not visualize the invisible. There is no anti-thesis between Word and image in his thinking, however, since “living images” (i. e. the sacraments, the liturgy, the universe, Christ) are used by God as means to make himself manifest. Still, as a result of Calvin’s decoupling of the arts and worship, in the Calvinist tradition works of visual art came to be displayed only in non-religious contexts. In this way, Calvinism contributed to the secularization of the arts in Europe. Bosman also expounds, however, how during the last few decades some Calvinist liturgies have escaped the limitations of early Reformed thinking on the uses of art. Nowadays, works of human art are being reintroduced in Reformed worship services. Bosman elaborates on an example of this shift, relating some theological arguments in its favour and suggesting that this is linked to the emergence of a new openness towards transcendence within Europe’s secularized culture. Beauty is once again seen as a “gateway” to this transcendence both inside and beyond the borders of the church.

Pieter Vos critically discusses the phenomenon of Euro-secularism, taking Paul Cliteur as a primary example. Cliteur particularly opposes the so-called “divine command theory,” which is often embraced by Protestants (as well as by other religious believers): whatever God commands is morally right, even if it goes against the grain of moral reason and humaneness. The classic example here is Abraham’s sacrifice of his son Isaac, as recounted in Genesis 22. After having briefly surveyed traditional Jewish and Christian interpretations of this text, Vos especially focuses on John Calvin’s and Søren Kierkegaard’s explanations of the passage – adding in this way a Lutheran voice to a Reformed one. For Calvin, the passage does not testify of an alleged conflict between God’s command and moral reason but highlights God’s faithfulness and the vital role of human faith. It is a story about the belief that moral *righteousness* will prevail in the end despite all appearances to the contrary.

As to Kierkegaard, his main purpose in *Fear and Trembling* is to offer a religious perspective *beyond* the ethical, in opposition to Kant and Hegel – but not against it. These Protestant readings therefore make clear that secularism is not the only way to uphold generally shared moral values within modern European constitutional states.

Zsolt Görözdi gives an account of the osmosis that took place when the ecclesiology of the Reformation clashed with the hierarchical structures of feudal society in central Europe, and especially in greater Hungary. In this way he opens our eyes to something that might be so evident that there is a risk of it being overlooked in a volume focusing on European culture: the fact that Protestantism also caused considerable change in the organization of European church life. It often did so in complex ways. As a strongly Christocentric movement, Protestantism – and Calvinism in particular – was wary of the possibility of the abuse of power and therefore had a strong anti-hierarchical and anti-centralist tendency. According to the Synod of Emden, lay people and ordained ministry should cooperate on the basis of equality instead of ruling over each other. In this way, Protestantism furthered – and reflected – the growing self-assurance of contemporary citizens. We should be careful, however, to speak of Protestantism as a champion of democratization. The main intention of the new church order was not to make the church more democratic, but to create structures that best reflect the reign of Christ. Although, due to political counter pressure, in central Europe consistories and presbyteries could not always be formed and the pivotal role of the bishop was maintained, Görözdi shows how the Reformed church order still contributed to the formation of Europe’s “soul.”

In the final paper included in this volume *Henk de Roest* turns our gaze from the past and the present to the future. His leading question has recently been the topic of intense reflection and debate both in the Netherlands and beyond: in what direction should academic theology, and Protestant theology in particular, develop in the current West European context? After having reviewed four Dutch contributions to this debate, De Roest observes that in each of them one of the three “publics” of theology, the church, is marginalized.²² In particular, local congregations – both old and new “church expressions” – are largely miss-

²² De Roest draws on David Tracy’s well-known typology here, as developed in TRACY’S *The Analogical Imagination*, New York 1981; as De Roest points out, the other two publics or domains of theology are the academy and society at large.

ing. Urging against this tendency, De Roest asserts that theology should remember that it is rooted in the church and its concrete practices of faith. He even goes as far as to say that “[t]heology evaporates without a connection to the church.” He notes that, paradoxically, as a result of secularisation churches have become more rather than less important to the preservation of the Christian tradition. Attaching the task of theology to this Christian tradition implies that theology should (1) explore how the “odd” language of faith (think of key concepts such as grace, reconciliation, etc.) can be mediated in secular contexts; (2) take seriously the missional character of the church as well as of theology itself; and (3) widen its scope so as to include global Christianity in all its varied expressions.

For a variety of reasons, not all papers delivered at the Amsterdam Comenius Conference have been included in this volume. One paper was withdrawn by its author and in the meantime has been published elsewhere: Sander Luitwieler, *The European Union: Protestant Contributions, Then and Now*, in: Jonathan Chaplin & Gary Wilton (eds.), *God and the EU. Faith in the European Project*, London 2016, 50–69.