

# Flacius' Struggle for the Freedom of the Church

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## Summary

*Matthias Flacius Illyricus is reputed to have been one of the most influential Croatian humanists and theologians of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Through his numerous works, he gave an efficient theological, philosophical, historical, linguistic and educational contribution to European cultural history. Besides a concise review of Flacius' life, the article discusses the truth as Flacius' starting point in his arguments and in life in general. Then it focuses on Flacius' spiritual/theological struggle for the freedom of the church which contributed greatly to the defeat of the pro-Catholic politics of Emperor Charles V and the survival of the Lutheran tradition of the Reformation in the German countries.*

Key words: Augsburg Interim, Bible, Gospel, truth, Luther, theology, Flacius

## Introduction

According to the notion of Radovan Ivančević (2004, 9), Matthias Flacius led only a meager group of Croatian thinkers who are now globally recognized as compelling contributors to the European cultural and scientific history of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ivančević has effectively and characteristically modified the expression "Stop Rojters" into the expression "Stop Flacius" because when Flacius published secret church and state documents accompanied by his direct and undisguised comments, he discovered the concealed purposes and goals of the enemies of the truth.

After Luther's death (1546), severe political, church-political, theological and cultural battles were waged in the German lands, and Flacius contributed to each one of them considerably. He had a crucial role in the survival of the German

Protestant movement since he aligned decidedly and uncompromisingly with the Holy Scriptures and Luther's teachings. This paper is dedicated to his struggle for the freedom of the church – freedom from the influence of political authorities in the faith of the church – and also to his struggle for a consistent implementation of Christ's teachings in the overall life of the church.

## Biographical Data

Matthias Flacius Illyricus<sup>1</sup> was born on March 3, 1520 in Labin (Croatia) as the youngest of six children<sup>2</sup> in the family of Andrija Vlačić. His mother, a daughter of the patrician Bartolomeus Luciani, died in childbirth, and his father died when Flacius was twelve years old. Judge Lucian Luciani, his uncle, was appointed his guardian (Olson, 2002, 28). At the age of sixteen, he went to study in Venice where he received a solid education in the school of San Marco, founded by Aldo Manuti. There he studied under the famous humanist, historian and professor of classical languages, Egnazio (Giovanni Battista di Cippeli, 1473-1553), who left a significant mark on Flacius' thinking.<sup>3</sup> There he learned the printing press craft, how to find and compile old manuscripts and documents, and the book selling trade.

From Venice Flacius set out for Augsburg, and from there he headed to Basel,<sup>4</sup> Germany in 1539, as he had been promoted by Bonifacius Wolfhardt (Lykosthenes), the pastor from Augsburg who was a respectable follower of Zwingli. In Basel, he learned Hebrew under Professor Sebastian Münster, while he learned the basic elements of philosophy and Reformation thought from Professor Simon Grynaeus. There he met the publisher Johannes Oporinus

- 1 There are several forms of his name and surname in the literature: Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Flacio Illirico, Mattia Francovich, Mattia Vlacich, Matija Franković, Mattia Flacio, Flacius Illyricus, and Matthias Flacius.
- 2 Matthias had two brothers, Franjo and Jakov, and three sisters, Celija, Dominika and Martina. We know their names from the last will of Celija Vlačić announced by Tomaso Luciani, *Matthia Flacio Istriano de Albona, notizie e documenti* (Pula: G. Seraschen, 1896). See more on this in Olson (2002, 28).
- 3 Egnazio was a close associate of Aldo. Among his numerous students were also Paolo Manuzio and Pier Paul Vergerius, who was Luther's convert and also the bishop of Kopar.
- 4 When he registered in Basel, Flacius called himself Francowitz, therefore, he was officially recorded as "Mattheus de Francistis de Albona Polensi Dioecesi in Illirico, sub Venetorum ditione, pauper" (Matthias of Frančić from Labin, from the diocese of Pula in Illiric, under the Venetian governing, a pauper) (Mirković, 1980, I, 70). At the registration, poor students were recorded as *pauper* (exempt from paying taxes due to poverty), contrary to the *nobiles* – students who were able to pay for their studies. Photographic reproduction of this entry can be found in Mirković (1960, 2nd picture).

(1507-1568) whose lectures he followed in Greek and Hebrew, and he also met the originator of bibliography, Conrad Gessner.

Flacius' conversion to God was also at about that time; he became a believer while reading the Bible.<sup>5</sup> He wrote that he became a believer by reading the Bible a long time prior to becoming influenced by Martin Luther (Flacius, 1557, T v iij r).

“Even before I learned Luther’s doctrine, I felt in myself the peace of conscience and the joy in the Holy Spirit, loved the religion and the Holy Scripture and often with my whole heart wished to contribute something in theology, so that I could advance in the Holy Scripture and serve the church of Christ some time and then be able to return to the Lord” (Flacius, 1549, D iij v; Olson, 2002, 28-29)

Who directed him to the Bible? Olson (2002, 29) assumes that maybe it was Ascerius who introduced him to the Bible.

In 1540, Flacius moved to the newly founded Protestant university in Tübingen where he was received and assisted by Mathias Garbitius Illyricus, professor of Greek, Greek culture and ethics.<sup>6</sup> Supported and recommended by Matija Grbac (Garbitius), in 1541 he went to study Greek and Hebrew in Wittenberg, the leading university of the day.<sup>7</sup>

In Wittenberg, Flacius met Martin Luther (1541?). Luther was already old, ill and exhausted. Mirković (1980, I, 79) dynamically describes the relationship between Flacius and Luther:

“For five years Flacius is there with Luther, he sees him, sometimes he eats with Luther at the same table, he reads, engulfs and absorbs his writings; Luther takes him in defense, comforts him personally, and when he got to know him better, he puts more hope in him, than in any other of his disciples.”

- 5 Franjo Zenko (1990, 170) points out that the theologian, Flacius, testified to his Christian-theological self-cognition through his personal life and work. He points to the fact of Flacius' conversion to the true Christian faith which happened – as he said – through God's mercy.
- 6 Mathias Garbitius (1511-1559) came to Germany as a boy with merchants. In Nürnberg, in the newly founded Protestant Gymnasium, he learned humanistic doctrine under the professor Joachim Camerarius (1500-1574). In 1533, he studied at the university in Heidelberg and at the university in Wittenberg in 1534 where Martin Luther assisted him with his counsels and reputation (Mirković, 1980, I, 75). As a student he gained the trust of his professor Philipp Melancthon, who recommended him after he completed his masters to the newly founded university in Tübingen. There, in 1537, he was nominated to be the professor of Greek, Greek culture and ethics.
- 7 Flacius lived in Wittenberg for a total of eight years: first for six consecutive years (1541-1546), then for an additional two years after the armed battles for access to the city and the cessation upon the conquest of the city by the emperor's army in 1547 (Mirković, 1980, I, 79).



Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575). Source: Jean-Jacques Boissard and Theodor de Bry, *Bibliotheca chalcographica, hoc est Virtute et eruditione clarorum Virorum Imagines*. Heidelberg: Clemens Ammon, 1669. Partes 1-5. Universitätsbibliothek Mannheim; MATEO: Mannheimer Texte Online (<http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/desbillons/aport/seite70.html>)

Although Mirković exaggerates a little in his description, it is worthwhile to note what Luther wrote, namely that Flacius is “a man of great faith whom I know very well”.<sup>8</sup> In November of 1545, Flacius got married to Elizabeth, the daughter of Pastor Michael Faustus from Dabrun, near Wittenberg.<sup>9</sup> Luther attended their wedding, thus demonstrating respect and a great appreciation for Flacius. Flacius also had a high esteem for Luther. “Luther’s best years are behind him,” he said. “Behold, this is our old, venerable Father in Christ, the faithful man of God and true Elijah, who as an undismayed hero has fought, confidently and happily against the Antichrist, all kinds of heresies and Baalites. Today or tomorrow our Lord God will take him from here”<sup>10</sup> (Olson, 2002, 47).

8 Luther wrote that Flacius was *homo notissimus et magnae fidei vel supra aetatem* (WAB, 10, 328).

9 Elizabeth bore him twelve children in nineteen years of marriage. Eight of them survived. She died in the last (the twelfth) delivery in 1564.

10 *Etliche greiffliche gewisse unnd scheinbarliche warzeichen, daraus ein jeder wie geringes verstands er auch sey, Wo er nur zu erforschung der warheit geneigt ist, vermerken kan, das die Lehre der Evangelischen des Herrn Christi Lehre selbst ist, und das der papisten Lehr falsch, gotlos, vom Antichrist erfunden ist*. Magdeburg, 1549, Aij v; 1550, A iij r.

Referring to Caspar Heldelin (1575, T iij v), Olson (2002, 49) believes that Flacius was never a part of Luther's inner circle, although he had several conversations with him; then he communicates the opinion of Christiana Frank who dismisses the possibility that Luther ever regarded him as his chief spiritual heir. It is worth noting that Kaspar Ulenberg - known by the consulting of the modern sources - gives him that honor. He writes that Luther acknowledged him as "a man of his own spirit," as a man he held "in high honor"; he also believed and hoped that Flacius would be the one who would be able to continue his reform after his death (Olson, 2002, 49).

Flacius came to Wittenberg with a recommendation addressed to Philipp Melanchthon who was already known as the most prominent German professor, the teacher of Germany (*Praeceptor Germaniae*). Melanchthon received him and gave him accommodation in his grand house on the main street, and he also provided him with students for drills in Greek and Hebrew. Flacius honored and dearly loved Melanchthon and served with him for three years as a *Korrepetitor*. Flacius wrote to his Preceptor, "I honestly have loved you . . . more than any other" (Flacius, 1549c, [Hr], J iij v; Olson, 2002, 42).

During his studies, Flacius fell into a spiritual crisis. He wrote about his state:

"Here (that is, in Germany) I fall into difficult temptation, while for this, neither the arrant teachers nor any other important proceeding on my side are to be blamed. I fall into desperation, in all the torments of the hell. This state of mine outlasted three years. All this time the evil in me aggravated. After that it took a whole year to ease up. At that time, I have experienced inside and passed the vexation of God and the fearsome dominion of the devil over the wretched people, the vehemence of sin and the corruptness of the old Adam and his rage against God. I believed that I was rejected and started to anticipate death" (Flacius, 1549a: Mirković I, 1980, 94).

During his stay in the house of Friedrich Backofen, the deacon of the evangelical church in Wittenberg, Flacius' spiritual and physical state was very poor, so he thought he would soon die. Backofen noticed this and persuaded Flacius to go to doctor Bugenhagen and to Luther for consultation and prayer. Flacius wrote about this experience: "Luther comforted me by eliciting his case and the cases of others. Then the church prayed for me. Since then, the evil started to vanish day after day and I was completely well after a year" (Flacius, 1549a; Mirković, I, 1980, 94). His recovery occurred in 1543. This persistent struggle greatly determined Flacius' theological thought which was based on a personal relationship with God, and not on an abstract speculation. "I tell you all this," Flacius wrote later, "so that you do not think I have learned the teaching of the gospel only from reading or leisurely thought, but through my own experience, and that I am not

an untested Christian, which Doctor Martin Luther especially wanted in a theologian” (Olson, 2002, 48). His own experience, similar to Luther’s, helped him understand Luther’s theological deliberations. Although professor Melanchthon had influenced him deeply, he declared that he learned more through his own temptations and study than through his (Melanchthon’s) lectures (Flacius, 1557, H iij v). “I have experienced more what it means to struggle and fight with the devil, sin and a bad conscience,” he wrote about himself, reacting to their theological speculations, “than Dr. Major and Maximus [Melanchthon?]” (Flacius, 1553, B v; Olson, 2002, 49).

Supported by Luther, Matthias Flacius traveled to Venice in 1543 in order to help Fra Baldo Lupetina get released from jail. Regardless of the letter Flacius brought with him from Johann Friedrich, the Saxon elector, signed also by other territorial rulers of the Schmalkaldic League, he did not succeed in seeing Fra Baldo Lupetina released due to political and administrative reasons.

Elector Johann Friedrich designated Flacius as the professor of Hebrew language at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University in Wittenberg in 1544. The elector received the recommendation to name Flacius as professor by Chancellor Gregor Brück<sup>11</sup> upon Melanchthon’s confirmation that Flacius had gained sufficient knowledge of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and the humanistic sciences. At the age of only twenty four, Flacius was appointed as a professor at the most influential Protestant university, although without the right of participation in the faculty council as he would point out later.<sup>12</sup> Under the mentorship of Professor Philipp Melanchthon, he acquired a Masters degree in free arts on February 25, 1546.

From Wittenberg, Flacius moved to Magdeburg where he stayed until 1557. In the surrounded city of Magdeburg, Flacius wrote the book *Catalogue of the Witnesses of the Truth (Catalogus testium veritatis)* by which he employs and encourages Luther’s followers to endure in the struggle for the truth. He believed that the development of the Reformation required a systematic university education, therefore he interceded greatly for the founding of the university in Jena where he worked as a professor of theology from 1551 to 1561. As a result

11 In the letter of recommendation, Brück wrote, “What especially moves me to write this is that in the church I saw how the fine young fellows gathered around the said Illyricus on the feast days with Hebrew books that they are reading. When they have need, they ask him. He cheerfully gives them information and instruction. I can conclude that he would be very useful to the students because he is young, learned, and, as a foreigner, poor. The students would feel less shyness about consulting him at any time than an old one, as Master Lukas is” (Cited in: Olson, 2002, 52).

12 *Apologia auff zwey unchristliche Schriften Justi Menij. Darinnen von den gewelichen Verfelschungen der Adiaphoristerey und Maioristerey allerley nützlichs angezeigt wird.* Jena, 1558, E r.

of this so-called deterministic teaching on original sin and the abjudication of the rights of the mundane lord to censure the university course books, Flacius was forced to leave the university in Jena in 1561. The same year, he introduced the idea of founding a university in Regensburg in a letter to Ivan Ungnad, the German nobles, and Primož Trubar and Mathias Klombner in Ljubljana; in it, he especially emphasized that the foundational lectures on theology for students from Slavic countries should be in their national languages.

Flacius dreamed about his own printing house, but the social, political and religious atmosphere was not benevolent toward him, so he was not able to establish it. However, he assisted in the printing of Slovenian and Croatian books in the existing printing house in Regensburg.<sup>13</sup> In Regensburg, he started to write his most renowned work, *The Key of the Holy Scriptures (Clavis Scripturae Sacrae)*.

In 1566, Flacius was driven from Regensburg. He moved often because of persecution. The cities Antwerpen, Frankfurt am Main, Strasbourg, Mansfeld, Berlin and Basel were only passing stations where he could not find a shelter for a peaceful life and focused intellectual work. Finally, with the help of his loyal friends, he found a shelter for himself and his large family in a nunnery in Frankfurt where he worked intensively on the completion of a philosophical-theological commentary of the *Bible (Glossa compediaria)*. There he died in 1575, worn down by illness and other distresses.

### **The Truth as a Starting Point in Flacius' Thinking<sup>14</sup>**

Many researchers of the Reformation and Flacius' works have raised a whole range of questions: What prompted Flacius to write and publish numerous works? Why did he interfere with the pope and countless German bishops? Why did he confront Charles V, the mighty Duke Maurice of Saxony and other influential magnates? What motivated him to gather countless intellectuals to write church

13 In 1566, the printer Ivan Burger printed the Slovenian book *Otrozhia Biblia* edited by Matthias Flacius and his Slovenian student Sebastijan Krelj in Regensburg. The following year they printed the Slovenian translation of the Spandenberg's *Postilla* which was translated by Krelj. In the same printing house in 1568, a Croatian translation of the Brenc' *Postilla* was printed in two parts at it was translated by Stipan Konzul and Antun Dalmatin. The reprint of the *First part* of the *Postilla* was published in Zagreb in 1993. Alojz Jembrih prepared the reprint and he also wrote the epilogue.

14 This part of the text is elaborated on in more detail in my article *Vlačičeva borba za istinu (Flacius' Struggle for the Truth)* published in: Matija Vlačić Ilirik: Zbornik s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa "Matija Vlačić Ilirik", Labin, Grad Labin, 2004.

history? What was so valuable to him that he would sacrifice his easygoing job as a professor? Why was he willing to move often with his large family? What struggles did he have? What purpose?

Flacius' basic attitude, which determined his entire life and work, was crystallized during his stay in Wittenberg, especially during his studies. The events he experienced between 1543 and 1548 were especially significant and formative for Flacius and his later work. Several events deeply influenced him and determined his thinking: his studies in Wittenberg, the establishment and deepening of his relationship with God, his acceptance of evangelical theology, Luther's death, the convening, polemics and conclusion of the Council of Trent, and the imposition of political solutions for religious matters by Emperor Charles V.

During that rapturous time, Flacius rapidly accepted the Bible, or the Holy Scriptures, as the sovereign truth and authority in all of life's issues and all areas: in belief and life, in the church, politics and education. Therefore, to him, the struggle for truth is a struggle for the authority of the Bible as the Word of God (1997, 1960) as well as a struggle to apply this Word in the believer's life. Namely, by the Reformation rule of *sola Scriptura* (only Scripture), Martin Luther emphasized that the Bible is the only source and standard for Christian teaching, faith and living, and countless 16<sup>th</sup> century reformers uncompromisingly asserted the thesis that the Holy Scriptures are the judge and the creator of the church. By stressing the authority of the Scriptures, Luther and Flacius disputed the Roman Catholic teaching on the parallel source of truth, that is, on the oral tradition which is continuous in the history of the church. According to the Roman Catholic teaching, the Scriptures and the oral tradition are regarded as equivalents, but in practice this has been reduced to a tradition which is rooted more in philosophy and folk beliefs than in the Scriptures. Throughout history, the Roman Catholic Church has established the tradition and the general belief that church tradition can supplement the Scriptures. Flacius (1993, 93) confronted this practice scorchingly, writing:

One should always be careful to search every teaching from the true source. Namely, even in the sciences about man it is strictly regulated that all the methods and teachings are derived and built from the true principles in a right and careful manner; than they are finally proved by their natural cause, experience and general benefit and usefulness for the people. However, our task here is not to form or compound a certain teaching. We receive it from heaven as already formed and included in the book. It only remains for us to know it well and apply it in our everyday usage. The Son of God Himself, who rests in His lap, has revealed us from there all the secrets. It is exactly to this source and to this wealth that we are referred to by God.

In his works, he thoroughly displayed his reasons for not accepting the tradition



of the fathers and he argued for the sufficiency of the Scriptures:

Because some people instruct us to search for the truth sometimes from the old, sometimes from the learned, sometimes from the fathers and the tradition, therefore, it needs to be carefully stressed, as opposed, that Christ and the apostles did not want to list any fathers or their traditions and customs. They could have undoubtedly created them for themselves, and their reputation was of great value to the Pharisees and the priests, as well as with the common people themselves. But, instead, they have not mentioned any of that, not even in the smallest matter, neither for themselves, nor against their opponents. Moreover, they have strictly admonished the traditions of the ancestors. Therefore, all the truth should be exhausted from the source itself, the Scripture. We are built on this unique foundation of the prophets and the apostles. They are the only heads, both of the Church and the faith, and we should rely on the Scripture. Therefore, while emulating them and listening to them, let us not worry too much of what others say or propagate, which instructions or obligations they try to enact upon us or teach us in advance (1993, 93).

Flacius thought that all the beliefs, deliberations of the church fathers and decisions of the Council should be done on the foundation of the Scriptures for they are the Word of God – the living Word which revives those who believe in it. The Holy Spirit makes it alive because he is the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father and testifies to him (Jn 15:26-27). Flacius emphasized that the Holy Spirit is both the author and the interpreter of the Scriptures. His task is to lead the believer in all truth (Jn 16:13). His task is to inscribe the Scriptures in the believer's heart (Jer 31:33). Prophecy, and the whole of Scripture (as evidenced by Peter in 2 Pet 1:20), is not a matter of a person's mind and interpretation, but should be interpreted in light of the Holy Spirit as displayed by the prophets through the Holy Spirit (Flacius, 1993, 67). Flacius also thought that since all is created by the Word and nothing has been done apart from it (Jn 1:3), then a true understanding of the whole reality is possible only by the revelation of God and his creative purpose. A true interpretation of reality is possible only *within* and *through* the Word about the Triune God whom Jesus Christ has revealed (Jn 1:18) Flacius (1993, 67) wrote,

Every good thing should be sought from God, especially the greatest – understanding of his Word. Therefore, let us say together with David: *Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me* (Ps 119:18-19). Therefore, we should pray to God continuously and intensely through his Son, so that we might know the Scripture in a true and salutary way. Whosoever shall ask, namely, it shall be revealed to him. Whosoever shall knock, it shall be opened unto him. Whosoever shall seek, it shall be given unto him.

To him, the truth is not merely a simple matter of agreeing about the accuracy of

a doctrine nor a result of a person's philosophical deliberations on the subject of truth. The truth is a person, Jesus Christ, and his creative Word which has been declared in the Bible, or the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, we should not only know the truth, but also obey it (Rom 2:8; Gal 5:7). Flacius (1993, 67) points out: "The gift of Christ is to reveal the Scripture to us and to enlighten our heart in order to be able to understand the Holy Scripture (Lk 24:25). We should all receive from his fullness. This, however, happens when we acknowledge and accept him".

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ inasmuch as he is the ultimate revelation of God the Father (Jn 1:17-18). Flacius names Jesus Christ "the king of truth" (1993, 115) who came to promote and testify to the truth (Jn 18:37).

"When we turn to Christ, then the veil of our heart is being lifted, as well as from the Scripture itself, not only because we are illuminated by the spiritual light, but also because then we have the scope and the argument of the entire Scripture, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ himself with his suffering and benevolence (2 Cor 3:16). Namely, Christ is the end of the Law. He himself is the pearl or the treasure; if we find him in this field of the Lord, we have wielded well with it" (Flacius, 1993, 91).

Flacius (1993, 71) stressed that all that has been written in the Scriptures was written for people: first, to mark or judge them foremost as sinners, second, to witness to them about Christ (Jn 5), third, to comfort them in order to have patience and hope, and finally, to teach them completely about salvation, revealing their own guilt to them, correcting them and teaching them to be perfect and equipped for every good deed (cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17). The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God by which God is revealing himself and which speaks to mankind in everyday situations. Therefore, it is important that every person be able to read and understand the Scriptures and respond to their impulses by faith. Flacius considered it to be important that every person be able to understand and comprehend the language, the text and the meaning of the Scriptures in order to be able to "hear with their own ears their Teacher who speaks to them clearly, while teaching them and offering his goods to them, without an interpreter or a mediator" (Flacius, 1997, 197).

Flacius (1993, 89) adopted the viewpoint that Scripture is the source of all truth: Jesus Christ is the Truth, the living Word of the Father, and Scripture is a "discourse of the truth" or the written Word of God. Therefore, "along with diligence and prayer, one can find in the Scripture the most reliable truth on all necessary issues" (1993, 89). This thought led him during his struggle for the freedom of the church.

## Flacius' Political Struggle for the Separation of the Church from the State

Understanding and accepting the truth of the Scriptures uncompromisingly prompted young Flacius to take his first political actions upon the compromise of the leading Catholic and Protestant mediating theologians; at the state council in Augsburg, 1547, they adopted the common decree called the *Augsburg Interim*.

Namely, after Luther's death (on February 18, 1546), supported with military and finances from the pope, Emperor Charles V declared war on his followers united in the Smalcaldic League. The next several years were a period of intense testing of the faithfulness of the evangelicals to the Scriptures and to Luther's doctrine. Many of them did not pass the test. Luther's prediction that after his death none of Wittenberg's theologians would remain steadfast came true.<sup>15</sup> When the test of faithfulness came to Flacius, he resigned from the safety of the professor's salary at the university in Wittenberg with the conviction that a compromise with Luther's enemies represented a betrayal of Luther's teaching; since Luther's teaching is a matter of the Gospel, thus it would be a betrayal of the Gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

During the negotiations on July 28, 1546, the pope requested Emperor Charles to use force to protect the authority of the Council of Trent, the Catholic faith and its unity.<sup>16</sup> On April 24, 1547, with help from the army of Duke Maurice, Emperor Charles V defeated the princes of the Smalcaldic League in Möhlberg. Elector Johann Friedrich (1503-1554), the leading protector of the Reformation, was captured and sentenced to death for assaulting his Majesty and for compliance with the Protestant teaching (Iserloh, 2004, 235); later his sentence was changed to time in prison. On May 19, 1547, he signed a capitulation which consented to let Maurice take over the electorate in order to ensure a smaller but sure inheritance for his sons. The provincial Count Philipp of Hessen surrendered himself to the emperor on June 19, 1547. By defeating the Smalcaldic League, Charles V defeated Germany militarily, and then he devoted himself to solving the religious and political issues of the empire. He withdrew Johann Friedrich from the position of elector of the Holy Roman Empire;<sup>17</sup> with incentive from

15 Stephan Tucher noted Luther's declaration in his edition (1549) of Luther's last sermon from January 17, 1546. For more on this, see Diener, 1978.

16 Emperor Charles V signed an alliance with the pope on June 7, 1546. (Iserloh, 2004, 234).

17 By virtue of his steadiness in confessing biblical truth under pressure at the emperor's court, Johann Friedrich acquired a popular title, far more sublime than the one he was given by the emperor: "Johann Friedrich, by the Grace of God Elect Martyr of Jesus Christ, Duke of the Afflicted, Prince of the Confessors of the Faith, Heir to Eternal Life. And after this life, Victor over [Emperor] Charles and Judge of his betrayer" (*Des Gefangnen Christlichen Churfürsten*,

the pope, he gave the title of elector to Duke Maurice from Albertine Saxony as a reward for his assistance in restraining the Lutheran princes.

After the victory over the Smalcaldic League of the Protestant princes (1547), Emperor Charles V devoted himself to restoring the unity of the church. He believed that in time the church would be united with the help of the Council of Trent, but he was not willing to wait. At the “armored parliamentary sitting” (Iserloh, 2004, 236) in Augsburg which took place from September 2, 1547 to June 30, 1548, he was given the unpleasant honor of parading the captive Lutheran princes. On that occasion, he produced a unity formula called *Declaration of the Holy Roman Imperial Majesty on How Matters are to be Managed in the Holy Empire until the Settlement of a Common Council*.<sup>18</sup> Although he strongly emphasized the return of the evangelical believers into the Roman Catholic Church, the emperor was forced to accept an inter-solution (*Middle way*), a decree named *Augsburg Interim*. According to the decree, declared May 30, 1548, the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church remained temporarily binding even for the Protestants, although with some small concessions; this was just until the general church council convened. The decree consisted of twenty-six articles which included the basic Roman Catholic truths: the primordial state of humanity (1-3), the fall of humanity (4-8), the teaching of the Church (9-13), the sacraments (14-21) and the Mass (22-25). The last article (26) dealt with the observances and the orders (Iserloh, 2004, 237).<sup>19</sup>

The Augsburg Interim and the events that followed awakened a dynamic movement which confronted Emperor Charles V, Pope Paul III and the Philippistic party in the Lutheran tradition of the Reformation; with Philipp Melancthon as their leader, numerous theologians and humanists of the Wittenberg University participated. Flacius, however, participated and often guided the resistance

*rechter Titel so ihn itziger Zeit, von allen Gottseligen Waren Christen, billich gegeben wird zu Latein und Deutsch in ein Lied verfasset, Olson 2002, 93).*

18 *Sacrae Caesareae Maiestatis Declaratio, Quomodo in Negocio Religionis Per Imperium usque ad definitionem Concilii generalis vivendum sit, in Comitiis Augustanis. XV. Maii, Anno 1548, proposita & publicata & ab omnibus imperii ordinibus recepta.* Augsburg: Philipp Ulhard, 1548. The text is in Joachim Melhausen (ed.) *Das Augsburger Interim von 1548.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970.

19 According to the London publication, *A Waying and Considering of the Interim by the honour-worthy and highly learned Philipp Melancthon* from 1548. (Translated into English by John Rogers), “Interim is a booke whiche was at ye Emperoures Maiesties commaundment prynted and put forth about the begynning of June, in this yere of our Saviours birthe 1548, wherein is commaunded that al the cities in Dutchlande that have received the worde of god, and made a change of ceremonies accordyng to the word shal reforme their churches agayne, and turne the olde popische ordinaunces as a dog dothe to that he hath spued out, or washen swyne to the myre” (Olson, 2002, 84).

movement with his writings and theological work.

The Interim applied only to evangelicals while the Catholics were exempt from its regulations.<sup>20</sup> The evangelicals regarded it as a means of compulsion for obedience to the pope. Although the Interim was the emperor's intervention within the arena of the church itself, after long negotiations, by issuing a bulla on August 18, 1546, the pope granted Charles V the necessary dispensation for the advancement of the unification (Iserloh, 2004, 239). Resistance to the Interim was forbidden, and sermons and publications were strictly censored. Evangelicals were requested to accept the decisions enacted by the Council of Trent.

The Augsburg Interim was focused on liturgy; the Lutheran churches were commanded to reintroduce the invocation of the saints, prayers for souls in purgatory, processions, festivals, consecration, priestly robes, votive Mass and the seven sacraments (Olson 2002, 85). It was difficult to enforce the politically imposed Interim; it caused a strong resistance, especially in the northern provinces of the Holy Roman Empire. The power of Charles V was more significant in the southern part of the kingdom where the Interim was more heavily enforced. In Saxony, the political, theological and spiritual situation became complicated. The evangelical theologians in Wittenberg, led by Philipp Melanchthon, readily conciliated the Protestant teaching with the Catholic teaching and this made concession to Rome and to King Charles V. Considering the military defeat of the Lutheran princes as the will of God, Melanchthon consented to negotiations, accepted the Roman Catholic liturgy, and even the pope's authority. In a letter dated April 28, 1548 to the court's official Cristoph von Carlowitz,<sup>21</sup> Melanchthon complied and obliged to cooperate with them. In July, 1548, Wittenberg's theologians elicited their complaints about the Augsburg Interim before the mundane parliament in Meissen, and after negotiations in Pegau and Torgau, a new formula of unity was agreed upon in Altzell. The formula included a list of adiaphora with the expectation that the Lutherans might be able to agree with it. The text was a basis for adopting the new imperial document called "Leipzig Interim" or "Small Interim" (December 28, 1548) declared on July 4, 1549 under

20 For Catholics, the emperor issued the *Formula Reformationis* on July 9, 1548 by which he ordered a reform of the clergy and the people. The beginning of it states: "So that fraud and enticement might be renounced, the clergy and the people be reformed ... until the general council ends the frauds, it is necessary, first of all, that the spiritual estate be reformed and purged, because upon their unsettlement, anarchy and unsteadiness, confusion comes into the church in general and it shakes it in many ways." Along with this quotation, Iserloh (2004, 238-239) offers a more detailed insight on the contents of the document.

21 Flacius published the letter in *Gründliche Verlegung des langen Comments*. C ij v – D ij r.; CR, VI, 879-885; MBW, 5139; Lowell C. Green translated it into English. *Melanchthon in English*. St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982.18-23.

the command of the Elector Maurice.<sup>22</sup>

Since Melanchthon promised to cooperate and supported adoption of the law, Flacius urged for a resistance against the Interim and he organized it successfully. Melanchthon considered the imperial law to be inviolable. Flacius, on the other hand, thought it was time for an act of civil disobedience; he opposed the adoption of the law and violated it purposely. Under the pseudonym “Christian Lauterwar”, Flacius published the first of five brochures against the Interim: *Against the Interim, Papist Mass, Canon, and Master Eisleben (Wider das Interim, Papistische Meß, Canonem, und Meister Eißleben durch Christianum Lauterwar, zu dieser Zeit nützlich zu lesen)*; it was successfully sold at the Leipzig Christmas fair.<sup>23</sup> While changing pseudonyms, and successfully connecting the Leipzig decision with the imperial law, Flacius made his most spectacular propaganda move. Therefore, Olson rightfully concludes,

The most successful propaganda is what is not recognized as such, and every historian who mentions a “Leipzig Interim” without a hint that the term was ever controversial gives evidence of Flacius’ stunning victory. By identifying the provincial decisions from Leipzig with the imperial law from Augsburg, Azarius/Flacius unleashed popular resentment, deftly depriving Elector Maurice of his Middle Way – his Saxon Solution. “Another Interim! Try to explain the fine distinction to the people! Augsburg Interim – Leipzig Interim? Even Wittenberg tongues, would falter – the people hear only ‘Interim’ (Olson, 2002, 127).

Olson refers to an undated appeal addressed to the church in Hamburg which appears to be an open letter to the cities in the north of the kingdom (2002, 88-89) from which we abstract the following:

Since we are being pressured to despise the truth, all angels and men, especially the faithful, ought to be thinking constantly about what should be done to preserve doctrine and the church of Christ, it seems to me, having considered the matter carefully and having thought about current conditions, that, after prayer, nothing would be more appropriate and useful, than if we, in a dignified and prudent fashion, would publish a protest against the Interim and all perversions of our doctrine, written in the name of all those who would want to sign it.

- 22 The final document from the Leipzig meeting never became a law, therefore this document is called by different names: “Recommendation for an Evangelical Interim Order for Electoral Saxony”, “Leipzig Articles”, “Opinion” (*Bedencken*), “Decision” (*Beschluß*). Today it is most familiar under the name Leipzig Interim. For more details, see Olson, 2002, 124-144.
- 23 With the development of print in Germany, journalism developed as well. Together with his collaborators, Flacius published the “*Zeitung-Buch*”, popular book editions which were sold very cheaply; his goal was to leave a record of the time and the more important events in Germany.

In it we would assert that no law permits men willing to give a reason for their actions to be killed without a hearing. That Luther, princes and cities confessing our doctrine have appealed so often from the iniquitous condemnation of the pope to a free council; that Caesar himself and the princes promised it so many times. That we demand from Caesar, therefore, the free inquiry promised so many times, and protest before God and men, that he is acting extremely unjustly with us and with the cause of the gospel, violating every right and promise, that we are being murdered unheard, and that we are being cut off by deceptions and violence from that doctrine that we believe is the only truth of Christ.

With Christ's help, there would be many good results. First, perhaps even Caesar himself would be moved by our just claim. I certainly hope that he will be a bit moved, if not out of kindness, at least on account of the opinion of all those people who are somewhat reasonable, who on the basis of our protest, must necessarily decide that our opponents are dealing with us very unjustly. Thus, his rage against us will be a bit restrained. In secular legal cases no one abandons his rights as carelessly as we are doing in this cause of the Gospel. I have no doubt, then, just as our adversaries are encouraged by our softness and surrenders, that, especially in this case, about which it is possible to speak positively, even in the presence of not too favorable judges, they would be restrained by the steadfast defense of our cause.

Secondly, even if we could not accomplish anything among the tyrants themselves, nevertheless we would strengthen our own people when they saw how unjustly and wickedly the adversaries have put everything in motion against us. In the same way we would attract many among the adversaries to our teaching, lest it come about that even the less sympathetic think about us, "See, that party wants everything done in an orderly and proper fashion; that after indictment their cause be examined lawfully before impartial judges. But the papal party is doing everything execrably, by deception and violence. The party that does not flee the light, surely, is the more just. Likewise, since those are doing everything properly, observing Christian modesty, and gently, but ours are proceeding with the help of fraud, violence, lies and murders, it seems likely that those, not these, are the ones ruled by the Spirit of Christ." Surely it is absolutely true that there is no way that we can speak more plausibly about the present controversy, among ourselves, or among the impious, than by such a protest. If there is anything to be written for our religion, certainly, then it is especially this.

Finally, if the world does not want to recognize our complaints and tears or laughs at them, surely the father in heaven understands, gathers them into his bottle, as the Psalm [56:9] says, and in his own time will wipe them away. God wills that we do it; if not to convert them, then for their judgment.

Enormous good should be expected from the protest itself, since undoubtedly many preachers would sign it, and their agreement would become known. No more useful thing, then, could be done for the church at this time, than this. So faithful men, especially the ministry of the church ought to promote it with the most possible zeal. What we have sensed we can do piously and usefully for the church, we certainly must do. And we must expect and implore help from the Lord, who in his own time will grant his blessing and copious increase on our planting and watering.<sup>24</sup>

Flacius left Wittenberg and went to Magdeburg. There, together with Nicolaus von Amsdorf (1483-1565), the former superintendent of Magdeburg, and the then bishop of Naumburg/Zeitz, Erasmus Alber (who died in 1553), and the satirist Nicolaus Gallus from Regensburg, he led the struggle against the Interim. Charles V ordered Duke Maurice to defeat Magdeburg. For Flacius, however, accepting the Interim meant accepting the papal primacy, that is, returning the believers back to "Egyptian slavery". The successful resistance of Magdeburg strengthened some other Protestant cities in Northern Germany in their rejection of the Interim. The evangelical believers and churches in Germany were then divided: one group followed and supported Melanchthon who had promised to cooperate and who supported the acceptance of the Interim while the other group decidedly opposed the Interim and all those who accepted and supported it. The upholders of the Interim were called *Philippists*, after Philipp Melanchthon, while the group which opposed the Interim was called *gnesiolutherans* because they uncompromisingly claimed the teaching of Martin Luther. Since Matthias Flacius was one of the leading *gnesiolutherans*, the *gnesiolutherans* were often called *Flacians*.

The cost of the resistance was very high. Magdeburg was governed by the opponents of the Interim; with their well organized political resistance, they endured a long and formidable siege of the city - from September 29, 1550 to November 4, 1551. The believers who openly declared themselves against the compromise of the Interim suffered gossip and denunciation by those who accepted the Interim. In the intense exchange of polemic brochures, both sides often cited, commented and used the personal mistakes, weaknesses and defects of the opponent.

Magdeburg printers Michael Lotter, Christian Roedinger and Hans Walther defied the imperial edict by which it was forbidden to print works against the Interim; Magdeburg became the center of printing anti-Roman works from all over Germany. Between 1549 and 1551, more than a hundred brochures on the

24 Carl Hieronym and Wilhelm Sillem (edd.). *Briefsammlung des Hamburgischen Superintendenten Joachim Westphal aus den Jahren 1530 bis 1575*. Hamburg: Lukas Gräfe & Sillem, 1903. I, 90 ff.



subject of the resistance to the Interim were printed in Magdeburg (Diener, 1978, 19). Flacius cooperated with the printers; he was writing, editing and selling their editions.

Resisting the imperial solution of the religious issue put the Magdeburg citizens into a very difficult situation. They were forced to establish a church of believers who did not accept the compromise of the Interim, but without the protection of the leadership of Electoral Saxony with its wealth and prestige. The upholders of the Interim accused the citizens of Magdeburg of being violators of the peace and of fostering and creating problems.

In Magdeburg in 1549, Flacius published a number of familiar tracts. In March, 1550, he prepared and corrected his earlier works and published them in one volume under the title *Omnia latina scripta (All Latin works)*.<sup>25</sup> In this work, he emphasized (p. c5r) that he had offered his censorship's refutation of the Saxon concessions to George Major, his colleague from Wittenberg, to prepare the theologians for the meeting in Altzell (November 19, 1548) together with the representatives of Elector Maurice. In his elaboration of the problem, Flacius restricted himself to sixteen declarations (*rationes*). He started with Aristotle's philosophical-political argument against capitulation to demands (in this case the Interim), and then he submitted a number of political and theological arguments.

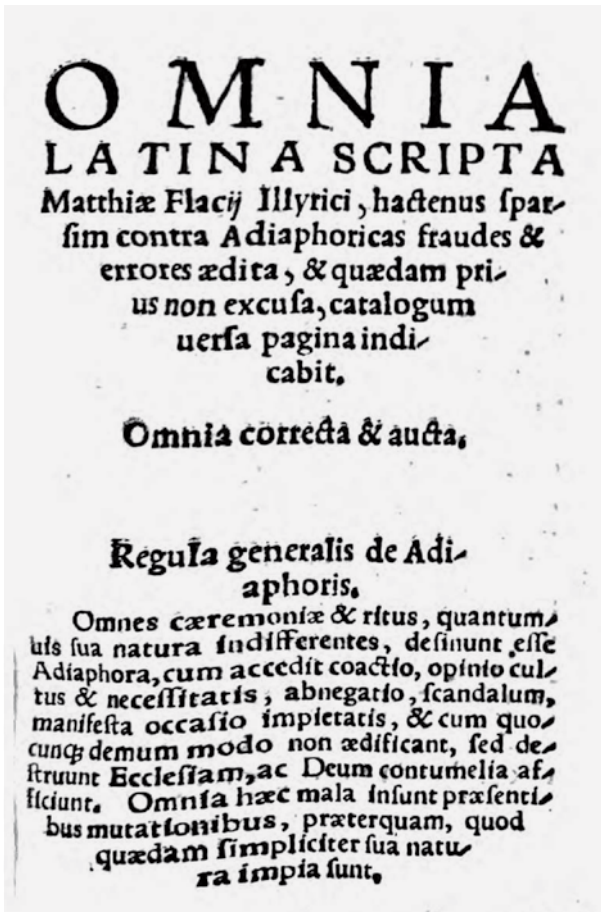
He attempted to keep his stands, opinions and judgments private, but in the spring of 1549 he conceded to pressure from the public. That summer he wrote the first version of his *Apology to the Wittenberg School on the Issue of Adiaphora*, publishing it in Latin<sup>26</sup> and German<sup>27</sup>. Mirković considers it to be Flacius' best literary work (Mirković, 1980; Franičević, 1983, 570). In this work, he defends his departure from Wittenberg and his lack of accord with his former colleagues and benefactors. He emphasized that the eyes of all of Europe were focused on Wittenberg; if Luther's own city failed to oppose the Interim, their cowardice would make a mockery of the Reformation.

Beginning his new career in Magdeburg, he emptied his pen and himself of all gall, according to Ronald Diener (1978), not only against those who made a compromise with the Interim, but also against the authors and the advocates of

25 The full title states: *Omnia latina scripta hactenus sparsim contra Adiaphoricas fraudes & errores aedita, & quaedam prius non excusa, catalogum versa pagina indicabit. Omnia correcta & aucta*. Magdeburg: Michael Lotter, 1550.

26 *Apologia Metthiae Flacij Illyrici ad Vitebergensem in adiaphorum causa. Eiusdem epistola de eadem materia ad Philip Malanthe...* Magdeburg, 1549.

27 *Entschuldigung Matthiae Flacij Illyrici, geschrieben an die Universitet zu Wittemberg der Mit-telding halben. Item sein brief an Philip. Melanthonem sampt etlichen andern schrifften dieselbige sach belangend. Verdeuscht*. Magdeburg: Christian Rödinger, 1549.



Flacius' *Omnia Latina Scripta* (All Latin works), published in Magdeburg, 1550. Source: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

the compromise. He searched for and found a basis for the denunciation of the new Catholic catechisms, books with sermons and religious-political brochures. He captivated readers throughout Germany very quickly.

In the *Apology* to the University in Wittenberg, the very first of his collected works named “classics of resistance”,<sup>28</sup> Flacius debated about the issue of

28 Along with said work, Olson (2002, 152-156) also includes the following works among Flacius' “classics of resistance”: *Ein Vermanung zur bestendigkeit in bekentnis der warheit, Creutz, und Gebett, in dieser betrübten Zeit sehr nützlich und tröstlich* (1549) and *Ein buch, von waren und falschen Mitteldingen, Darin fast der gantze handel von Mitteldingen erkleret wird, widder die schedliche Rotte der Adiaphoristen. Item ein brieff des ehrwürdigen Herrn D. Joannis Epini Superintendenten zu Hamburg, auch von diesem handel an Illyricum geschrieben* (1550).

adiaphora from the Leipzig Interim and introduced the term “adiaphorist”. Adiphora (Greek: *adiaphora*, impassive) is a word which signifies something indifferent (neither good nor bad, neither useful nor harmful), and it became an issue in the disputes over the Augsburg Interim and the Leipzig Interim. In theology, adiphora relates to matters which are not relevant to faith and can be allowed in the church, that which can or cannot be believed in a dogmatic sense of the word; there are church observances which are neither commanded nor banned in the Word of God. Adiphorists were Lutheran believers which, like Philipp Melancthon, tolerated and maintained particular Catholic practices out of respect for the unity of the church.

The dispute over adiphora was very significant, especially at the political and internal church levels. At the political level, it was a struggle for the freedom of the church to dictate its own way of life, a refusal to be governed by the state even in secondary matters. At the internal church level, it was a struggle for the clarity of the inner life of the church, especially in the form of the ordinances. Thus, the dispute over adiphora was actually a dispute over church independence, a dispute over the separation of the church from the state.

Adiphora implied the right of Charles V to govern the church, while the same right was demanded by the Protestant princes, emphasizing the right to designate adiphora. The most distinguished defender of the right of the rulers to govern the church was Philipp Melancthon.

Convinced that church authority was passing to the government, Flacius demanded that the church authorities take responsibility. Regarding the Wittenberg professors, he said, “On the basis of their office, the theologians should have cried ‘stand fast’ ... but, they cried: ‘yield, yield, submit yourself to the Antichrist and to the Pharaohs, and you will be saved’” (*Omnia latina scripta* Bb iiiij r, in Olson 2002, 92). Jesus Christ called for preaching of the Gospel which would bring believers under Christ’s command. Flacius believed that “Churchly authority consists in confessing the confession, in commanding the divine command. Whosoever does not exercise the office committed to him to bind a person’s conscience to the command of Christ looses the congregation from obedience, since his action shows that the doctrine preached is not binding in serious situations. Churchly authority is not given once and for all, emphasizes Flacius, but consists only in its use. And whoever is unwilling to exercise his office publicly necessarily surrenders his own leadership” (Olson 2002, 92-93).

Flacius asked the foundational question: Who has the right to determine church doctrine? He considered the making of basic church decisions at the imperial court to be unlawful. While citing Luther, he insisted that the secular government had no right to determine church doctrine; the church had the right to determine its own order. “‘In religion,’ he wrote (1550b, A iij v), ‘the church is

completely free. It cannot, therefore, be a servant of any man. ... it is a good and wholesome counsel, which the church should know above all, that the power of the keys, that is, the whole government of the church, has been given to her and not to the tyrants of this world..."<sup>29</sup> (Olson, 2002, 158)

The reports that Flacius had prevented execution of the imperial law in Magdeburg staggered the sitting of the Council in 1550. The assembly requested military action,<sup>30</sup> and the Elector Maurice was commanded to suppress the city. On September 29, 1550, he took over and led the siege army.<sup>31</sup> The people of Magdeburg were faithful to the emperor in secular matters. In following Luther, however, they did not want to tolerate the emperor's authority in religious matters. However, the distinction between secular and religious matters did not exist for the Elector Maurice. In his opinion, the city was simply rebellious.

Magdeburg was surrounded by the army, but not silenced as Wittenberg had been, whose citizens had complied with the censorship laws. The only commentaries about the Interim were published in Magdeburg where Erasmus Alber, Nicolaus von Amsdorf, Nicolas Gallus and Matthias Flacius feverishly wrote while the daring printers Christian Rödinger in Lödischendorf and Michael Lotter published numerous anti-Interim writings. The written word and the printing press were used efficiently for changing the course of history. The siege of Magdeburg, highlights Olson (2002, 177), was a significant chapter in the history of psychological warfare. Pamphlets were tossed over enemy lines for the soldiers to read.

In surrounded Magdeburg, Flacius wrote and published numerous works while encouraging the believers to endure the enemy siege and thundering against all kinds of excuses. "If you are a Christian", Flacius wrote, "you really have to recognize Christ's cause and not allow yourself to be used so foolishly, so that you slaughter Christians as if you were asked to slaughter swine or sheep".<sup>32</sup> Olson (2002, 208) states that by his work *Ein geistlicher Trost dieser betrübten Magdeburgischen Kirchen Christi, das sie diese Verfolgung umb Gottes worts, und kein andern ursachem halben, leidet* (Magdeburg, 1551) Flacius convinced the people of Magdeburg that they were suffering for the Word of God and nothing

29 *Ein Supplication und demütige bitt einer Christlichen Gemein in Schwaben, an ihren Rath. Darinne sie biettet, das man ihn wolle die Tauffe lassen nach Christi Einsetzung, wie sie es zuvor gehabt haben.* Magdeburg: Michael Lotter, 1550, A iij v.

30 Friedrich W. E. Roth. *Augsburg Reformationgeschichte IV: 1547-1555.* Munich: Theodor Ackermann, 1911, 296; *Gründliche Verlegung des ... Comments.* B iij v - f.

31 The siege army amounted to sixteen or twenty thousand; Magdeburg's garrison, on contrary, amounted to three thousand people (Olson, 2002, 169).

32 *Das alle Verfolger der Kirchen Christi zu Magdeburg Christi den Herrn selbst verfolger sindt. Geschreiben zur Warnung an alle Christen und sonderlich an das Kriegsvolch der Feinde.* Magdeburg: Michael Lotter, 1551. A iij v. Cited in Olson, 2002, 178.

else. In *Klerliche beweisung*,<sup>33</sup> he warned those who were outside the city that those who opposed Magdeburg were actually persecutors of Christ and that the Interim changes were indeed distortions of the Christian faith; since they were persecuting innocent Christians for their faith, they were persecuting Christ (Olson, 2010, 272).

“The present time,” warned Flacius in *Ein kurtzer Bericht vom Interim* (B -iiiij v), “will not stand for much disputation ... but demands that ... all Christians, every Christian, confess with whole, steadfast hearts” (cit. in Olson 2002, 208). In *Responsio ad Philippi Melanthoni* (A vj), he stated, “I see that even Christ knew no other way ... that steadfast confession, fervent appeal for help to God, and patience on the cross” (cit. in Olson, 2002, 208).

Meanwhile, the Königsberg defensive alliance, organized in February, 1550, was strengthened; its task was to defend the *Augsburg Confession* and to help the surrounded city of Magdeburg in 1551. When Elector Maurice evaluated his political position, he negotiated secretly with the leadership of the Königsberg alliance and joined them. In October, 1551, with the help of the French King Henry II, he conspired to attack Emperor Charles V. This was accomplished in March, 1552.

In the fall of 1551, the pursuit for a diplomatic solution for the surrounded Magdeburg advanced. The final negotiations, approved by the emperor, took place on November 4-5 while the siege was discontinued after thirteen months, on November 7, 1551. Magdeburg consented to compromise, and Maurice himself entered the city, took the key, gave honor to its citizens, declared amnesty and confirmed the city rights and freedoms. With the document of consent, Maurice guaranteed freedom to Nicolaus Galus and Matthias Flacius.

Matthias Flacius Illyric fought decidedly and thus, together with his associates, secured the survival of the Protestant movement. Luther's reform survived because Magdeburg was successful in encouraging opposition in the surrounding areas and in forming the front of resistance. “Metz and Magdeburg,” wrote Friedrich Hülsse, “are the cities on which Charles' V politics for a Spanish-Hapsburg world monarchy break up,” and Magdeburg was “the rock on which the politics of Emperor Charles V floundered.”<sup>34</sup> Duke Maurice of Saxony gave

33 The full title of the work is: *Klerliche beweisung, das alle die jenige, welche schrifften widder das Interim und Mittelding feil zuhaben und zu lesen verbieten, Item, die zu dieser zeit, die von Magdeburg (auf waserley weise solchs geschehen mag) verfolgen oder verfolgen helfen, Christum den Son Gottes warhafftiglich selbs verfolgen. Geschrieben zur warnung an alle Christen, auff das sie sich für dieser grawsamen, Teufflischen wüterey fleissig hüten.* Magdeburg: Christian Rödinger, 1550.

34 Friedrich Hülsse. *Die Stadt Magdeburg im Kampfe für den Protestantismus während 1547-1550.* Halle/Saale: Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, 1872. 58 ff. Cited in Olson, 2002, 216.

a significant contribution to the survival of the Reformation in Germany with his changeover from being an ally of the emperor to the Königsberg Defense League. He fought for the Scriptures to be applied, the Augsburg confession and Luther's teachings. Therefore, some researchers consider Maurice to be the most deserving of credit for the survival of the Lutheran tradition of the Reformation in the German lands while others divide those merits between Maurice and Flacius, and the rest attribute those merits to Flacius (see Olson, 2002, 211-218).

## **Conclusion**

During his study in Wittenberg, Flacius established and deepened his relationship with God and he also accepted the teaching of the Scriptures as well as Luther's teachings. Later, he applied this teaching in all the spheres of his personal, family, church and social life. He accepted the Bible, or the Scriptures, as the ultimate truth and authority regarding all matters of life and in all areas: in belief and life, the church, politics and education. Therefore, to him, the struggle for truth is a struggle for the authority of the Bible as the Word of God (1997, 196), and also a struggle for the application of that Word in the believer's life. As a fighter for biblical truth, Flacius participated in the countless disputes and controversies in the German lands, whether between Catholics and evangelicals or with particular theological schools of thinking within the evangelical tradition of the Reformation. The controversies that emerged about the Augsburg Interim (1548) have actualized anew the basic conflict between evangelicals and Catholics. Those were, for example, about worship, the view on the papacy, the teaching on grace, original sin, free will, and the Eucharist. The imposition of political solutions to religious matters from Emperor Charles V (Augsburg Interim) provoked Flacius and his associates in Magdeburg to fierce resistance and civil disobedience. Spiritually led by Flacius, Galus and Amsdorf, and the people of Magdeburg provided a persevering resistance to the pro-Catholic state politics and the return of the Lutherans back to Catholicism, which was assisted by the siege army of Maurice of Saxony. During the siege of Magdeburg which lasted for months, Flacius instructed the believers through his brochures and books that the only true and right faith and church is the faith and the church which are based on the truth, that is, on the Scriptures. He asked the foundational question: Who has the right to determine the teaching of the church? He regarded decision making at the imperial court or at the state council on religious matters as unlawful. The secular government, he asserted while recalling Luther, has no right to define church doctrine; the church has the right to determine its own order, only on the basis of and in accordance with Scripture. Namely, the church teachers are inconsistent, pliable and constantly err, especially regarding the structure with bishops and the

pope at their head, whereas the Scripture is inerrant and truthful. Therefore, the church, which is based on the Scriptures, is the true and right church of Christ which has had its continuity during its fifteen-century-old history, only, not by the Roman Church, but by the working of the Holy Spirit who witnessed the truth of the Scriptures *in* and *by* the numerous believers.

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Michael Lotter.

(1550c). *Omnia latina scripta Matthiae Flacij Illyrici: hactenus sparsim contra Adiaphoricas fraudes & errores aedita, & quaedam prius non excusa, catalogum versa pagina indicabit. Omnia correcta & aucta.* Magdeburg: Michael Lotter.

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*Translated from Croatian by Ljubinka Jambrek*

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## **Vlačićeva borba za slobodu Crkve**

### Sažetak

Matija Vlačić Ilirik slovi za jednog od najutjecajnijih hrvatskih humanista i teologa šesnaestog stoljeća, koji je svojim brojnim djelima dao vrstan teološki, filozofski, povijesni, lingvistički i obrazovni doprinos europskoj kulturnoj povijesti. Članak, uz sažeti prikaz Vlačićeva življenja, raspravlja o istini kao Vlačićevu polazištu u cjelokupnom promišljanju i življenju. Potom se usredotočuje na Vlačićevu duhovno-teološku borbu za slobodu Crkve, koja je uvelike doprinijela porazu prokatoličke politike cara Karla V. i opstanku luteranske tradicije reformacije u njemačkim zemljama.