

CHRISTIAN HEBRAISM IN THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION: CROATIA?

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Christian Hebraism—the study by Christian scholars of the Hebrew language and Jewish texts, especially the Hebrew Bible—was a fundamental part of both the Italian Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. This paper traces the development of Christian Hebraism from St. Jerome (5th century) to the end of the 16th century. It outlines the explosive growth in Hebrew studies by Christians, which was begun modestly in the mid-fifteenth century by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Giannozzo Manetti, but rapidly developed in the sixteenth century by Johannes Reuchlin, Desiderius Erasmus, Phillip Melanchthon, and, for our purposes particularly important, Matija Vlačić Ilirik. By century's end, however, Christian Hebraism had lost its Renaissance impetus, that is, »the nostalgia for the most ancient testimony,« and was replaced by more scholarly and less religious approaches to Holy Scripture. The paper examines the differing interests in Hebrew language and literature on the part of Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed figures. And then it endeavors to look more closely at elements of Christian Hebraism in Croatian lands, especially Istria and territories adjacent to Venice, Slovenia, and Hungary, and among Croatian scholars, first and foremost Vlačić, but a few others, as well. Finally the paper speculates upon the question of why, in the otherwise vigorous Croatian Renaissance culture, Christian Hebraism was present among the Croats in a uniquely different way from other Renaissance cultures.

Key words: Hebrew language, Hebrew Bible, Bible translations, Vulgate, Lutheranism, Matija Vlačić Ilirik, Croatian Protestantism

Christian Hebraism, that is, »the use of Hebrew, rabbinic, or Cabbalistic sources for Christian religious purposes,«¹ in Jerome Friedman's now definitive formulation, started in Italy in the latter part of the fifteenth century, and then

¹ Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1983, 1.

flourished there and in Germany, Switzerland, the Low Countries, and France in the sixteenth century. It brought to an end a thousand-year gap in the study by Christians of the Hebrew language and Hebrew texts, especially the Hebrew Bible. As one crucial component of Renaissance humanism, Christian Hebraism initiated the scholarly study of Christian Scripture, not just the Old Testament, but the New as well, and unleashed a flood of vernacular translations of the Bible which would in turn contribute to the codification of many modern European languages. Christian Hebraism elevated the Hebrew language to the rank of »classical languages,« which until then only Latin and Greek were considered to be; it focused Christian interest on medieval Jewish scholars and gave them new standing in the eyes of the humanists²; and it led to the printing and distribution of the most important Hebrew-language texts. Although the study of Christian Hebraism is only thirty years old, Friedman having first formulated his arguments for it in 1983, our understanding of both the Italian Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation has been profoundly affected by the ongoing, outstanding work of those scholars who continue Friedman's investigations into the sixteenth-century Christian love affair with the Hebrew language and Jewish wisdom.

But was this love affair universal among Christian humanists and reformers? I pose that question today specifically about Croatia. Is there evidence of Christian Hebraism in the Croatian Renaissance and Reformation?

First, however, let us step back, to examine more closely the specific features of Christian Hebraism. It was St. Jerome (ca. 347-420) who developed the notion of *Hebraica veritas*, »Hebrew truth,« which he believed he had found in his study of the Hebrew text of the Bible. In this respect he may be considered the first Christian Hebraist, for he valued the Hebrew Bible above its ancient Greek translation, the Septuagint, and its many Aramaic renderings, the Targums.³ He differed from his scholarly predecessor Origen (ca. 185-254), who had used the Hebrew Bible to amend the Septuagint, which for him was the definitive version of the Christian Old Testament. (I might note parenthetically that Jerome believed that the Jews had tampered with the text of the Septuagint to conceal proto-Christian elements in it; an echo of this notion can be detected in some contemporary Christian circles, which believe that the Masoretic [i.e., standard Hebrew] text of the Bible is a Jewish attempt to conceal Christian verities.⁴) In

² As Cecil Roth puts it in his *History of the Jews in Venice*, Schocken, New York, 1975, 81, Christian Hebraists began »to rehabilitate Hebrew literature from the long discredit which it had suffered in Europe ever since the rise of Christianity.«

³ Daniel Steinkokkin, »The Hebrew Question in the Italian Renaissance: Linguistic, Cultural, and Mystical Perspectives,« Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2006, 33-5.

⁴ Kokkin, *op. cit.*, 85; Michael A. Signer, »Polemic and Exegesis: The Varieties of Twelfth-Century Hebraism,« in: Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson, eds., *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004, 25; and Henry R. Cooper, Jr., *Slavic Scrip-*

producing the Vulgate, the Latin translation which eventually became the definitive Bible of the Roman Catholic Church, Jerome in fact marginalized for a thousand years both Greek and Hebrew («Why bother with either when the Latin satisfies all our needs?»). As Friedman notes, »the idea of ‘Hebraica veritas’ was surely one of the most overstated ideals of the Christian Middle Ages,«⁵ for it was honored despite its almost total absence from medieval intellectual discourse. But Jerome did establish that Jewish commentaries could be profitably examined in translation for items benefiting Christianity, and indeed this was done even in the Middle Ages by Hugh and Andrew of St. Victor in Paris, Herbert of Bosham in England,⁶ Stephen Harding at Cîteaux, Nicolas Manjacorria in Rome,⁷ Nicholas of Lyra,⁸ and others. Moreover, he posited that Hebrew was the original language of humanity from which all others were derived.⁹ This notion would take on a life of its own in the Renaissance.

The first glimmerings of an interest in the Hebrew language and consequently the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish texts can be traced to the middle of the fifteenth century in Italy. Although he had a few predecessors,¹⁰ Giannozzo Manetti (1396-1459), a Florentine humanist, is credited with being the first of the Renaissance Christian Hebraists. He was tutored in Hebrew by one of the few Italian Jewish humanists, the Florentine banker Immanuel ben Abraham da San Miniato,¹¹ and he was able to read the Hebrew Bible cover-to-cover. He sensed the true *antichità* of Hebrew, the similarity in outlook between the classical Greeks and Jews, whose world knew no original sin or after-life, but who held ethical behavior as essential in human life.¹² Manetti was no philo-Semite: his goal in translating the

tures: The Formation of the Church Slavonic Version of the Holy Bible, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Madison, Teaneck, New Jersey; Associated University Presses, London, 2003, 167, note 17.

⁵ Friedman, *op. cit.* (1), 13.

⁶ See Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1964, 155-91.

⁷ Signer, *op. cit.* (4), 23-32.

⁸ Friedman, *op. cit.* (1), 14.

⁹ Stein Kokin, *op. cit.* (3), 58-60.

¹⁰ Signer, *op. cit.* (4), 22, calls them »cultural Hebraists,« those interested in Jewish learning but unable to read Hebrew. He does note that there were a few »lexical Hebraists,« those who could read Jewish texts in the original, e.g., Herbert of Bosham (*op. cit.*, 26). And Kokin, *op. cit.*, 125, also mentions Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459), who also knew Hebrew.

¹¹ In early Christian Hebraism, the role of learned Jews, especially Jewish medical doctors, was crucial for teaching Christians Hebrew. Others include Obadiah ben Jacob Sforno, Johannes Reuchlin’s teacher, Abraham ben Meir De Balmes, who taught Daniel Bomberg, founder of the Hebrew press in Venice, and Jacob ben Samuel Mantino, Paul III’s personal physician and an advisor to Henry VIII concerning his divorce (Friedman, *op. cit.* [1], 21-2).

¹² Christoph D r ö g e, »’Quia Morem Hieronymi in Transferendo Cognovi...’: Les Débuts des Études Hébraïques chez les Humanistes Italiens,« in: Ilana Zinguer, ed., *L’Hébreu au temps de la Renaissance*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, New York, Cologne, 1992, 72-4.

Old Testament (he only managed to do Psalms) was to convince the ‘obstinate Jews’ of Christian truth by deriving it directly from Hebrew texts. But his prestige, knowledge, and contacts—he was a personal friend of Pope Nicholas V—made Hebrew studies part of the *studia humanitatis* of the time. In a sense he picked up where Jerome had left off a thousand years before. He did not advance much beyond Jerome himself (his interest was just the Hebrew Bible), but he did set Christian Hebraism in motion.¹³ His collection of Hebrew books greatly enriched the Vatican Library.¹⁴

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) was a popularizer of Hebrew learning, if not a particularly adept Hebrew-language scholar himself.¹⁵ His fascination with kabbalah, i.e., Jewish mysticism, sparked much interest and no little controversy in Italy. But in that as well as in the knowledge of Hebrew he was much surpassed by his contemporary Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), who wrote the first grammar of Hebrew for Christians and a Hebrew-Latin dictionary. He was also the first Christian teacher of Hebrew (his most notable pupil was his grandnephew Philip Melancthon). In his promotion of kabbalah studies, he believed that they »represented a lost font of ancient wisdom entirely applicable and beneficial to Christian purposes.«¹⁶ And by defending Jewish learning against the relentless attacks of the Dominicans, he brought Hebrew studies to the forefront of European intellectual awareness. In a sense Reuchlin Christianized Hebrew studies: Jews were no longer necessary as teachers or intermediaries to Jewish texts. But perhaps most important was the fact that, although Reuchlin died a faithful Roman Catholic, he introduced Hebrew studies into Germany at the very earliest moments of the Protestant Reformation. As one scholar puts it, he »transmitted the embryonic Renaissance interest in Hebrew sources, as it had developed since Manetti and Pico della Mirandola, to the northern Renaissance.«¹⁷

Mention should be made here of the first Croatian contributor to the development of Christian Hebraism, although a somewhat peripheral one, Juraj Dragišić (1445-1520).¹⁸ Dragišić had fled Bosnia as a seventeen-year-old when the Turks

¹³ D r ö g e, *op. cit.*, 74-8.

¹⁴ S t e i n K o k i n, *op. cit.* (3), 160.

¹⁵ Crofton B l a c k, *Pico's Heptaplus and Biblical Hermeneutics*, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden, Boston, 2006, 24-5.

¹⁶ F r i e d m a n, *op. cit.* (1), 25.

¹⁷ Abraham M e l a m e d, »Hebraic Aspects of the Renaissance: Sources and Encounters,« in: Ilana Zinguer, Abraham Melamed, and Zur Shalev, eds., *Hebraic Aspects of the Renaissance: Sources and Encounters*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2011, 3.

¹⁸ The bulk of my information comes from Elisabeth v o n E r d m a n n-P a n d ž i ć and Basilius P a n d ž i ć, *Juraj Dragišić und Johannes Reuchlin. Eine Untersuchung zum Kampf für die jüdischen Bücher mit einem Nachdruck der 'Defensio praestantissimi viri Joannis Reuchlin' (1517) von Georgius Benignus (Juraj Dragišić)*, Fach Slavische Philologie der Universität, Bamberg, 1989.

occupied it. He subsequently became a Franciscan priest and then bishop, rising to the very highest levels of his order. He spent almost all of his adult life in Italy, with short excursions to England, France, Palestine, and, in the last decade of the fifteenth century, Dubrovnik, in order to be closer to Bosnia. He wrote extensively and exclusively in Latin. He knew no Hebrew himself, but in the famous polemic between Reuchlin and the Dominicans, he wrote a scholarly theological treatise entitled *Defensio praestantissimi viri Ioannis Reuchlin* supporting Reuchlin's position on the value of Jewish books for Christian exegesis. Dragišić's motives are not clear, nor did his actions in any way impact Croatia or subsequent Croatian Hebraism. But he is a noble footnote in the development of Christian Hebraism in Renaissance Italy and Reformation Germany.

Before we leave Italy, we should look at perhaps the most important center of Hebrew studies there, that is Venice, since the *Serenissima* impinges most directly on the ultimate object of our inquiry, namely the Croatian lands. The Jewish community in Venice was of long standing, dating back at least to the tenth century.¹⁹ The original population consisted of Ashkenazic Jews from Germany (Venetian Jews were called in fact *Tedeschi*, i.e., Germans), but in subsequent centuries, and particularly after 1492, they were joined by Ponentine (Western) and Levantine (Eastern) Jews from Portugal, Spain, and the Middle East. These Jewish groups were on the whole wealthier and better educated than the *Tedeschi*, and their presence enhanced Venice's industrial, mercantile, and educational efforts in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries.²⁰

Venice was also the principal European port for travel to the Holy Land, and, from 1475 on, it became the European center for the printing of Hebrew books.²¹ Aldus Manutius (1449-1515), founder of the Aldine Press, was »intensely interested in Hebrew books.« He also founded the school attached to St. Mark's where, among others, the young Matija Vlačić Ilirik (1520-1575) was trained to be an editor of classical manuscripts.²² But even more noteworthy was the press founded by Daniel Bomberg, a Christian from Antwerp whose family had settled in Venice: using rabbis as editors he produced definitive versions of all the im-

¹⁹ Roth, *op. cit.* (2), 7.

²⁰ Robert Bonfil, »A Cultural Profile.« in: Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid, eds., *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 2001, 176-8.

²¹ Bonfil, *op. cit.*, 2001, 172 claims 3,986 Hebrew books were printed in Europe by 1650, and 1,284 came from Venice. I am grateful to colleagues at the symposium for bringing to my attention the Soncino Press, the oldest Hebrew press in Italy, founded in 1483. But I would note that while it moved quite often to various Italian cities, the Soncino Press was never in Venice.

²² Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform*, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2002, 29.

portant Hebrew texts including the Bible. To this day his editions of the Talmud serve as standards.²³

Venice also had schools where it was possible to study Hebrew: Matija Vlačić probably learned his first Hebrew between 1536 and 1539 at the St. Mark's school.²⁴ Unlike other Italian cities, Venice had no university, so its sons, including many young Jews, had to travel to Padua for their higher education.²⁵ Nonetheless, it was in Venice that the Renaissance ideal of the *vir trilinguis*, the scholar who commanded Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, was first enunciated.²⁶

The relatively benign situation of Venetian Jews was reflected in Venice's Adriatic holdings as well, most notably Split, where a continuous Jewish presence has been hypothesized since classical times.²⁷ There was also a Jewish community in Dubrovnik from the fourteenth century on.²⁸ Especially with the influx of the Sephardim in the sixteenth century, some Jews there rose to prominence as surgeons and doctors, others were merchants with particularly good connections to the East, and still others tailors, bankers, and used goods dealers. We look, however, in vain for Jewish humanists in these Dalmatian communities, even among the physicians: I have found only one name, Isaiah Cohen (also known as Didacus Pyrrhus, and Jacobus Flavius Eborensis), who flourished in Dubrovnik in the latter half of the sixteenth century.²⁹ Any activity of his as a potential Hebraist is unattested. And while Hebrew was surely taught to young boys within these Jewish communities, there is no indication that the language went beyond those communities to Dalmatian Christian scholars. Even a scholar as brilliant and worldly as Marko Marulić had, it would seem, no exposure to Hebrew.³⁰

²³ Roth, *op. cit.* (2), 245-52.

²⁴ Olson, *op. cit.* (22), 29.

²⁵ Roth, *op. cit.* (2), 288.

²⁶ Dörge, *op. cit.* (12), 71. The first embodiment of this ideal was the Venetian humanist Marco Lippomanno (1390-1438).

²⁷ Duško Kečkemet, *Židovi u povijesti Splita*, Slobodna Dalmacija, Split, 1971, 22.

²⁸ Bernard Stulli, *Židovi u Dubrovniku (Jews in Dubrovnik)*, Jevrejska općina Zagreb, etc., Zagreb, 1989, 17. My attention has been directed also to the following study, but I was unable to consult it for this paper: Vesna Miović-Perić, *Židovski geto u Dubrovačkoj republici (1546-1808)*, Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, Dubrovnik, 2005.

²⁹ Stulli, *op. cit.*, 22. See also Dražen Budiša, »Humanism in Croatia,« in: Albert Rabil, Jr., ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, vol. 2, *Humanism Beyond Italy*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1988, 272. Budiša claims he taught »classical languages and literatures« in Dubrovnik. See also G. Hugo Tucker, »Didacus Pyrrhus Lusitanus,« *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 41 (1992), 175-198, which makes it clear he was a scholar of Latin and Greek; nowhere is Hebrew mentioned.

³⁰ I am grateful to Prof. Neven Jovanović for calling my attention to the following articles, which demonstrate Marulić's use of second-hand etymologies from the Hebrew: Miroslav Palameta, »Marulićeva tropologija u svjetlu patrističke alegoreze (1.)«, *CM XIV* (2005), 127-162; (2.), *CM XV* (2006), 81-119; (3.), *CM XVI* (2007), 131-162; (4.), *CM XVII* (2008), 247-285.

The absence of Jewish scholars interacting with learned Croatian Christians in Dalmatia is, I would suggest, one of the reasons why Christian Hebraism was not able to flourish in Croatian lands in the way it had flourished in Renaissance Italy. In what I might call the first stage of Christian Hebraism, before the schism of Western Christianity, Jewish cooperation was all-important as Christians began to value Jewish learning and seek a working knowledge of Hebrew to engage it. But the two principal Dalmatian Jewish communities, in Split and Dubrovnik, were commercial and professional, not scholarly in orientation. Like Matija Vlačić, Croatians wanting to learn Hebrew had to leave Croatian lands to do so. Once they did, however, their achievements in Hebrew, however brilliant, had little impact on their homeland.

As noted above, in the first two decades of the sixteenth century, Hebrew studies in Italy and elsewhere became »Christianized,« largely through the grammar book and dictionaries Johannes Reuchlin had produced.³¹ That is, Jews were no longer needed for imparting knowledge of the language or access to materials. Christian Hebrew-language teachers could now be found among the faculty of any number of universities. And thanks to the Aldine and Bomberg presses, copious numbers of Hebrew-language books circulated throughout Europe. I would designate this as the second stage of Christian Hebraism, and, by the third decade of the sixteenth century, it became closely identified with the various Protestant movements in Germany and elsewhere. It owed its vigor to the Protestant belief that Scripture must be in the language of the people: consequently, the Bible and the liturgy had to be translated. Since the Vulgate and Roman Catholic missals and breviaries were no longer acceptable to the Protestants as a basis for these translations, it was natural, and now possible, to turn to the original languages of Holy Scripture to make new, pro-Protestant translations.³² A veritable explosion of vernacular translations of the Bible ensued in the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century in the lands where the Reformed churches held sway. Although he was no translator himself, the most famous Croatian Protestant, Matija Vlačić Ilirik, was a central figure in this second stage of Christian Hebraism.

³¹ Notably his *Rudimenta hebraica* (1506) and several Hebrew-Latin dictionaries and studies later on. Reuchlin was motivated in part by the fear that Europe's Jews might die out and no one would then be able to handle Hebrew or the Jewish books (F r i e d m a n, *op. cit.* [1], 25).

³² Some Roman Catholics promoted the direct translation of Scripture from its original languages as well. Erasmus noted that 'an apple plucked directly from the tree is sweeter,' for example (S t e i n K o k i n, *op. cit.* [3], 247); but even he had some misgivings about Hebrew, particularly when Protestants began to use the Hebrew Bible to question Roman Catholic teachings. See Arjo V a n d e r j a g t, »*Ad fontes!* The Early Humanist Concerns for the *Hebraica veritas*,« in Magne Saebø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 2, *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2008, 185.

Vlačić studies have been something of a scholarly »growth industry« over the past thirty years. In 1984 Ivo Banac lamented the ignorance among Western scholars of Vlačić's many achievements.³³ Now, there are even international symposia celebrating Vlačić's many works.³⁴ For our purposes it is important to note that Vlačić was the greatest Christian Hebraist of his day. At the tender age of twenty-four, in 1544, he was appointed professor of Greek and Hebrew at the University of Wittenberg (succeeding Philip Melanchthon in that position). In his books he insisted that knowledge of Hebrew was essential for any Christian exegete and translator of both the Old Testament and the New.³⁵ He firmly believed, but incorrectly so, following St. Jerome, that Hebrew was the original language of humanity, that it had escaped the confusion inflicted on human speech at the Tower of Babel, and that from Hebrew all other languages were derived. He was also incorrect in his thesis that Hebrew vowel pointings dated back to the original compilation of the Bible. But he was spectacularly insightful in recognizing the linguistic development of Hebrew over time, the importance of other, related languages for understanding Biblical Hebrew, the need for studying literary structures, authorship, and authorial intentions in the Bible, and the Bible's overall integrity. Like the medieval Jewish exegetes, he may have exaggerated the notion that the Bible was completely harmonious, down to its very consonants and vowels. But, as Ivan Kordić puts it, he was correct in rejecting the patristic approach to Scriptural interpretation, which was »literal, moral, allegorical, and mystical,« in favor of a scholarly approach that followed »grammatical, dialectical, logical, and rhetorical methods and rules,« and required a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language itself.³⁶ In this regard he launched the modern study of the Bible, the fruits of which we enjoy to the present day.

But where is Croatia in all this? As the schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches grew more acute in the sixteenth century, Christian Hebraism became more and more closely identified with the Reformed Protestantism of Strasbourg, Geneva, Basel, and Zurich, with its focus on rabbinic sources for Christian insights into Scripture, that is to say, understanding the New

³³ Ivo Banac, »The National Notation of Matthias Flacius Illyricus,« *Slovene Studies* 6/1-2 (1984), 93. By »national notation« I believe Banac means national consciousness or awareness, and he concludes that Vlačić had little, if any at all (p. 98).

³⁴ For example, Josip Matešić, ed., *Matthias Flacius Illyricus: Leben & Werk. Internationales Symposium, Mannheim, Februar 1991*, Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, Munich, 1993; and others.

³⁵ Nikola Hošnjec, »Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Father and Creator of Modern Biblical Hermeneutics (1520-1575)«, in: Jože Krašovec et al., eds., *Interpretation of the Bible*, Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Ljubljana; Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1998, 469-71. Also Olson, *op. cit.*, 55, who claims Vlačić introduced the notion that the New Testament authors may have written in Greek, but they thought in Hebrew.

³⁶ Ivan Kordić, »Croatian Philosophers IV: Matija Vlačić Ilirik—Mathias [sic] Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575)«, *Prolegomena* 4 (2/2005), 226.

Testament through the Old Testament and appreciating the continuity between the two. At the same time, however, Christian Hebraism became less and less acceptable both to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, who reaffirmed the uncontested authority of the Vulgate, and to the Lutherans, especially Luther himself, who in the 1540s became a fierce anti-Semite. Luther insisted that one could understand the Old Testament only by reading backwards from the New Testament; he stressed the dichotomy between the two testaments, the Old with inferior law and the New with superior grace.³⁷ Consequently the study of Hebrew began to diminish among Lutherans. Vlačić, the great star of Christian Hebraism in the 1540s and perhaps, after Luther, the greatest Lutheran »zealot«,³⁸ was forced out of Wittenberg in 1549, and his sad vagabond existence from then until his death in 1575 mirrored the decline of interest in Hebrew in the Lutheran churches.

As Franjo Bučar notes, the Croatian lands were more or less impervious to Protestantism. For a variety of reasons they remained squarely in the Roman Catholic camp, with only ineffectual incursions by Lutherans largely confined to Istria.³⁹ The Lutheran proselytism that did occur was the work of a relatively compact group, consisting of Slovene Lutherans like Primož Trubar (1508-86), Adam Bohorič (1520-98), Sebastijan Krelj (1538-67), Jurij Dalmatin (ca. 1547-89), and the printer Matija Klombner (dates unknown). They were supported by the Carinthian nobleman Baron Ivan III Ungnad Weissenwolf von Sonneg (1493-1564), whose Lutheran press at Urach produced books in both Slovene and Croatian.⁴⁰ And they were complemented in their proselytizing by a few Croatian Lutherans, mostly Istrians, Juraj Cvečić (1520-85), Stjepan Konzul Istranin (1521-79), Anton Dalmatin (died 1579), Matija Grbić (or Grbac) Ilirik (died 1559), and a few others.⁴¹ They did seek the assistance of the greatest Croatian Hebraist of the time, Matija Vlačić, for their publicistic endeavors at Urach, but

³⁷ See F r i e d m a n, *op. cit.* (1), 125-35 for a fuller elucidation of these disparate approaches to Christian Hebraism.

³⁸ So B u d i š a, *op. cit.* (29), 286. But for Lutherans Vlačić was a heretic.

³⁹ Franjo B u č a r, *Povijest hrvatske protestantske književnosti za reformacije*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 1910/Logos, Daruvar, 1996, 26-9.

⁴⁰ For a very detailed study of this press, its personalities, and products, see Alojz J e m b r i h, *Stipan Konzul i »Biblijski zavod« u Urachu*, Teološki fakultet »Matija Vlačić Ilirik,« Zagreb, 2007. Vlačić is, however, mentioned only once substantively (pp. 283-4), and the only mention of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) I could find is the list of books the Urach translators bought for purposes ultimately of translating the Hebrew Bible into Croatian (p. 156), a project that never came to fruition for lack of translators who knew Hebrew well enough to translate the biblical texts, and perhaps also because of the controversy surrounding the correctness of Konzul and Dalmatin's Croatian New Testament (pp. 157ff).

⁴¹ For a rather complete list, see <http://www.flacius.net/index.php?view=category&id=44%3Avani-protestantski-reformatori&option=com_content&Itemid=61&lang=hr> (accessed December 11, 2013)

they achieved only a small measure of success: with his former student and fellow Hebraist Krelj, Vlačić published *Otrozhia Biblia* and *Katehismus hervacki* in 1566 (the precise contributions of each to these works is, however, unknown).⁴² But a Bible in Croatian, translated from the original languages, remained only a dream. As Annelies Läg Reid notes, Vlačić believed fully in the *dignitas* of Croatian, that it was suitable as a language of literature and education, and he even intended, however, without consequence, to found a South Slavic university with instruction in Croatian.⁴³ But he was unable to resolve the knotty issues of grammatical norms and orthography for Croatian, and so he lost interest. With the premature death of Krelj, the only other true *vir trilinguis* among the Slovene and Croatian Lutherans,⁴⁴ any possibility of South Slavic Christian Hebraism died. The Slovene and Croatian translators clearly understood the value of Hebrew for their endeavors—they mentioned Hebrew texts often enough and spent precious funds to acquire them—but they lacked the necessary knowledge of Hebrew to make any practical use of them. And there was no institution akin to Erasmus' *Collegium Trilingue* in Louvain or Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros' *Universitas Complutensis* in Alcalá de Henares to support their efforts.

I conclude with the following thoughts. In the principal urban centers of the Croatian Renaissance, Dubrovnik and Split, there were Jewish communities which lived in relative peace and harmony with their Christian neighbors. But these communities lacked the Jewish humanists who in Italy were so crucial for imparting a knowledge of Hebrew to Christian humanists. In Istria, in towns like Koper, Piran, Pula, and Vlačić's birthplace, Labin, a fruitful interchange between Christians and Jews might have taken place, but Venice's adherence to the Inquisition and the Counter-Reformation ended any hope of that for Lutheran as well as Roman Catholic humanists.⁴⁵ The Lutherans either departed (Vlačić himself, Petar Pavao Vergerije [Pier Paolo Vergerio il Giovane, 1498-1559]), or they were murdered (Fra Baldo Lupetina, Vlačić's relative, and Vergerije's brother Ivan [Giovanni]); the Roman Catholics were forced to abandon any interest in Hebrew and turn back to the Vulgate. So then there was no »first stage« of Christian Hebraism in Croatia.

⁴² Annelies L ä g r e i d, »Flacius Illyricus und die kroatische Sprachenfrage des 16. Jahrhunderts,« in Matešić, *op. cit.*, 105.

⁴³ L ä g r e i d, *op. cit.*, 106.

⁴⁴ It is possible that Cvečić may have known some Hebrew as well, but how much is uncertain. See L[ahorka] P [l e j i ć], »Cvečić, Juraj«, in: Krešimir Nemeč et al., eds., *Leksikon hrvatskih pisaca*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2000, 140.

⁴⁵ O l s o n, *op. cit.* (22), 28, 223-5.

As for the »second stage,« Protestantism in Slovenia and Croatia came only (or largely) in its Lutheran form, and, as we have seen, just as Lutheran impulses were penetrating these areas, Luther himself turned against Christian Hebraism and denigrated the value of Hebrew for Christian pastors and teachers. To be sure, Trubar and Jurij Dalmatin *consulted* the Hebrew text of the Old Testament for their translations,⁴⁶ but neither knew Hebrew to the degree it was known in Italy, Germany, or the Low Countries. Among the Slovenes only Sebastijan Krelj, Vlačić's student and Trubar's protégé, knew Hebrew well, but his death at the age of twenty-nine ended any possible involvement he might have had with Christian Hebraism in Slovenia or Croatia. As for Vlačić, the last of the great Christian Hebraists, he was considered a heretic by Orthodox Lutherans and therefore banned from the church; he was destitute and nearly homeless, far from any South Slavic lands; he shunned the translation efforts of Baron Ungnad's press in Urach; and, much as he wanted to produce a Croatian Bible, whose Old Testament would most certainly have been based on the Hebrew, he was thwarted by the lack of a standard Croatian grammar and orthography, and stymied by the lack of financial support or encouragement from the Lutheran authorities. So what I have called the second or Protestant phase of Christian Hebraism flourished neither in Slovenia with its otherwise vigorous Lutheran moment, nor in the Croatian lands, where Lutheranism barely penetrated at all. Thus, in some senses, Christian Humanism in Croatia is a unique phenomenon among the Renaissance cultures of Europe in the sixteenth century. Croatia produced one of the most outstanding Christian Hebraists of the day, but the nation itself did not benefit directly from his genius. Croatian reformers were fully cognizant of the importance of Hebrew for their biblical endeavors, but they lacked both the resources and the impulses to utilize Hebrew for them. Only in the twentieth century, with Antun Sović's unpublished translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew (done in 1929-32), would the fruits of Vlačić's learning flourish also in Croatia.⁴⁷ And only three decades after

⁴⁶ Jože Krašovec, »Slovenian Translations of the Bible,« in Krašovec, *op. cit.*, 1040, where he writes »In his translation of the Old Testament, Dalmatin used Luther's translation as his principal source, although he also took into consideration the Hebrew and Greek texts.« Leszek Moszyński, »Zwei slavische Renaissancepsalterübersetzungen aus dem Hebräischen: Die slowenische von Primož Trubar 1566 und die polnische von Szymon Budny 1572 (Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede ihrer Übersetzungsmethoden,«), in Krašovec, *op. cit.*, 986, insists that Trubar translated the Psalms directly (*unmittelbar*) from the Hebrew (though Trubar claimed to know no Hebrew), but admits he also used frequently Luther's and the Vulgate's Psalm translations.

⁴⁷ See Adalbert Rebić, »Die Übersetzung der Bibel ins kroatische: Eine kurze Übersicht,« in Krašovec, *op. cit.*, 1138 and 1144, who claims that Sović used Hebrew as the basis of his Old Testament. Though unpublished, the translation was consulted for the Zagreb Bible of 1968 (cf. p. 1142).

that, in 1960, with Mijo Mirković's biography, would Vlačić's Hebraistic genius begin to be appreciated in his homeland.⁴⁸

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KRŠĆANSKI HEBRAIZAM U RENESANSI I REFORMACIJI: HRVATSKA?

Kršćanski hebraizam – tj. proučavanje hebrejskog jezika i židovskih tekstova, osobito Biblije na hebrejskom, od strane kršćanskih učenjaka – bio je temeljnom sastavnicom ne samo talijanske renesanse nego i protestantske reformacije. Ovaj rad prati razvoj kršćanskoga hebraizma od sv. Jeronima (5. st.) do kraja 16. st. U njemu se očitava nagli rast hebrejskih studija kod kršćana, kojima su skromne početke sredinom 15. st. označili Giovanni Pico della Mirandola i Gianozzo Manetti, ali su se oni ubrzano razvili u 16. st. zahvaljujući Johannesu Reuchlinu, Erazmu Rotterdamskom, Philippu Melanchthonu i – što je za našu svrhu osobito važno – Matiji Vlačiću Iliriku. Do kraja toga stoljeća, međutim, kršćanski je hebraizam izgubio svoj renesansni zamah, tj. »nostalgiju za najstarijim svjedočanstvom«, a zamijenili su ga više učeni, a manje religiozni pristupi Svetom pismu. U radu se propituju različiti interesi za hebrejski jezik i književnost kod pojedinih pisaca rimokatoličke, luteranske i reformacijske pripadnosti. Zatim se pokušava dati поблиži uvid u elemente kršćanskoga hebraizma u hrvatskim zemljama, osobito u Istri i na područjima u blizini Venecije, Slovenije i Mađarske. Među hrvatskim učenjacima na prvom mjestu razmatra Vlačić, ali i nekoliko drugih. Napokon, postavlja se pitanje zašto je u inače snažnoj hrvatskoj renesansnoj kulturi kršćanski hebraizam bio prisutan na jedinstven način, drugačiji od onog u drugim kulturama renesanse.

Ključne riječi: Hebrejski jezik, Biblija na hebrejskom, biblijski prijevodi, Vulgata, luteranstvo, Matija Vlačić Ilirik, hrvatski protestantizam

⁴⁸ See Mijo Mirković, *Matija Vlačić Ilirik*, JAZU, Zagreb, 1960/Pula and Rijeka, 1980).