

of God. Its value lies in its high level of scholarly investigation, which does not make it lose any of its practicality. Very insightful and stimulating, this book has much to offer. Still, it would be advised for potential readers to read it carefully with discernment, for the reasons mentioned above. Yet, the benefits of this book outweigh the detriment it could cause with its less than conservative views. If nothing else, it will make its readers more aware of just how much happiness is in the Bible. Reading God's Word will never be the same.

Mario Kushner

Stanko Jambrek

The Reformation in Croatian lands in the European context

Zagreb, Central Europe and the Biblical Institute, 2013, 464 pages

At the end of last year a new book appeared on the Croatian literary market, which talks about 16th and 17th century Reformation, in Croatian lands in particular. Its very appearance—almost 500 pages, hard cover, attractive design—as well as its ambitious title, made it obvious that this could be a significant intellectual and publishing event. Our linguistic and geopolitical area, which is usually not very familiar with this subject, is simply craving for good contemporary literature (which is objectively and scientifically supported) dealing with this subject, so the expectations of every interested reader who approached this work were (and are) quite great, and rightfully so. Did the book justify the expectations, and whose pen did it come from in the first place?

The author of this ample volume is Stanko Jambrek, who is definitely known to the knowledgeable reading audience. He is one of the rare living Croatian scientists who deals with themes pertaining to Reformation, and has done so for most of his career. It is enough to look at his basic biographical data to see that we are dealing with an author who is well- acquainted with the subject matter. His master thesis on the subject of church history, defended at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek in 1997, was published under the title, *Hrvatski protestantski pokret XVI. i XVII. stoljeća (The Croatian Protestant Movement in the 16th and 17th centuries)*, Matica hrvatska, Zaprešić, 1999. His dissertation for his doctorate in theology, defended in 2001 in the USA at the New Covenant International University, was published under the title, *Crkve reformacijske baštine u Hrvatskoj (Reformation Heritage Churches in Croatia)*, Bogoslovni institut, Zagreb, 2003, while the research from his second doctorate, in history, defended in 2012 at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zagreb, was published in the very book we are dealing with. In addition to these, he has published two more books, as well as a series of articles which deal with history, theology, and

the history of the church, both in domestic and foreign journals. He works as a professor of church history and theology at the Zagreb Bible Institute. He is the founder and chief editor of *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology*.

In the *Introduction* (p. 12), Jambrek outlined five goals of his research published in the book. First of all, he wanted to “point to the written and preserved manuscripts of Reformers as a rich treasury of historical, religious, and culturological data.” Second, he wanted to “explore the as of yet unused archive matter, and to provide a critical analysis of the published historical sources and key works of Croatian and European Reformers, which had a powerful influence on the development of Reformation in Croatian lands and among Croats in diaspora.” In addition, he wanted to “explore the perception of Reformational ideas among bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the most influential magnates in the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom.” Then, he wished to “explore the ways of mediating the Reformed teaching to people living in urban and rural areas” and, finally, “the influence of counter-Reformation in Europe and in Croatian lands.” In other words, in his book Jambrek wanted to make a “synthesis of the development, course, and cessation of Reformation in Croatian lands in the period between 1520’s and 1630’s” (p. 14).

In order to accomplish these goals, the author divided the book into five large sections: 1) Reformation in Europe, 2) the Reformed movement among the intellectual elite, 3) the reception of Reformed ideas among the political elite, 4) common people Protestantism: ways of mediating Reformed teaching to people living in urban and rural areas, and 5) counter-Reformation and the Catholic renewal in Croatian lands. In addition, he enriched the book with important and helpful appendices: 1) the letter of Mihael Starin, 2) a fragment of Starin’s drama *Comoedia matrimonio sacerdotum*, 3) ten rules regarding forbidden books, 4) a list of pictures and illustrations, 5) index of names, and 6) index of phrases. He also included eight comprehensive original color maps: 1) Overview of distribution of Evangelical, or Lutheran Reformation tradition in the 1560’s; 2) Overview of distribution of Reformed, or Calvinian Reformation tradition in the 1560’s; 3) Overview of Reformed migrations to Southeast Europe in the 1550’s and 1560’s; 4) Areas of Reformation; 5) the Istria-Kranj-Croatian area of Reformation; 6) Distributional network and centers of distribution of publications published by the Biblical Institute in Urach between 1563 and 1564; 7) The Međimurje-Prekomurje-Hungarian area of Reformation; and 8) the Baranja-Slavonia area of Reformation. Also included is an excellently done (also original) information and illustration-rich “Reformation timeline” spreading across two pages of the book, also in full color.

In the first section of the book, Jambrek provides a general context for Reformation in Europe, and describes the Reformation as the movement of proclaiming “the pure Word of God.” Then, after a summarized overview of the development

and spread of main Reformation traditions, he provides insight in the context of the Reformation in Croatian lands. In the second section of the book he deals with the subject of the activity of the Reformed movement among the intellectual elite, and he divides it by geographic areas: 1) Istria, Carniola, western Styria and the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom, 2) Međimurje-Prekmurje-West Hungary, and 3) Baranyan-Slavonian region. In the third section he explores the reception of Reformed ideas among the Roman Catholic bishops and priests in Croatian lands, as well as among the most influential nobility in Croatian lands and the areas into which the Croats have migrated. In the fourth section of the book he deals with the theme of strategies and methods of evangelism, i.e. promoting Reformation, then goes on to the preaching of the Word of God, teaching, child-rearing and education, as well as types and ways of worship, services, and rituals. In the fifth, which is the last section of the book, he first deals with the counter-Reformation and the Catholic renewal in the European context, and then with counter-Reformation and Catholic renewal in Croatian lands.

Jambrek has approached his research in a thorough, measured and knowledgeable way. He uses a number of published and unpublished (and even unexplored archival) sources, as well as the relevant secondary literature. His argumentation and dealing with subjects are structured in a logical harmony, and always supported with relevant sources. His conclusions seem sober and objective, as is fitting for a doctoral dissertation. His language is simple (but not at all trivial!) and clear, which makes this work accessible to a wide range of readers. As many as seventy pictures and illustrations provide help in visualizing and memorizing the subject matter, as do the eight comprehensive maps, which could, due to their didactic usefulness, one day easily be turned into posters in lecture rooms of theological and similar seminaries.

The goals which the author has set for himself have been quite adequately realized in the book. After a careful reading of the work, we must agree with the book reviewers that Jambrek has indeed managed to create an excellent and much needed “modern synthetic review of the Reformation movement in Croatian lands”, with a high scientific, research, and didactic reach (Zrinka Blažević), bringing “a series of new discoveries and interpretations by presenting them from socio-historical, but also a theological perspective as well” (Nataša Štefanec), which he was more than capable of doing as a historian and a theologian.

In other words, this is a remarkable work, which will definitely become a standard for current and future researchers of this and related subjects, and it will be hard to top it as well. We can only congratulate the author on his achievement, and sincerely recommend the book to interested readers.

Tomislav Vidaković