

Conceptions of Holiness in the Lutheran Countries, c. 1550-1700*

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When considering the impact of the Lutheran Reformation on the issue of holiness, most readers will view the influence of the Reformation as negative, resulting in the abolition of the cult of saints. The Reformers' emphasis on the Christian's personal need of grace and faith is generally thought to have made saints superfluous as mediators and as models of good works and holiness. However, as I shall attempt to show, holiness remained an important issue after the Reformation, though the meaning of the word was altered in some important respects.

The English language has a large number of terms related to the concept of holiness: sacrality, sacredness, sainthood, saintliness, sanctimony, sanctitude and sanctity. Though these words suggest a variety of perspectives to be studied, they also overlap to a large degree. Therefore I shall in the following speak of holiness which seems to be the most general of these terms.¹

Holiness is a central notion in the comparative study of religion. Some religions do not have a conception of God, but in all religions there is a distinction between holy and profane. If a religion recognizes a god or gods, then things holy are related to the godhead. Moral perfection, however, seems originally not to have been a necessary quality of the holy.² So far, there seems to be agreement among students of religion, but this consensus ends quickly when the phenomenon holiness is to be interpreted. My aims, as an historian and a folklorist, are much more modest. I shall attempt to describe what holiness meant in a specific period, in a given confession and in a delimited geographic area.

I shall deal with the period from about 1550 to 1700, i. e. after the introduction of the Reformation and before the spread of pietism. The confession concerned is Lutheranism which also implies the area to be covered: Virtually all the northern lands of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation as well as some territories in

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¹ The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, vol. 7, p. 307; vol. 14, p. 335, 340, 380, 440-442.

² Lanczkowski 1985b; Kellermann 1985; Kippenberg 1989.

the South such as Alsace, Franconia, Württemberg and a number of imperial cities;³ Denmark-Norway with Iceland and the Faroe Islands; Sweden-Finland with Livonia and Ingria; and finally some areas belonging to the Polish Crown including Courland and Prussia. Around 1700 basically the entire area around the Baltic Sea was Lutheran.

The different confessions of early modern Europe had different conceptions of holiness and their adherents were offered different means to influence this relation to God and to speak about it. To name a few examples,⁴ Lutherans maintained some rituals of consecration⁵ but did not conduct canonization processes anymore. Comparable to Calvinists, Lutherans attempted to pursue a godly life. However, they seem to have doubted the possibility to lead a perfect life⁶ and to have been much more reluctant than Calvinists or Catholics to judge another person's state of grace.⁷ Catholic dogma contained a clear definition of a saint (with several categories ranging from Mary over martyrs to virgins and widows), but the distinctions were somewhat more blurred in day-to-day life. Recent research has shown many examples of living saints, unauthorized saints and fake saints in Catholicism.⁸ Correspondingly (but not as well known) there were a number of persons who enjoyed a reputation of holiness among Lutheran laymen - obviously without any chance of being canonized by the Church. Among Lutherans certain forms of hagiography were continued, some were rejected and others were created. Finally, the effects of holiness in the physical world were viewed differently. The Calvinists were probably the most critical of miracles, but Lutherans certainly did accept miraculous healings or votive churches but not relics, amulets, incantations or sacramentals.⁹

There were also diverging interpretations of the words "communion of saints" (*communio sanctorum*) in the Apostles' Creed - read every Sunday in the Lutheran and Reformed Churches and also used liturgically in the Anglican and Catholic Churches.¹⁰ The expression *communio sanctorum* can be translated in several ways

³ The area diminished in the seventeenth century with the advances of the Counter-Reformation.

⁴ Some examples with references will be taken up later in this paper.

⁵ Apart from the ordination of pastors there were dedications of churches, church furniture and liturgical objects (Graff 1921 / 1937:400-414).

⁶ Cf. Leube 1924:172.

⁷ Cf. Lansemann 1938:87f., 175; Pinomaa 1977:61f.

⁸ Zarri 1990/1992, 1991; Barone, Caffiero & Scorza Barcellona 1994.

⁹ Cf. Scribner 1984/1987.

¹⁰ Molland 1955.

(with *sanctorum* being the genitive to *sancti* or *sancta*). For the Lutheran Reformers *communio sanctorum* meant the community of all living believers.¹¹

This paper is primarily concerned with holy persons and only marginally with holy objects, holy places or holy time.¹² I shall distinguish between four categories of holy persons: (1) a canonized saint after death; (2) an exemplary figure as a hero of tales recycled in devotional literature; (3) a pious or godly person attempting to live life according to the rules of a religion; (4) a person viewed by contemporaries as holy while still living (i. e. enjoying a reputation of holiness).

(1) Canonized Saints

Holiness in this sense was not available in Lutheranism. There were no canonizing procedures. In the Middle Ages, the saints' power was attested through post-mortem miracles, and they were invoked as mediators for intercession on behalf of humans. The cult of these saints had been a prominent target for Reformation polemics and was abolished in Reformation lands; side-altars in churches were removed.

(2) Saintly Models

The *imitatio* of saints remained a valid goal though not in the literal sense of copying their actions. Their *exempla* should strengthen our faith.¹³ Although not all traditional saints were acceptable to the Reformers, a fair number of legends about saints continued to be used because they served as *exempla* for a godly life lived in faith. Stories about the heroic lives of martyrs for the Reformation (whose literary models were early Christian rather than medieval)¹⁴ were told and retold, but only to serve as an example for the living; the martyrs did not provide a link to God or serve as objects of a cult.¹⁵ Luther could be praised as a holy man of God,¹⁶ as a prophet¹⁷

¹¹ Bekenntnisschriften 1930/1986:61f. (Confessio augustana, art. 7: De ecclesia, art. 8: Quid sit ecclesia), 233-246 (Apologia confessionis augustanæ, ad art. 7 et 8), 655-658 (Catechismus major, De symbolo fidei, art. 3); Lindström 1952; Kähler 1958.

¹² Cf. May 1995; Brereton 1987; Quack, Reinhardt & Adam 1995.

¹³ Bekenntnisschriften 1930/1986:83b-83d (Confessio augustana, art. 21: De cultu sanctorum), 316-328 (Apologia confessionis augustanæ, ad art. 21); Pinomaa 1977:93f.

¹⁴ Kolb 1987:136.

¹⁵ Lansemann 1938:93-105 et passim; Scharfe 1968:139-196; Scharfe 1969; Moritzen 1971:20-23, 39-65, 68f.; Brückner & Brückner 1974; Deneke 1974:144-152; Rehmann 1977-79; Kolb 1987; Alsheimer 1997; cf. also Bergamasco 1993,

and, indeed, as a saint in the sense that he was chosen by God to proclaim His Word.¹⁸ No one, however, suggested that Luther would intercede for humans before God.

The Lutheran countries experienced comparatively little iconoclasm: images of saints continued to be visible in churches, and even new images of some saints and confessors were produced.¹⁹ Lutherans continued to give their children the names of saints and to use saints' days for dating purposes. In most territories, the Reformation only retained those holidays which were supported by Scripture, e. g. Christological feasts, the days of the Apostles and some Marian days such as Purification, Annunciation and Visitation.²⁰ The names of churches were not changed even if they had been dedicated to a saint whose feast was abolished.²¹ All in all, the traditional saints (and not only the biblical saints) were still present in Lutheran church life.²²

(3) Holiness of Life

Pious men and women, like the heroes of the Reformation, provided examples of holiness according to the third definition given, the Holiness of Life. For Lutherans, the concept was rooted in Luther's notion of the priesthood of all believers and of the Christian's calling: "all believers are saints and ... all human activity performed by the believer, both in the religious sphere and also in the profane realms of family and occupational life, of political duties and obligations, are godly."²³

Great emphasis came to be placed on the Holiness of Life in English Puritanism, in the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie*, in the German *Reformorthodoxie*, in the pietism of

1994; on humanist and Counter-Reformation hagiography, cf. Soergel 1993:96f.

¹⁶ Kolb 1987:105, 120-122 et passim, Scribner 1986/1987b:335, 340, 348f. The word "Gottesmann" does not necessarily mean any more than a pious man, who has lived a godly life (cf. Grimm & Grimm 1936-58:1285-1287); cf. also the Latin *homo Dei, vir Dei* (1 Tim 6, 11; 2 Tim 3, 17; 2 Pet 1, 21; Angenendt 1994/1997:69-74).

¹⁷ Leube 1924:157-162; Scribner 1986/1987b; Kolb 1987:115-120 et passim.

¹⁸ Kolb 1987:136-138.

¹⁹ Hasse 1965; Scharfe 1968:139-196, esp. 167-169, 174f.; Kolb 1987:146-148.

²⁰ Graff 1921/1937:112-128; Lansemann 1938; Kolb 1987:139-145; Malmstedt 1994. Some territories also maintained non-biblical holidays.

²¹ Schulz 1985:667.

²² The biblical saints referred to in the magic spells analysed elsewhere in this volume by Ulrika Wolf-Knuts point in the same direction.

²³ Kolb 1987:155f., quotation p. 155; cf. also Pinomaa 1977:134. For Luther, however, only God can make a judgement about this (id., p. 156 et passim).

Spener or Francke and even in the Counter-Reformation. Scholars have to some extent concentrated on only one of these movements at a time whereas there is reason to view all these reform efforts as a general European phenomenon.²⁴ Lacking a better word, one might call it the intensified or internalized Reformation.²⁵ In different confessions and in different countries, the movement was active with varying degrees of intensity and at different social levels, starting at different times. For the Lutheran areas it appears that the movement gained momentum after about 1600 in Germany and after about 1630 in Scandinavia. The theologians advocating these reforms were little interested in theological disputes about dogmatic details. Their aim was a Holiness of Life, a life corresponding to the faith, a *praxis pietatis*.²⁶ People should not only outwardly conform to the demands of the established church, they should internalize them.

To spread this message an enormous amount of edifying literature was published. A substantial body of this literature tells the exemplary lives of pious Christians. These Lives not only demonstrate the right frame of mind of the heroes, they also tell of miraculous interventions into the lives of the godly.

As a consequence of Reformation polemics against Catholic saints' legends ("Lügenden") Lutheran theologians emphasized that only true stories about God's actions in the world should be told by Lutheran theologians.²⁷ Nevertheless, these Lives also follow the literary conventions of their genre. Therefore I have chosen to distinguish between people trying to lead a godly life and between the narratives of godly Lives in devotional literature (p.).

While every true Lutheran would insist that only faith was necessary for salvation, writers for an intensified Reformation nevertheless placed great emphasis on a behaviour that corresponded to the professed faith.²⁸ Here the efforts of theologians and the disciplining measures of the state went hand in hand. A good example - with parallels in other Lutheran countries - is an edict by the Danish king Christian IV of

²⁴ Frijhoff 1995:354-361; Leube 1924; Soergel 1993:215f. et passim.

²⁵ This is inspired by the Dutch term *nadere reformatie* - but in the broader sense, cf. Frijhoff 1995:354f.

²⁶ Lewis Bayly's book with the same title was translated into German though with some modifications in the Lutheran editions (Leube 1924:167-170, 179f.).

²⁷ Cf. Pinomaa 1977:55-58; Brückner 1988-90b; cf. also Beyer 1997:52.

²⁸ Cf. Leube 1924:180.

27 March 1629. This edict was promulgated in Denmark,²⁹ Norway³⁰ and the island of Saaremaa (Estonia)³¹ (possibly also in other of the territories ruled by Christian IV)³² and re-edited in 1660 by a writer for ecclesiastical reform.³³ The subjects were admonished to lead a Christian life. In general, "outward church-going, the external use of the sacraments, singing, prayer etc."³⁴ were not enough if one did not live according to God's Word. In order to avoid God's punishment for the country, the king decreed the following: in every parish honourable men were to be appointed to help the pastor maintain church discipline. They should see to that people attended divine service, did not use feast-days for private celebrations, drinking, gambling and other entertainments, did not stay away from the Lord's Supper for long periods, and did not swear. The helpers should watch out for discord in families, usury, persons with bad influence on young people etc. In severe cases, the sinners could be excommunicated or even ordered to leave the country. The edict was also concerned with raising the standard of training for theologians; they should for example not only know Latin but even some Greek. At the end of each sermon the pastors should explain a part of the catechism, and during the week at a set hour they were to teach the catechism to the children.

A side-effect of these disciplining measures was a rising level of literacy.³⁵ Similar efforts were made in Sweden. In catechetical examinations, which were insti-

²⁹ Forordning Om Kirckens Embede oc Møndighed mod wboðferdige Sampt om atskillige Geistlighedens Forholdt. *Secher* 1897, p. 446-477. There were several editions in 1629 and 1631.

³⁰ Gamle Kongelige Forordninger ... 1751:680-708.

³¹ Ausz der Dänischen Sprach translirte Verordnung ... 1639.

³² Pontoppidan 1747:771-792, prints a German text "so wie ichs in Mss. vorgefunden, nach der in denen Fürstenthümern Schleswig und Holstein publicirten, aber sehr gezwungen und mit danismis angefüllten Teutschen Uebersetzung". The collections of ordinances for the Duchies do not print the text, possibly because it was no longer valid at the time of their publication. This might also be the reason why it is not to be found in von Oetken 1722. The German print of 1639 referred to in n. is the only one mentioned in Mitchell 1969, no. 271. The reference in Ambrosius 1796:8 probably refers to this print ("1639. den 27sten März, Königl. Verordnung, betreffend verschiedene Kirchensachen.") and implies validity for the Duchies.

³³ Schröder 1660; cf. Leube 1924:78. When the pietist Pontoppidan edited a German translation of the edict in 1747 (cf. n.), he very much approved of this earlier effort to improve church life.

³⁴ *Secher* 1897:449: "udvortis kirkegang, sacramenternis udvortis brug, siungen, beden oc deslige".

³⁵ Dahlerup 1995:8-17.

tutionalized in the seventeenth century, the pastors examined all parishioners in their knowledge of the catechism and in reading.³⁶

In a way, hardly any of these demands for reform was an innovation of the seventeenth century. Basically, they belonged to an age-old Christian tradition. However, it was in the early seventeenth century, together with an expectance of the end of the world, that these demands became urgent.

Until now, I have only referred to theologians' demands and edicts of the state. Did lay people see the need for an intensified or internalized Reformation? There are a number of indications for this. Many edifying books were written, published and reprinted many times. There must have been countless readers who were concerned with life after death and the improvement of life before death. Many autobiographies tell us the same thing, and, in fact, it has often been argued that the autobiography became a popular genre due to the new desire to examine one's life closely.³⁷ The cases of Lutheran living saints (which I shall discuss in the following) also attest to an urge by lay people for an intensified Reformation.

(4) Living Saints

A large number of so-called living saints can be found in late medieval and early modern Catholicism. In many cases these religious specialists were not clergymen, monks or nuns, but nonetheless did miraculous things and enjoyed a reputation of holiness with lay people.³⁸ Were there also lay people in the Lutheran countries whom their contemporaries viewed as living saints? Here it was not enough to read the right books and behave in a godly fashion: all Christians were to live in this manner. Certain signs of grace were required to show that one was under the direct influence of God or had direct contact with Him. One can both argue that the living saints were viewed as holy because they did extraordinary things and that they did extraordinary things because they were holy.³⁹

In the following I shall present three kinds of living saints in early modern Lutheranism: prophets, persons fasting miraculously and faith healers.

(4.a) Prophets

³⁶ Wahlbom 1983:18-27.

³⁷ Frijhoff 1995:60f. with further references.

³⁸ Zarri 1990/1992.

³⁹ Cf. Gentilcore 1993:142f.

Between c. 1550 and 1700 more than 300 lay prophets appeared in Lutheran countries. A typical case can be constructed as follows: A person meets an angel out on the fields. The angel instructs the seer to exhort her or his community to repent. The seer then goes to the pastor who preaches the angel's message from the pulpit. These prophets - as was the contemporary terminology - came from all social groups, from all age groups and were of both sexes. Reports about them can be found in a variety of sources, from pamphlets and edifying literature to chronicles and archival records.⁴⁰

This model seems to have developed out of a late medieval pattern (with parallels in Russian Orthodoxy⁴¹): A saint appears offering to be the patron saint of the community, asking for a procession to be held and a shrine to be erected in his or her honour. Later the shrine develops into a pilgrimage site.⁴² After the Reformation, the saint becomes an angel (dressed in white), the call for penance is retained but placed within the Lutheran theology of repentance. No cult develops, no shrine is erected, no pilgrimage is started. The procession is turned into a day of public prayer (which has to be ordered by the secular authorities).

In some sources, the stories ended after the prophets delivered their messages. In other cases, however, prophets obtained a reputation of holiness and acted as living saints.

Credibility was a difficult issue for the seers. Nobody was present when they encountered their epiphany. Even though their message derived from the most supreme authority, i. e. God and his angel, they did not have any proof of that. An important means for achieving recognition was the prophets' performance.⁴³ They suffered bodily pain and fasted for extended periods, they went without sleep or became mute. All in all, they used their body and senses solely to spread God's message, and, importantly, they also increased their credibility by living in a godly way.

In 1636 an about seventeen year old maid of Meldorf in the Ditmarshes was carried off by two

"Jünglingen (oder Engelen)" dressed in white "an einen Ort / da jhr gezeigt etliche Verdampften im Feuer ligend vnd erbärmlich klagend / ja auch etliche / so noch im Leben seyn / derer Stuel aber schon bereitet gewesen / vnd darauff jhre

⁴⁰ Amundsen 1995; Beyer 1994b, 1995, 1996; Wall 1994.

⁴¹ Cf. Västriik 1999.

⁴² Christian 1981/1989; Darricau 1982:66.

Gestalt sitzend / sind gesehen worden / etc. Von dannen ist sie geführet an einen andern Ort / da jhr der Zustand der Außewehlten gezeiget / warunter jhr auch etliche bekandt gewesen / vnd allererst gestorben seyn."⁴⁴

["young men (or angels)" dressed in white "to a place where she was shown several damned lying in the fire and lamenting miserably, yes, even some who are still alive, but whose chairs were already prepared and their figures were seen sitting on them. From there she was led to another place where she was shown the state of the elect of whom she also knew several, who had died only recently."]

It should be noted in passing that she did not visit purgatory. After she had been brought back to earth, the angels told her to report all this to the pastors. She and the pastors should admonish those still living, but whose chairs she had seen prepared in hell, to abstain from

"Vngerechtigkeit / Geitz / Hoffart vnd Verachtung des göttlichen Worts vnd seiner Diener. Daß jhr auch desto mehr getrawet ward / solte sie 3. Tag sprachloß ligen / welches auch geschehen."⁴⁵

["injustice, avarice, pride and contempt of the divine Word and its servants. In order to be more credible, she was to lie speechless for three days, as also happened."]

Like other prophets this girl proved her divine vocation by exhibiting unusual muteness, but her message went further than that of most of her colleagues. She had an individual message as well, not only an admonition to the community. A pamphlet of 1596 contains another example of a message to an individual. An angel tells the seer:

"Zeiget ewrem Pfarrherrn (Henningio Cappelman) an / das er den [sic] frommen Christen warne / damit sie sich bekehren / vnd das sie abschaffen die langen Hangelkragen / desgleichen auch seinem Sohne / das er solches thue."⁴⁶

["Tell your pastor (Henning Cappelman) to admonish the pious Christians to repent and to do away with the long hanging collars. Also his son should do this."]

But such specific messages can only occasionally be traced in pamphlets which aimed at a large public beyond the immediate vicinity.

The Meldorf vision resembles an experience the Holsteiner Gottschalk had had in the twelfth century. In a vision he was shown around purgatory and later on he

⁴³ Cf. Beyer 1995.

⁴⁴ Alardus 1636:12f.

⁴⁵ Alardus 1636:13, cf. also 18f.

even saw places reserved in heaven for people still alive!⁴⁷ This seems to have been rather common in the Middle Ages⁴⁸ when some visionaries were also assured of their own future place in heaven.⁴⁹ But after the Reformation, apart from a few exceptions,⁵⁰ such a thing seems to have been out of the question for Lutherans (or their pastors?) because it would lead to a false security concerning personal salvation.⁵¹ When Lutheran prophets saw people they knew in the other world they were generally either sinners, dead⁵² or living,⁵³ in hell (or places in hell reserved for living people⁵⁴), or deceased persons in heaven.⁵⁵ These messages were very powerful calls for repentance.

Even if a prophet only intended to preach repentance or to criticize the authorities,⁵⁶ he could easily be forced into the rôle of a spiritual advisor and of a living saint. People would then come from far away in order to profit - often for money - from his knowledge and his connection to divine powers.

About 1630, people sought out a "holy prophetess" in Jutland to discover "in which way they displeased God".⁵⁷ This prophetess was one of several Danish woman at the time who gave information on "which sins to abolish, how God can be

⁴⁶ Geddicus 1596:A3v.

⁴⁷ Assmann 1979:114-122; cf. also Bünz 1995.

⁴⁸ McGuire 1990:107f.

⁴⁹ Thomas of Cantimpré 1701:2[5]6 (III, 1); McGuire 1990:107.

⁵⁰ TWÄNNE Undersamma Berättelser ... 1759:[](3)v; Stimer 1633:[A3r]; Batto-
lovius 1730:605. Hartknoch 1686:584f., who gives a summary of Stimer's
report, adds that "nicht lang hernach [ist] der Betrug offenbar worden" but
does not cite any reference. For Jesuit polemics about this case, cf. Zusätze ...
1730; Arnoldt 1769:551.

⁵¹ Cf. also Lochman & Marquardt 1989 for the distinction between the *certitudo*
promised to the believers and individuals' vain attempts for *securitas*.

⁵² Laakmann & Anderson 1934:9; Trenne sannfärdiga Berättelser ... n. d.: [A1v];
TWÄNNE Undersamma Berättelser ... 1759:[](3)v (the seer's great-uncle does
not appear to be in heaven, though his wife can be seen).

⁵³ Lycosthenes 1557:624 (a case from (reformed) Basle, c. 1538); Alardus
1636:12f.

⁵⁴ Trenne sannfärdiga Berättelser ... n. d.: [A2r].

⁵⁵ Alardus 1636:13; TWÄNNE Undersamma Berättelser ... 1759:[](3)v.

⁵⁶ Anhorn von Hartwiss 1674:93-96; Landsarkivet for Fyn, Odense: Fyns bispe-
arkiv, Sunds Herreds breve 1541-1721, no. 47 (undated, possibly 1689);
Curicke 1686:349f. (only contained in the unabridged version, a copy of which
is preserved in the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences at Danzig; it
was made available to me through the generous help of Bodo Nischan
(Greenville)), summary in Hartknoch 1686:745f.

⁵⁷ Jersin 1631-32:A9r, A10v: "hellig Prophetinde" --- "huad Gud paa dennem
mißhagede".

appeased, how things are in heaven".⁵⁸ Here the people were told how to reform their lives and could probably also learn about the fate of deceased family members in the other world.

This seems to correspond to the rôle of late medieval recluses.⁵⁹ The prophets' rôle as spiritual authorities seems, however, to have been somewhat more restricted than that of their late medieval predecessors. There are no hints that Lutheran prophets had greater spiritual powers than their fellow Lutherans. They could not mediate from man to God, only from God to man: they gave information. Not only did medieval saints give information about souls in purgatory, they could also - owing to their special grace, their self-castigation or the power of their prayers - obtain these souls' release. They could also intercede (through penance or prayers) for living persons to gain forgiveness of their sins⁶⁰ or perform miraculous cures.⁶¹ Living saints in sixteenth-century Italy could through their intercession delay or limit God's punishment of their community.⁶²

Through pilgrimages,⁶³ indulgences,⁶⁴ requiem masses⁶⁵ and alms-giving⁶⁶ medieval laymen could do penance for the sins of other people, living or dead. The prophets' activities certainly suggest that the interest in the fate of the dead continued after the Reformation. There is no evidence, though, that it was still possible to influence the position of souls in the other world. The Reformation had broken the bonds with the dead. Repentance now only affected God's relation to the living. The communion of saints (cf. p.) was no longer seen as "the reciprocal contacts among the Church Militant on earth, the Church Suffering in purgatory, and the Church Triumphant in heaven".⁶⁷ It now meant the community of all living believers. The fate of the dead was in God's hand alone.

Lay people reacted in different ways to these prophets. The first reaction was probably curiosity and craving for sensation. Quite often the prophets seem to have

⁵⁸ Jersin 1631-32:L6v: "huad synder vi skal affskaffe / huorledis Gud formildis / huordan det staar til i Himmerige".

⁵⁹ Mulder-Bakker 1995b:244-246.

⁶⁰ McGuire 1990:106f.; Tanz & Werner 1993:41f.; Mulder-Bakker 1995b:238, 244-246.

⁶¹ Nip 1995:210f.; Zarri 1990/1992:118f.

⁶² Zarri 1990/1992:111f.

⁶³ Molland 1968; Soergel 1993:58.

⁶⁴ Müller 1993.

⁶⁵ Nøjgaard 1955; McGuire 1989:68, 72-74, 79-81.

⁶⁶ Müller-Bergström 1927:274f.; McGuire 1989:79.

⁶⁷ McGuire 1989:67.

succeeded in converting many listeners to repentance and a changed life - at least for some time - but not all of them. There remained some critics and cynics.⁶⁸ Many prophets therefore first reacted to the angel's command by refusing to spread the message, since they feared that no one would believe them.⁶⁹

Some prophets were more successful at preaching than the ordained pastors. The Jutlandish audience of a female prophet about 1630 was "immediately ready upon her speech to work their clothes with scissors and knives".⁷⁰ Bishop Jersin, from whose book about miracles and apparitions the quotation is taken, laments that people do not address themselves to the ordained pastors with their spiritual concerns and that they put more trust in the angels' messages than in the pastors' preaching.⁷¹ Also in a 1563 case from Württemberg it was said that many lay persons had more faith in the angel than in the pastors.⁷²

It may be that Lutheran prophets also appealed to other lay people because they spoke a language that could be easily understood. They spoke the vernacular and did not mix it with Latin words. Their intellectual horizon was the same as their listeners'.⁷³

It was a topos - which sometimes proved to be wrong in reality⁷⁴ - that the prophets led an irreproachably godly life. They tried to make their contemporaries live in a godly way as well. The prophets had something to communicate about important topics such as heaven and hell. They were capable of giving many more details than the pastors could permit themselves.⁷⁵ Laymen treasured these theological questions so highly that they were willing to pay for the answers!⁷⁶

The prophets stood in an ambivalent relation to the pastors. They were to a certain degree dependent on the pastors' acceptance in order not to be proclaimed fanatics or heretics. On the other hand they assumed some of the pastors' functions (as well as those functions the pastors could not fulfill) but without dissociating themselves from the clergy. Even though the prophets did not have any official authority, lay people accepted their authority as spiritual advisors.

⁶⁸ Schütz n. d.:C2v f.; Colerus 1595:C1r.

⁶⁹ Klitgaard 1909-11:594; Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart: A 206, Bü 3618, no. 1.

⁷⁰ Jersin 1631-32:A10v: "strax ferdig paa hindis Tale / med Sax oc Knifue at fare ofuer deris Klæder".

⁷¹ Jersin 1631-32:A10r-A11r.

⁷² Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart: A 206, Bü 3618, no. 5.

⁷³ Cf. Küllö's 1993:237.

⁷⁴ Debes 1673/1963:351-353.

⁷⁵ Cf. Küllö's 1993:237f.

The prophets' activity suggests that lay people not only passively listened to the long sermons in church, but that they also processed them actively. Theological reasoning was not only to be found in the clerical world.⁷⁷ Prophets and audiences reasoned along similar lines, but may have accentuated different aspects of theology.

The prophets' theology followed Lutheran teaching. This indicates that Reformation thought had prevailed. On the other hand, the prophets bear witness to the sermons' insufficient moral effects:⁷⁸ people kept sinning, although some of them were converted, at least temporarily, by the prophets' reformulation of the official sermons.

Summarizing one can say that a Lutheran prophet's authority - apart from the constitutive element of revelations - could be based on a godly life, on signs, ecstasy, bodily sufferings, unnatural fasts or on information about divine matters but no longer on miraculous cures or on powerful prayers for souls in purgatory. A prophet could combine some of these features but rarely all of them.

(4.b) Persons Fasting Miraculously

I have already mentioned that a number of prophets fasted over longer periods. But there were also people who fasted - miraculously - for weeks or months at a time, but never met angels nor called for repentance. This seems to have been a primarily, though not exclusively, female phenomenon, and was by no means restricted to Lutheranism.⁷⁹ It is tempting but probably misleading to diagnose these cases as *anorexia nervosa*,⁸⁰ but also here it is conspicuous that lay people charged the phenomenon with religious meaning. They addressed themselves to these girls in order to find answers to their religious worries. The faithful were willing to spend money on this.⁸¹

I should mention in passing that in these cases - as well as with the prophets - there were a number of impostors who made a living out of their fasting.⁸² This, however, only underlines how established the phenomenon was in the early modern society.

⁷⁶ Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart: A 206, Bü 3618, no. 5; Dahlmann 1827:323, 352.

⁷⁷ Cf. also Frijhoff 1995.

⁷⁸ Cf. Leube 1924:75.

⁷⁹ Bell 1985; Rollins 1921; Vandereycken & van Deth 1994; Zarri 1990/1992:106f.; Frijhoff 1995:389-405.

⁸⁰ Frijhoff 1995:395f.

⁸¹ Wier 1660:750, 766.

⁸² Wier 1660.

(4.c) Faith Healers

I have stated above that Lutheran prophets unlike some Catholic saints did not perform healing miracles and that they did not have greater spiritual powers than other mortals. There were, however, cases of miraculous healers whom one might term living saints but not prophets since they did not receive angelic apparitions calling for repentance. The earliest and most prominent of these need not be treated in any detail. Martin Luther was said to have healed several persons by prayer,⁸³ but these tales first spread many decades after his death. There is, however, contemporary archival evidence for the two other cases I want to treat here.

In 1680 and 1681, Jonas Trellund, a fifty year old former merchant, performed many miraculous cures at Husum, a harbour town on the west-coast of Sleswick-Holstein.⁸⁴ Trellund demonstrated godly behaviour, and read the Bible, Johann Arndt's books of true Christianity⁸⁵ and other devotional works.

Trellund followed a specific method in his healing ministry. The patient had to confess his Lutheran faith and was asked if he believed that Christ could heal him. Trellund promised to pray for him, but the patient himself also had to pray ardently to God. Other rituals did not take place. In this way Trellund healed many persons. To a woman, who out of gratitude offered him money, he replied "that he had no power to sell the grace of God".⁸⁶ She should rather give the money to the poor.

People at Husum did not know who Trellund really was. The common people had several theories:

"[D]er eine sagte: Er wäre Moyses / der ander / er wäre ein Mann Gottes / andere sagten er wäre ein Prophet / andere er wär ein Apostel / so von den Todten aufferstande wäre / und daß er lebete sonder schlaffen / essen und trincken".⁸⁷

["One said, he was Moses, another that he was a man of God [cf. n.], others said, he was a prophet, yet others that he was an apostle who had risen from the dead and that he lived without sleeping, eating and drinking".]

These ideas - however odd they might seem today - were not rejected out of hand at the time. A woman asked Trellund's landlady to let her see the Elijah. It was

⁸³ Scribner 1986/1987a:311; Scribner 1986/1987b:349f.

⁸⁴ His activities are analysed in more detail in Beyer 1994a:119-127 and, based on additional sources, in Beyer 1999b.

⁸⁵ Arndt 1605-10/1617-19 with countless later editions.

⁸⁶ Kurtzer Und Gründlicher Bericht ... 1681:7: "daß er keine Macht hätte die Gnade GOTTes zu verkauffen".

a common eschatological belief that Elijah would return before the Day of Judgment.⁸⁸ Therefore it was probably not absurd either to view Trellund as Moses or an apostle, and prophets were no rare sights in the Lutheran countries. As for his miraculous fasting, Trellund disproved this rumour himself by opening the door to his living room so that everybody could see him when he was eating and drinking. Nonetheless we should remind ourselves that numerous persons at the time were reported to fast miraculously (cf. p.). One of the Lutheran prophets also claimed to keep on preaching without having to sleep.⁸⁹

The Husum clergy do not seem to have had objections to Trellund's cures. The pastors enjoyed his company and did not see any reason for suspicion. They publicly called the cures for a work of God. When cured persons asked for it, the pastors would pronounce a thanksgiving from the pulpit. Furthermore, an old pastor came to Trellund and asked for the healing of his son.

Although Trellund's burial is noted in the records of the Lutheran church at Friedrichstadt (some 15 km south of Husum),⁹⁰ in a way he kept on living. The tale about his miracles at Husum had an extended literary *Nachleben*. August Hermann Francke, Gottfried Arnold and other pietists after them referred to his healings or retold his story.⁹¹ This is somewhat surprising since locally, it had been a Lutheran orthodox pastor, Martin Holmer, who had supported Trellund against the pietist August Giese's critique. But once Trellund's story was included in the circuit of edifying tales, it could circulate freely without any hindrance from the real events in 1680/81.

Another faith-healer was Catharina Fagerberg who worked in Southeast Sweden between 1730 and 1732. After many years of religious scruples, illnesses, insomnia, lack of appetite etc., a good spirit explained to her,

⁸⁷ Kurtzer Und Gründlicher Bericht ... 1681:12.

⁸⁸ Mal 4, 5; Matt 17, 10-13; cf. also Sandblad 1942:42.

⁸⁹ Engelbrecht 1625:D3v-E1v.

⁹⁰ Stadtarchiv Friedrichstadt: Luth. Gemeinde, Beerdigungen 1658-99 (1 January 1683).

⁹¹ Francke 1698:suppl. p. 97f.; Arnold 1699-1700/1740-42, vol. 2, p. [5]59 ([III], 24, § 19), 913 (IV, 32, § 144); Arnold 1701:1090-1103, suppl. p. 24; Johan Thamssen 1824; Kanne 1816-17/1842:210-221.

"dass, wie die bösen Geister sie lange geplaget, so sollte sie hiernächst von Gott Erlaubnis haben, sie wieder zu plagen und auszutreiben von sich und ihrem notleidenden Nächsten."⁹²

["that, just as the evil spirits had plagued her for a long time, she should hereafter have permission from God to plague them as well and to cast them out from herself and her suffering neighbours."]

Subsequently Catharina Fagerberg believed she possessed this gift of grace.

She investigated the patients' illnesses with the help of so-called vital spirits (*Lebensgeister*). Either she summoned one of the patient's vital spirits, or she sent one of her own to God. After one and a half days the spirit returned from God with the necessary information. If the patient was tormented by evil spirits, she attracted the spirits into her own body where they spoke through her throat, but in the end they also left her and the patient was restored to health. There were some patients whom she refused to treat. She recommended that the patient prepared himself for death.

In many ways her method is comparable to that of Jonas Trelund at Husum. The patients were to pray to God, she offered intercessory prayers for them and declared afterwards, that the healing was not caused by her powers but by God alone. There are, however, important differences. She laid her hand on the sick person and in many cases stated that an enemy of the patient had sent the illness by magical means. Occasionally she used an actual medical therapy.⁹³

Catharina Fagerberg became a well-known healer. In a pietist account, her spirits were simplified as good and bad angels.⁹⁴ She was described as a very pious person, who was "very closely and in a special way attached to God and her Saviour".⁹⁵

Conclusions

Lutheran living saints have a number of traits in common with their Catholic counterparts from the Middle Ages or the early modern period, e. g. visions, ecstasy, fasting, signs, the suffering of bodily pain and the living of a godly life. There are, however, also notable differences.

⁹² Edsman 1967:85.

⁹³ Edsman 1967:86: "hat ihn im Ameisenbade zweimal geräuchert und geraten, sich mit Branntwein und Kampfer zu reiben".

⁹⁴ Edsman 1967:99.

⁹⁵ Edsman 1967:97: "mit Gott und ihrem Heiland sehr nahe und auf eine ungemaine Weise verbunden".

(1) Although Lutheran saints might give information about the state of the deceased, they cannot influence their position in the other world. The bonds between the living and the dead are broken.

(2) Some marks of holiness seem not to be available to Lutheran saints: there is no mention of levitation⁹⁶ or stigmata.⁹⁷

(3) Lutheran saints seem not to gather a circle of disciples around them.⁹⁸

(4) Unlike their Catholic counterparts,⁹⁹ Lutheran saints do not excel in good works and (apart from fasting) asceticism.

(5) Lutheran saints come from all walks of life. The number of female or married saints is not disproportionately small as with Catholic saints.¹⁰⁰

(6) There are no signs of a cult after the death of a Lutheran saint.¹⁰¹ No canonizing procedures exist. No miracles occur. With a few exceptions (e. g. concerning Luther and Gustavus Adolphus), no images of Lutheran saints are produced.¹⁰² Lutheran saints seem to fall into oblivion after their death - or already earlier. Only a few of them (like Trelund) were included in the collections of edifying Lives which were recycled time and again until the nineteenth century, but even they were not invoked as saints. They were just examples for a Holiness of Life - quite appropriately for a book religion they were immortalized in the form of literature.

(7) There is no apparent interest in relics. No pieces of clothes or other items belonging to the saint are taken home.¹⁰³

(8) Prophets occasionally receive objects as signs, but these are not treated as holy objects.¹⁰⁴ Holy objects in Lutheranism are restricted, for the most part, to

⁹⁶ Cf. Lanz 1951; Omez 1975; Zarri 1990/1992:116f.; Kellner 1994-96.

⁹⁷ Cf. Schleyer 1962; Schmucki 1964; Zarri 1990/1992:51-60, 109; Dinzelsbacher 1996.

⁹⁸ The prophet George Reichard, whose career led him away from mainstream Lutheranism, had a number of followers, but these were scattered through various towns in the Lutheran countries (Beyer 1999a). On the disciples of Catholic saints cf. Zarri 1990/1992:124; Vauchez 1997:623.

⁹⁹ Mulder-Bakker 1995b:232f., 236; Petrakopoulos 1995:264; Angenendt 1994/1997:55-68.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Mulder-Bakker & Madou 1995.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Scharfe 1969:103. The claim that a saint's tomb necessarily forms the centre of his veneration (Lanczkowski 1985a) certainly does not apply to Lutheranism, nor, for example, for the Virgin Mary.

¹⁰² Brückner 1988-90a; Zschoch 1994:40f.

¹⁰³ With the exception of Luther; long after his death objects connected to him were used as relics (Scribner 1986/1987a:312f.; id. 1986/1987b:351).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. the ring received by a living saint in Italy which was later treated as a relic in a monastery (Zarri 1990/1992:158, n. 257).

incombustible images of Luther or other objects connected to the Reformer,¹⁰⁵ or to incombustible copies of Johann Arndt's prayer-book *Paradiesgärtlein*.¹⁰⁶

(9) The place of an apparition does not become sacred. No chapel is built, no cross erected, no pilgrimage started. The closest one can get to holy places are miraculous wells¹⁰⁷ and votive churches,¹⁰⁸ but these are not connected to living saints.

(10) In the material concerning Lutheran saints there is no evidence of holy time.¹⁰⁹ Some evidence for this can, however, be found in the cases of miraculous wells and votive churches, since a number of these seem to have been visited more frequently at some times, for example around the feast of St. John (24 June), than at others.¹¹⁰

During the eighteenth century, under the influence of pietism and even more so the Enlightenment, Lutheran theologians lost interest in saints and the miraculous, rejecting them as papist errors or superstitions of the populace. In the course of time the appeal of these phenomena to lay people also disappeared to a large extent.

Historians and folklorists studying Lutheranism before 1700, however, should be aware that the received opinion of that period is largely coloured by two traditions: Pietist writing of ecclesiastical history defamed Lutheran orthodoxy as spiritless and litigious.¹¹¹ The impact of the Enlightenment and subsequent waves of secularization led to new forms of theology and church life adapted to modern

¹⁰⁵ Scribner 1986/1987b.

¹⁰⁶ Messerli 1997.

¹⁰⁷ Miraculous wells flourished after the Reformation. In many cases, there is no evidence of a continuity of medieval practices (Andersen 1985; Weiterer Bericht ... 1646). Miraculous wells found the support of Lutheran theologians who argued that God had provided the water with healing qualities. As long as all thanks was given to God and no undue rituals were performed, there was nothing to object to (Arvidsson 1991). The local clergy placed alms boxes at the wells and kept accounts of the income (Schmidt 1926:52-55).

¹⁰⁸ From about 1650 to 1725, the clergy encouraged people to give offerings at especially designated churches (normally rather small and with a low income) if one wanted a prayer to be heard or to give thanks for a prayer that had been granted. After about 1725, however, the clergy began to distance themselves from the practice which now increasingly was being regarded as superstitious (Sundberg 1989). While the most thorough research has been done on Sweden (Sundberg 1989; Bringéus 1997; cf. also Berg 1882:234), this custom is also documented for most other Lutheran countries (Henningesen 1950:47f.; Eriksen 1986, 1991-92, 1995; Simolin 1909:307f.; Andree 1911:117-119).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Kolb 1987:149; Scribner 1990:324f.

¹¹⁰ Riddermarck & Fonthelius 1694:B4v; Simolin 1909:307f.

¹¹¹ I shall only mention the seminal work of Arnold 1699-1700/1740-42.

society. Unfortunately, the image of contemporary Protestantism has often been projected back on earlier centuries, for example, when the roots of modern society were searched for in the Reformation¹¹² or when beliefs encountered by folklorists among the rural population were interpreted as survivals of medieval or pagan practices.

A study of the period from 1550 to 1700 should seek to understand early modern Lutherans by taking account of their own mental universe which included conceptions of holiness radically different from those of later periods.

¹¹² Cf. Scribner 1992-93.

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Abbreviations

EM: Enzyklopädie des Märchens
 LThK: Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche
 NTL: Nordisk teologisk leksikon
 TRE: Theologische Realenzyklopädie

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