

The Reality of Early Lutheran Education

The Electoral District of Saxony – a Case Study

By Susan C. Karant-Nunn

However much I appreciate Martin Luther's and Philipp Melanchthon's energetic advocacy of education, I cannot resist asking, their inspired prose aside, to what degree we may regard the Lutheran Reformation as an impetus to educate society? Were Luther's treatises of 1524 and 1530 indeed seminal, resulting in an unprecedented flowering of hitherto dormant young intellects across Germany and beyond, as has been claimed?¹ By and large, those authors who have made or implied such claims have confined themselves to the reformers' expositions on education plus such documentary evidence as »Instructions for the visitors of parish pastors in Electoral Saxony«, 1528,² and the school ordinances of the sixteenth century.³ They usually also cast a glance in the direction of the visitation protocols, but they seem to find in these detailed accounts the fulfillment of their sanguine expectations.⁴

RKVS K DIE REGISTRATUREN DER KIRCHENVISITATIONEN IM EHEMALS SÄCHSISCHEN KURKREISE/ bearb. von Karl Pallas. 7 Bde. Halle 1906–1918.

- 1 There is a sizable pertinent literature. The following are examples of it: Gustav Marius BRUCE: Luther as an educator. MP 1928; Heinrich HEPPE: Geschichte des deutschen Volksschulwesens. Vol. 1. Gotha 1858; HEPPE: Das Schulwesen des Mittelalters und dessen Reform im 16. Jahrhundert. Marburg 1860; Georg MERTZ: Das Schulwesen der deutschen Reformation im 16. Jahrhundert. HD 1902; Klaus GOEBEL: Luther als Reformator der Schule. In: Luther in der Schule/ ed. by Klaus Goebel. Bochum 1985, 7–25. Thomas NIPPERDEY: Luther und die Bildung der Deutschen. In: Luther und die Folgen: Beiträge zur sozialgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der lutherischen Reformation/ ed. by Hartmut Löwe und Claus-Jürgen Roepke. M 1983, 27, admits the danger that a researcher's confessional commitment may result in the exaggeration of Luther's role.
- 2 UNTERRICHT DER VISITATOREN AN DIE PFARRHERRN IM KURFÜRSTENTUM SACHSEN, 1528; WA 26, (175) 195–240. 655 $\triangle$ StA 3, (402) 406–462 $\triangle$ Am 40, 263–320.
- 3 DIE EVANGELISCHEN SCHULORDNUNGEN DES SECHZEHNTEH JAHRHUNDERTS/ ed. by Reinhold Vormbaum. GÜ 1860.
- 4 Goebel does observe, »Luthers Gedanken zur Schule und Erziehung sind teils verhallt, teils auf

A few scholars are beginning to examine the protocols more dispassionately. Hans Georg Kirchhoff ended a recent study of the Duchy of Jülich and the Electorate of Cologne with the comment, »The systematic investigation of the visitations of the sixteenth century for purposes of [uncovering the] history of schooling is an urgent desideratum«. ⁵ Such scrutiny has already begun to alter our views of the Reformation. It is precisely his close reading of the visitation protocols that led Gerald Strauss to declare that the Reformation in Germany won no »widespread, meaningful, and lasting response to its message. ... The evidence of the visitation records leaves no escape from this conclusion.« ⁶ When I was invited to give this address and had to decide how in a short time to make a contribution to so venerable a field as the history of German education, I determined to do a case study of the spread of education, using the protocols as my magnifying glass. Whereas Strauss's book was a broad overview of Germany, I would look closely at one part of one territory and try to ascertain how well the evidence sustained his rather pessimistic conclusions.

This is not a novel ploy. In 1982 James Kittelson did exactly this, drawing on the visitation records from Strasbourg and surround. ⁷ Kittelson refuted Strauss's contention that the Reformation as originally envisioned by Luther and his close associates had failed to win the people. Kittelson was not approaching the question from the angle of education as I am here, but Strauss found that the major purpose of Lutheran education, beyond acquainting the populace with the basic tenets of the faith, was to turn parishioners into moral, obedient citizens. Thus, theoretically at least, if one failed, the other failed with it. The education of children and the hoped-for transformation of behavior were not seen to be separate phenomena. In a subsequent article, Strauss has made the connection between education and behavior clearer. ⁸

Umwegen weitergeführt, teils in neue Formen gebracht und teils mit anderen Intentionen verschmolzen worden« (Luther als Reformator ..., 23).

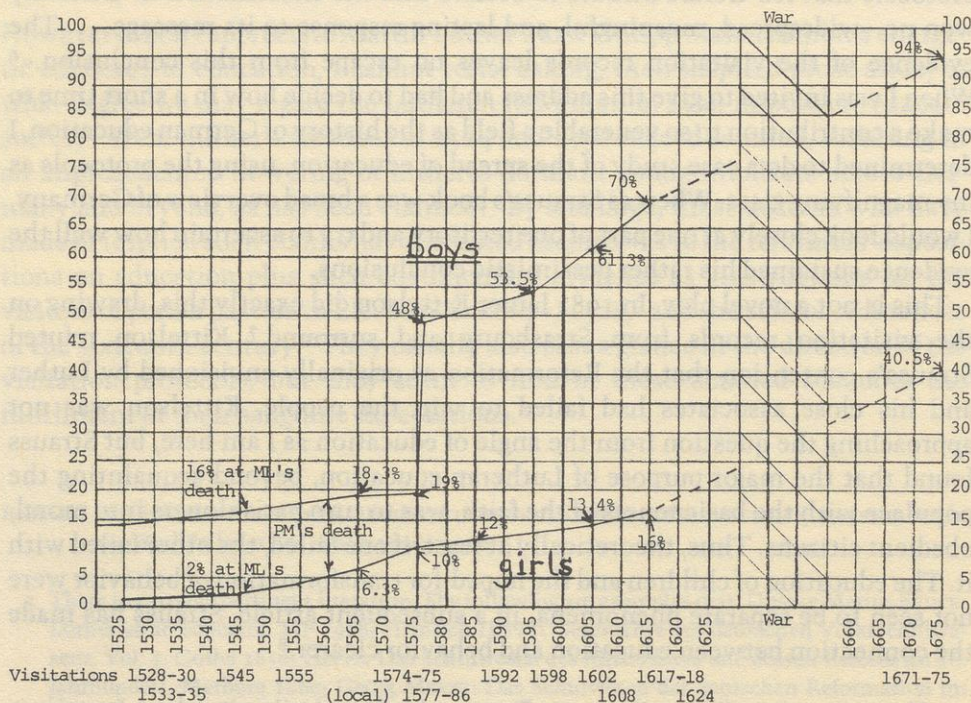
5 Hans Georg KIRCHHOFF: Kirchspiels- und Küsterschulen in der Reformationszeit: das niedere Schulwesen im Spiegel von Visitationsberichten des 16. Jahrhunderts. In: Luther in der Schule, 147. In the same volume, see also Günther WARTENBERG: Visitationen des Schulwesens im albertinischen Sachsen zwischen 1540 und 1580, 55-78.

6 Gerald STRAUSS: Luther's house of learning: indoctrination of the young in the German Reformation. Baltimore, LO 1978, 307f.

7 James KITTELSON: Successes and failures in the German Reformation: the report from Strasbourg. ARG 73 (1982), 153-175.

8 Gerald STRAUSS: The social function of schools in the Lutheran Reformation in Germany.

Mine is a case study of the Electoral District (Kurkreis) of Saxony from 1520 up to 1671-1675, when the last thorough parish visitation of the seventeenth century was carried out.⁹ It does not necessarily call into question what Kittelson has written. It is a cliché that every city, every territory was unique in the way it reacted to the challenge of reform. However, the Electoral District of Saxony is especially pertinent because Luther and Melanchthon lived out their



Percentage of parishes with licensed schools teaching reading
Electoral District of Saxony, 1525-1675 (borders of 1546 – source: RKVSK)

Number of parishes for which we have information, 1528-1626: 142.

Number of parishes for which we have information, 1671-1675: 84.

History of education quarterly 28 (Bloomington, IN 1988) no. 2, 191-206. For a related discussion, see Gerald STRAUSS: The Reformation and its public in an age of Orthodoxy. In: The German people and the Reformation/ ed. by R. Po-chia Hsia. Ithaca, NY 1988, 194-214.

⁹ RKVSK.

careers here and had in the persons of a succession of Wettin rulers strong champions of their pedagogical opinions. What were Martin Luther and his spiritual heirs able to accomplish at home?

In the space allotted to me, I shall confine myself to commenting upon the accompanying graph. In compiling the data on which this graph is based, I have carefully distinguished between *catechetical instruction*, carried out once or twice a week by sextons and in theory directed toward the entire population of town and countryside, and *schools* (even though presided over by the sextons) meeting six days a week and designed to teach children to read. The sources make this distinction altogether clear. Catechetical lessons did not produce schools, though all schools included the study of Luther's Small catechism in their curricula. In this age of gender awareness, I am also going to treat boys' and girls' education separately. The reality of a girl's education was often very different from that of a boy's, and I have a number of specific observations to make about the tutelage of girls.

I Boys

The accompanying graph gives an impression of validating the assertions that have been made concerning Luther's profound impact on German education. The visitation protocols, however, reveal much more than can be presented to the eye in this manner. I would like to offer a number of qualifications, some of which are known to us but some of which, so far as the literature shows, are evidently not.

1. In the larger towns, there were already schools for boys, one or two possibly dating as far back as the thirteenth century. Humanism, arriving well before the Reformation, promoted education, and a humanist curriculum was already in place in many boys' grammar schools. Other existing urban schools offered instruction in the German language, and some combined German and Latin studies, usually in that order. During the first general parish visitation, or earlier if city fathers were spontaneously receptive to the Reformation, these schools were converted into centers that inculcated youth with Lutheran doctrine. Teaching in German was eliminated, and catechism was simply added to a stock humanist curriculum. During the century and a half under investigation, this curriculum was not eradicated, though it was gradually modified. The nature of these modifications would be a fruitful line of research.

2. Hardly any new schools at all – three, to be as exact as the visitation records permit – were founded by Luther's death, and only perhaps three more by Melancthon's demise in 1560. Thus, if we limit our purview to the Reformation era narrowly defined, there was little expansion of education. Up until 1577, no more schools were founded than one might expect in an age in which both printing and the burgher class were increasing their spheres.

3. These existing schools, now in the late 1520s taken over for the Reformation, were not popular outside that small urban class of men that found humanist values sympathetic, that is, only to patricians, comfortably off merchants, doctors and lawyers, and a few of the most successful and ambitious artisan masters. People outside this category did not want this kind of education for their sons either before or after the Reformation.

4. The German-language schools that members of the non-elite either were or might have been drawn to were not officially condoned in the cities of Saxony – though they were in many cities in western Germany. Because of demand, they often sprang up, but the parish visitors continually ordered them abolished. Luther believed that the only education worth having was in Latin with a good admixture of Greek and Hebrew so that one could understand the original biblical texts.¹⁰ Even future craftsmen, he said, should submit themselves to this course of study.¹¹

5. The elimination of city-sponsored education in the German language further emphasized the growing division in Saxon cities between patricians and their emulators and non-patricians. Ordinary craftsmen saw no purpose to be served by a classical education. They resorted to unlicensed *Winkelschulen*, or they contented themselves with apprenticeship or other practical tuition for their sons.

6. After the visitation of 1575, Elector August was persuaded of the desirability of using education even in the peasant villages to imbue the peasantry with Lutheran and statist values. If the state had not compelled sextons to teach, sudden growth in the number of schools would not have occurred. This increase

10 An die Rathherren aller Städte deutschen Lands, daß sie christliche Schulen aufrichten und halten sollen, 1524; WA 15, 36, 6 - 37, 16 ≙ To the councilmen of all cities in Germany that they establish and maintain Christian schools; Am 45, 357f.

11 Eine Predigt, daß man Kinder zur Schule halten solle, 1530; WA 30 II, 546, 22-28 ≙ A sermon on keeping children in school; Am 46, 231f.

took place by fiat during the local visitations of 1577-1578. It was not, as has often been asserted, a result of the promulgation of the Saxon Schulordnung of 1580.¹²

7. When the Saxon Schulordnung of 1580 was drafted, it relied on a southwest German ordinance, that of 1559 for Württemberg.¹³ Just as Saxony had moved out of the vanguard of religious reform, so it had long since ceased to provide a model for Protestant education. The move toward literacy was stronger and took place earlier in southwest Germany than it did farther east.

8. During the local visitations of 1577-1586, rural sextons were ordered to instruct boys in reading and if possible in writing, using Luther's Small catechism, Psalms, Proverbs, and a few other devotional works as their texts. Many of these sextons were unqualified for the task, and one can imagine what caliber of schools they presided over. In 1617 in Rahnsdorf, the visitors remarked, »The sexton cannot write well but diligently holds school«.¹⁴

9. The late sixteenth century consequently witnessed an evolution in the requirements for the position of sexton. Sextons as a group advanced from the status of »dishonorable« linenweavers to full participants in the ecclesiastical cursus honorum.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, many, though not all, sextons were willing to undertake the teaching of children. If nothing else, they could appreciate the pecuniary advantages that were pointed out to them. Very often such gains proved illusory.

10. Rural folk overwhelmingly, though not without exception, resisted sending their children to school. As a bizarre consequence of the electoral fiat, some parishes were now considered to have schoolmasters (the sextons) and schools but no pupils at all! In compiling my statistics, I did not count »schools« that had absolutely no pupils. Many other sextons taught one, two, or three boys, and so we must be cautious in regarding the statistic that 70% of parishes had boys' schools before the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, or that 94% had them by 1675. In reality, even if the three Fürstenschulen are taken into account, only a few hundred boys attended school in the Electoral District of Saxony at any

12 Die evangelischen Schulordnungen ..., 230-297.

13 Die evangelischen Schulordnungen ..., 68-165.

14 RKVSK. Abt. 2, Teil 2. 1907, 544.

15 Armin TILLE: Zur Ehrlichmachung der sächsischen Leineweber. Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte und Altertumskunde 27 (1906), 331-335.

given time during the sixteenth century. Even during the late seventeenth century, village schools with five or six or seven pupils were not at all unusual. These low attendance figures by no means encompass the group of eligible children of a village. The matter of interpreting the visitors' imprecise figures of the numbers of communicants and calculating population still requires scholarly attention, however.

11. Where peasant parents sent their children to school, they sent them very, very irregularly, and then almost exclusively within a period stretching from mid-November to Easter or from Christmas to Easter. But even during the winter, few children came. The visitors noted in Zahna in 1617, »Conditions in the school are deplorable. Parents send their children either not at all or once in two weeks. ... The schoolteachers [schoolmaster and cantor] report that in the last eight weeks they have had only four pupils, and the cantor has had to sing [in church] the whole time with only two boys.«¹⁶ Otherwise, small children were employed in the herding of animals. The visitors' threats were mainly ineffective in changing parents' behavior. Notwithstanding, it appears that by the late seventeenth century more children went to school briefly in the wintertime, and school officials grudgingly came to regard a summer break as inevitable. Parents and teachers had hardly achieved a *modus vivendi*, however; they continued vigorously to dispute whether children should go to school in spring and fall and whether they should attend regularly at any time.

12. Schoolchildren were characteristically very young, between four and eight years old, and, it seems, perpetually at the level of learning their ABC. The reformers considered youngsters of four and five too little yet for school, and one suspects peasant families of sending them over to the sexton's house to get them out from underfoot. If the youngsters could acquire some bookish knowledge before they were of an age to be economically useful, then so be it.

13. Between visitations many village schools went out of existence. Still, more were founded than died out, and so the curve of the graph continues to rise. Unreliable oversight of the schools between visitations rendered the quality and even the continuance of education most uncertain.

14. Writing was thought a separate and more advanced skill than reading. Writing was taught only to a minority of those who went to rural schools. Of parents who allowed their children book learning at all, most regarded the

16 RKVSK. Abt. 2, Teil 2, 412.

alphabet and a little reading, enough to decipher a personal letter, as sufficient. Higher tuition, sometimes double tuition, was charged for teaching a child to write. Sextons who served their communities as scribes – as many did – did not want others in the parish to learn to write; they might become rival scribes. My graph is of schools that taught reading precisely because many schools did not offer writing.

15. All schoolmasters charged some sort of tuition (Schulgeld), ranging from 1 Pfennig a week in 1577 to 6 Pfennige a century later. However modest these sums, they further discouraged a poor, overtaxed, and unmotivated rural populace from sending their children to school. The visitors themselves often commented on the extreme poverty they encountered among the people, and, of course, among the sexton-schoolmasters too. In towns a few scholarships were available for »poor« boys, but apart from these, schulgeld provided another disincentive to artisanal and laboring classes to send their offspring to school.

16. It is obvious that under the circumstances described above, where only a handful of rural children stayed in school or, if not that, came frequently enough to learn ABCs, and where sextons themselves through most of the sixteenth century had only rudimentary literary skills, Latin could not be taught. The reformers may have disdained German-language schools as inadequate to the attainment of their goals, but German-language schools is what they got. As far as Saxony is concerned, German popular education was not available because the reformers desired it, but because they could not avoid getting it. Education in German was the only kind that was acceptable and possible for inhabitants of the countryside, and, as we have seen, to few enough of those. By 1577 the visitors tolerated German for villages, but they never relaxed their insistence on Latin for the cities. Their relenting in the countryside was the product of their confrontation with grim reality. Their ideal remained: boys must be educated in Latin.

17. In urban Latin schools, the curriculum became broader and more demanding as the pupil advanced from one class to another. By contrast, offerings in the country were spare. Children must have been bored to the point of recalcitrance. Doubtless, some children managed to avoid school because it was a disagreeable experience. Through sheer repetition, children were expected to master Luther's Small catechism, some Psalms, some »pretty Proverbs« (Schöne Sprüche) including some from Ecclesiasticus, prayers and several of Luther's songs. Year in and year out, this was the substance of rural education. These

were the textbooks of reading. The minority who went on to writing learned to compose letters with the accepted salutations, stock internal phrases, and complimentary closes of the day. The conventions of correspondence, like sumptuary laws, reinforced class differences.

18. The method of teaching and of measuring success was rote memorization. The visitors of Schildau parish noted without amazement in 1671 that the »biggest boys« in the school could recite »the complete Gospels in German from memory«.¹⁷ The extreme emphasis on memorization militated against true literacy. If »Johnny« in mid-twentieth-century America could not read, neither could »Hänschen« in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Saxony, but for different reasons. The visitors heard numerous stories of boys' having attended school for years and not learned to read. In Neussen in 1671, the people complained »about the schoolmaster that he neglects their children: people who have gone to school [here] in the last twenty-one years and grown up here could not read even a letter [Brief] perfectly«.¹⁸ In Pratau in 1617, residents reported that even boys who had gone to school for four years could not read.¹⁹ Or, the visitors occasionally discovered, as in Stechau in 1671, that after generations of having a school in their midst, no one in the entire village could read a single word.²⁰ This may have been partly a result of irregular attendance and negligent pedagogy. Or people who as children had acquired a very elementary literacy may have lost it as years passed without opportunity to apply their skill. But the method of teaching posed a problem of its own. When the sexton drilled the few villagers who submitted to the separate catechism classes on Sunday and other afternoons, he read out or recited over and over again the selected portion of Luther's summary of the faith. Sheer repetition was supposed to engrave the message in each listener's brain. Very likely the sexton used this same technique without reflection when facing young children in the setting of the schoolroom: he told them what was on the paper in front of them, and they memorized it. Hence, they did not learn to read.

17 RKVSK. Abt. 2, Teil 4. 1911, 479.

18 RKVSK. Abt. 2, Teil 4, 456.

19 RKVSK. Abt. 2, Teil 1. 1906, 153.

20 RKVSK. Abt. 2, Teil 6. 1918, 156.

II Girls

Luther advocated only enough education for girls to enable them to be submissive, conformist wives and mothers, wives who knew their God-intended place in subordination to their husbands, and mothers who could promote godly virtues among their children within the home. In »To the councilmen of all cities in Germany that they establish and maintain Christian schools«, February 1524, he opined, »This one consideration alone would be sufficient to justify the establishment everywhere of the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order to maintain its temporal estate outwardly the world must have good and capable men and women, men able to rule well over land and people, women able to manage the household and train children and servants aright. Now such men must come from our boys, and such women from our girls. Therefore, it is a matter of properly educating and training our boys and girls to that end.«²¹ He regarded women as having a limited intellectual capacity, but not so limited that they should not read. He paid his wife 50 Gulden to read the entire Bible. Katherine, it must be added, had learned to read in the convent where she had been a nun. After the Reformation, such schools were scarcely ever allowed to continue.

As in the case of the boys, I should like to make several qualifying and elucidating remarks about the picture that the graph draws of girls' education in Saxony.

1. There were throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries far fewer schools where girls could learn than schools where boys could. Girls' education is barely mentioned in the famous Schulordnung of 1580, and girls did not share in the benefits of the electoral campaign of 1577 to 1586 to establish schools in the villages. Looking across the population of the Electoral District of Saxony as a whole, we note that boys' and girls' levels of access to education approached each other most closely in 1575, when 19% of parishes had boys' schools and just under 10% had them for girls. Thereafter the boys pulled dramatically ahead. Girls made steady gains but remained 53½% behind boys in 1675, as compared with 54% behind boys on the threshold of the Thirty Years' War.

2. Although statistics on this subject can probably never be compiled, the general disruption in education at every level caused by the onset of the Reformation

21 Am 45, 368 $\triangle$ WA 15, 44, 26-33.

mation was soon amended for boys but not for girls. Few girls received formal education before the Reformation in Saxony, but even fewer enjoyed it immediately after the religious movement burst upon the scene. Nearly every conventual school, mainly the resort of noble daughters, went out of existence. Of greater consequence for ordinary citizens, those aforementioned Winkelschulen, where girls often learned either separate from or alongside small boys, and where women taught, were prohibited, displacing females in two ways. As said earlier, particularly between visitations these Winkelschulen managed to assert themselves again despite authorities' concerted efforts. We possess no data on these. Until the 1570s, opportunities for girls to gain an education were probably fewer than they had been before the Reformation.

3. The Reformation actively confined what girls could study to catechism, other devotional literature, reading, writing, and perhaps a little reckoning. These subjects made up the broadest curriculum for Saxon girls. The slenderest curriculum consisted of recitation and memorization of catechism, prayers, Psalms, and songs – not just twice a week for an hour or so as in the catechism classes, but for four to six hours a day.

4. The indoctrination of girls – and rural boys, too – frequently included the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, or The Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach, composed in the second century B.C. I had noticed long before undertaking the present study that Heinrich Krämer and Jakob Sprenger, the authors of »The Hammer of witches« (*Malleus maleficarum*), found in this source many misogynist quotations, and so the Saxon visitors' inclusion of Ecclesiasticus in the very constricted girls' curriculum, where it was not traditional, impressed me. The reformers were unable to dispense with this non-canonical book. Luther remarked in his preface to Ecclesiasticus in 1533, »It is a useful book for the common man, for its whole purpose is to make a citizen or father of the family [hausvater] godfearing, pious and sensible, and to teach him how he ought to behave toward God, God's word, priests, parents, wife, children, his own body, his property, servants, neighbors, friends, those in authority, and everybody else. One could well call it a book about household discipline, or about the virtues of a pious head of household, in other words, about what is and should be called proper spiritual behavior [rechte geistliche zucht].«²²

22. WA DB 12, 146, 16-22.

The visitors' wording makes it appear that the girls became acquainted with the entire book, although in some cases aphorisms may have been selected for them. We have no basis for assuming, even in the latter instance, that the following passages were omitted:

»I would sooner share a home with a lion or a snake
than keep house with a spiteful wife.
Her spite changes her expression,
making her look as surly as a bear.
Her husband goes to a neighbour for his meals
and cannot repress a bitter sigh.

There is nothing so bad as a bad wife;
may the fate of the wicked overtake her!
It is as easy for an old man to climb a sand-dune
as for a quiet husband to live with a nagging wife.
Do not be enticed by a woman's beauty
or set your heart on possessing her.
If a man is supported by his wife
he must expect tantrums, shamelessness, and outrage.
A bad wife brings humiliation,
downcast looks, and a wounded heart.
Slack of hand and weak of knee
is the man whose wife fails to make him happy.
Woman is the origin of sin,
and it is through her that we all die.
Do not leave a leaky cistern to drip
or allow a bad wife to say what she likes.
If she does not accept your control,
divorce her and send her away.²³

...

A bad wife is a chafing yoke;
controlling her is like clutching a scorpion.
A drunken wife is a great provocation;
she cannot keep her excesses secret.

A loose woman betrays herself by her bold looks;
you can tell her by her glance.
Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter;

23 Sir 25, 16-26. The translation is from »The new English Bible with the Apocrypha« (Oxford, Cambridge 1970).

if she finds you of your guard, she will take her chance.
Beware of her impudent looks
and do not be surprised if she disobeys you.
As a parched traveller with his tongue hanging out
drinks from any spring that offers,
she will open her arms to every embrace,
and her quiver to the arrow.

...

A silent wife is a gift from the Lord;
her restraint is more than money can buy.
A modest wife has charm upon charm;
no scales can weigh the worth of her chastity.
As beautiful as the sunrise in the Lord's heaven
is a good wife in a well-ordered home.²⁴

A daughter is a secret anxiety to her father,
and the worry of her keeps him awake at night;
when she is young, for fear she may grow too old to marry,
and when she is married, for fear she may lose her husband's love,
when she is a virgin, for fear she may be seduced
and become pregnant in her father's house;
when she has a husband, for fear she may misbehave,
and after marriage, for fear she may be barren.
Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter,
or she may give your enemies cause to gloat,
making you the talk of the town and a byword among the people,
and shaming you in the eyes of the world.
Do not let her display her beauty to any man,
or gossip in the women's quarters.
For out of clothes comes the moth,
and out of woman comes woman's wickedness.
Better a man's wickedness than a woman's goodness;
it is woman who brings shame and disgrace.²⁵

Small children of both sexes in rural schools, and girls in urban ones, were imbued with the belief that women were talkative, volatile, morally weak, and inclined to try to bring men down from their station of stability, strength, and dignity. The good woman was supposed to be married, faithful, fertile, submissive, smiling, light-hearted, modest, domestic, diligent, and silent. The Luther-

24 Sir 26, 7-12. 14-16.

25 Sir 42, 9-14.

an schoolroom was the scene of the active propagation of ancient and medieval notions of women's inferiority and of reformed ideas concerning her submission to her husband and confinement to the domestic sphere.

5. Where girls' teachers were separate individuals from boys' teachers, as they were in larger towns, they were paid less than any boys' teacher. In town and country alike, they were heavily reliant on tuition rather than the salaries, paid from community chest or civic treasury, that supported boys' teachers. I take this as clear evidence of society's lower estimation of education for girls. It was dispensable. Dependence on tuition and the absence of scholarships, together with prevailing attitudes, doubtless meant that at least in the cities, girls as a group were from a higher socio-economic class than boys as a group. In Schlieben in 1672, girls' tuition was double that of boys.²⁶ If tuition were not forthcoming from the girls' families and the teachers were forced to seek their living in more gainful employment, people were not intolerably distressed.

6. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some patricians' and nobles' daughters received private instruction either from tutors or from schoolmasters themselves during their leisure hours.

7. The instruction of girls was always carried on in German. Girls were not to be introduced to the classics. In the countryside, where there were neither able sextons nor consistently attending children, boys' and girls' curricula were identical. Very often the sextons had no alternative to teaching boys and girls together. For purposes of drawing the graph, where rural schools were essentially coeducational, I have counted one school for girls and one for boys.

8. The education of both sexes in the same room did not offend peasants. The researches of Natalie Davis, Martha Howell, Merry Wiesner, me, and increasing others have shown that especially in towns during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a tendency to separate the sexes and to withdraw females from public life.²⁷ In the hamlets of Saxony, where the traditional

²⁶ RKVSK. Abt. 2, Teil 6, 46. 50.

²⁷ Natalie Zemon DAVIS: *Women on top*. In: *Society and culture in early modern France*. Stanford, CA 1975, 126; Martha C. HOWELL: *Women, the family economy, and the structures of market production in cities of northern Europe during the Late Middle Ages*. In: *Women and work in preindustrial Europe*/ ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt. Bloomington, IN 1986, esp. 213-216; Susan C. KARANT-NUNN: *The women of the Saxon silver mines*. In: *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: public and private worlds*/ ed. by Sherrin Marshall. Bloomington, IN, forthcoming in 1989; Merry E. WIESNER: *Working women in Renaissance Germany*. New Brunswick, NJ 1986, 187-200.

agrarian existence absolutely required the participation of both men and women, the sexes continued to labor side by side. Parish visitors, carrying their urban and official outlook into the villages, tried in vain throughout this period to separate men and women, boys and girls. They raged and threatened, but men and women went on dancing together, drinking together, and generally sharing most aspects of life.

9. Women occupied a higher position in rural society than in urban. A high proportion of pupils in the country schools open to them were girls, and where writing was taught, many girls acquired this level of literacy. By contrast, the ratio of girls to boys in the cities was always lower. Few reliable numbers for both sexes are given in the visitation protocols, and most of these date from the visitation of 1672. These few data are nonetheless instructive. In that year, in the eight towns of Prettin, Jessen, Schweinitz, Herzberg, Schönewalde, Liebenwerda, Übigau, and Schlieben, there were a total of 199 girls and 439 boys in school, or 31% girls to 69% boys. But in thirty-three villages for which the information is given, there were in all approximately 246 girls and 277 boys, or 47% girls to 53% boys. This is a strikingly close correspondence between the two sexes. However, there were forty-four other village schools in which either exclusively boys learned or the sex of the pupils is not identified. I suspect that the word »children« designates boys *and* girls, but I cannot prove as much. Thus, we cannot regard rural education and rural parents as unobservant of gender differences. Still, we may conclude that where the classroom was open to girls, they attended — they were allowed to attend — in nearly as great numbers as boys.

10. In the *cities* of the Electoral District of Saxony, education widened the intellectual and therefore also the communicative gap between boys and girls; educated boys' and girls' mental worlds diverged. In many *villages*, educated children of both sexes shared essentially the same experience in the classroom, and in a similar proportion to their untutored fellow citizens. Future research could well assess the effects of markedly contrasting educational content on relations between the sexes in the cities. The shallowness of their course of study perpetuated the view in reformed society that females remained children, and it conditioned them to accept subordination and restriction to the domestic arena. Boys' education prepared members of the male sex to esteem themselves and to take part in public life — public life hierarchically conceived, of course.

III Conclusion

This paper could have been subtitled »What a graph does not show«. The visitation protocols from the Electoral District of Saxony compel me to conclude that the mere founding of schools in most parishes before the end of the seventeenth century did not mean that teachers were of satisfactory caliber, that children enrolled in them, that those who did learned to read (much less to write), or that the religious instruction included in the course of study made them »think, feel, and act as Christians«. It may be that in the larger towns, where the inhabitants were easily kept under surveillance and their lives more consistently molded, the schools' attainments more closely approached authorities' goals than in the villages. The environment was different in town and countryside. In the latter setting, the visitors vented their disappointment and displeasure again and again. Their findings sometimes shocked them, as in Zwethau in 1672, when the new schoolmaster informed them that some of his pupils, boys of »ten, eleven, twelve years and more«, did not know whether they were baptised or even if they were Christians.²⁸

By the end of the seventeenth century, long, long after the Reformation era, the reformers' objectives were still very short of realization. Having said that, I am willing to concede an impression gained from the visitation protocols that peasants were gradually growing accustomed to the presence of schools. They realized by 1675 that schoolmasters and their activities were not going to disappear. I have a sense of a few more parents sending their young children to learn to read in 1675 than in 1575, but such a sense needs verification from demographic data, and these are largely lacking. We are all aware of the disastrous effects of the Thirty Years' War on the German population, and many Saxon villages had been destroyed or badly mauled by Swedish armies.²⁹ Consequently, three or four children attending school in 1672 may represent a higher percentage of the eligible age group than ten or twelve had a century earlier. Or the presence of girls may have swelled classes in 1672 that only boys had audited in 1575. Many unanswered questions remain.

It is apparent that outside of cities, though a few parents were enthusiastic, the degree of progress made in schooling young people by the late seventeenth

28 RKVSK. Abt. 2, Teil 3. 1908, 390.

29 See the map of German population loss in Henry KAMEN: *The iron century: social change in Europe 1550-1650*. NY 1972, 43.

century depended upon state insistence. Indeed, it may even have depended upon compulsion: the visitors often threatened to punish parents who kept their children out of school, and sometimes they ordered the Schösser actually to impose penalties. Whether these officials did as they were commanded is unknown. Whether or no, princely decree did ultimately effect the availability of instruction in all but the most backward hamlets.

As for the towns, it is regrettable that we do not possess the kinds of information on which David Cressy was able to base his study of literacy in Tudor and Stuart England, showing differences among social ranks, skilled trades, and geographic regions.³⁰ The Saxon visitors ordered parish registers to be kept, but they infrequently were, and most of the few that were have disappeared. Had they survived, we might have attempted to gauge the growth of literacy.

Finally, it is evident to me from the visitation protocols that the dissemination of schooling and basic literacy was not only slower in coming than many have liked to think, but also that it was taken advantage of by a more restricted segment of the population, no doubt mainly by the better off citizens of town and village. How can we in good conscience credit to the Reformation schools founded three, four, or more generations after its conclusion? Or do we mean that the Reformation had no end? The conditions that fostered boys' and girls' tutelage were varied and complex, and in compiling a list of them, we would need to take into account, besides the wishes of Luther and Melancthon, the needs of the authoritarian state, developments in agriculture and the rural economy, relations between town and hamlet, the wider availability of printed matter, and new religious currents such as Pietism. In the end, I must agree with Strauss that, in the Electoral District of Saxony at least, the Reformation failed to make all people »think, feel, and act as Christians, to imbue them with a Christian mind-set, motivational drive, and way of life.«³¹ The visitation protocols are indeed compelling evidence. Has any movement, however revolutionary, succeeded in attaining such ambitious, such all-comprehending goals as these?

It is curious, as Klaus Goebel has observed, that the theme of Luther and education was neglected in 1983.³² It is high time that new histories of late

30 David CRESSY: *Literacy and the social order: reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England*. Cambridge 1980, esp. 143-163.

31 Strauss: *Luther's house* . . . , 307.

32 Klaus GOEBEL: *Daß man Kinder zur Schule halten soll: Vorwort*. In: *Luther in der Schule*, 5.

medieval and early modern German schools and schooling were written. Their authors will use sources other than evangelical school ordinances and printed curricula – and indeed, sources other than visitation acts: they will be willing, too, to process archival minutiae. I hope that these new histories will elucidate the following questions: (1) What was the actual social, political, moral and ethical content of items listed in the various curricula? We who have not enjoyed a classical education may have to read Quintilian, Cicero, and Terence for the first time in addition to Ecclesiasticus and the texts of Lutheran songs. What values, in other words, did education attempt to convey to children? (2) Who set the curricula, and how did their content relate to the framers' ideals and aspirations? How to prospective pupils' and their families'? (3) What were the differences between the curricula of urban schools and rural schools? Between boys' schools and girls' schools? Why were they different? (4) What implications for education did the fact have that many Germans were part of a still prevalently oral culture? How did methods of instruction either facilitate or impede the transition to a visual culture? What effects did such a transition have upon popular culture? (5) How did early Lutheran education compare to Catholic? Zwinglian? Anabaptist? Anglican? Calvinist? Are we justified in treating Lutheran education as a distinct category? (6) What was the relationship between reading and writing? Between reading and economic life? What benefits did schooling confer upon the child? (7) Would it be fruitful to look to other times and places for ideas and methodologies that could be applied to early modern Germany?

I confess to an inclination to answer the last question in the affirmative. I believe that it *would* be useful for anyone setting about the task of writing a new history of Lutheran education to cast his bibliographic net broadly. Non-denominational historians have been busily at work on education in other European countries during the sixteenth century. The literature burgeons. In closing I would like to mention just four books that, while not on Reformation Germany, have helped me to focus my perspective on the Electoral District of Saxony.

J. A. Hoeppner Moran in »The growth of English schooling 1340-1548« (Princeton, NJ 1984) tacitly points out to those of us working on Germany the potential yield of a wide variety of non-traditional sources. She proves the existence of considerable numbers of small and somewhat informal schools, such as dame schools, countering the assertion that the Reformation brought

with it a revolution in education. It is Moran's diverse sources, however, and not her conclusion that I wish to emphasize here.

R. A. Houston's doctoral dissertation, »Scottish literacy and the Scottish identity: illiteracy and society in Scotland and northern England, 1600-1800« (Cambridge 1985), not only includes valuable discussion of the meaning and significance of literacy but produces a basis, undoubtedly not entirely applicable to Germany, for statistics. The problem of whether German literacy was growing or declining during the sixteenth century is still very much with us, and it is not unrelated to the Reformation's alleged role in fostering education.³³

Harvey J. Graff's »The literacy myth: literacy and social structure in the nineteenth-century city« (LO 1979) compares literacy levels in three Canadian cities. It is rich in theory as well as facts. It suggests that there are various qualities, purposes, ethnic and gender variations, and economic influences in literacy. Graff inquires about the meaning of literacy to the individual.

Finally, a somewhat older collection of essays, »Literacy in traditional societies«, edited and contributed to by an Africanist, Jack Goody, (Cambridge 1968) contains eleven articles by specialists on places reaching from England to Melanesia. These essays are not only geographically dispersed in their subject matter but are also in varying degrees interdisciplinary. In its own way, each of these studies is pertinent to the investigation of schooling and literacy in early modern Germany. Researchers of early Lutheran education will find it worth their while to pursue their quarry across geographic, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries. By such means we may enlarge our perspective and develop more penetrating methodologies than those heretofore employed.

Where will Martin Luther be left at the end of this undertaking? We cannot say. We cannot know our conclusions before we begin our research. As far as the Electoral District of Saxony is concerned, Luther was a prominent early advocate of universal education for boys, and his and Melancthon's advocacy may well have provided a crucial rationale for Elector August in his campaign to establish schools. Nonetheless, the prince must have had the head of state's varied and complex motives for what he did. These details remain to be discovered. But Luther will hold his own.

As of July 1989 R. A. Houston's new book, announced for 1988, »Literacy in early modern Europe: culture and education 1500-1800« (LO 1988), was not yet available.

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