

es, den richtigen Zeitpunkt für den Druck seiner Texte zu wählen. Publierte Predigten boten den Gläubigen religiöse Erbauungsliteratur, um mit ihrer Hilfe auch in privatem Kreis den Glauben zu praktizieren. Für die Pastoren stellten Samsons Predigten sicherlich auch willkommene Muster für ihre eigene Praxis dar.

Als Prediger hatte Samson noch eine weitere Rolle, die des – modern ausgedrückt – Meinungsmachers. Der Prediger war derjenige, der die aktuellen Ereignisse interpretierte. Dabei tat er dies zwangsläufig aus ideologischer Sicht, d. h. aus der Sicht des orthodoxen Luthertums. Was die Wahl der von Samson behandelten Themen angeht, so findet sich hier nichts Außergewöhnliches, denn ganz Europa war damals von unbestimmten Ängsten befallen, die durch religiöse Konflikte, verheerende Kriege und die sich daraus herleitenden Folgen Not, Hunger und Epidemien bewirkt wurden. Zur Unsicherheit der Menschen trugen auch seltsame Himmelserscheinungen bei, die als sichtbare Zeichen göttlicher Strafe gedeutet wurden, und die Türken, die im Südosten Europas drohten, muteten gar als der erwartete Antichrist an. Samson hielt im Großen und Ganzen an der zeitgenössischen europäischen Tradition fest, doch zeichnete er sich dadurch aus, dass er sich mit einem äußerst breiten Themenspektrum auseinandersetzte, worunter auch allerlei Sensationelles und Volkstümliches fiel. Sein zielsicheres Vorgehen bei der Publikation seiner Texte sowie die bewusste Ansprache an sein Publikum mit den Themen, die in der Gesellschaft aktuell waren, lässt keinen Zweifel daran, dass es sich bei ihm um einen Autor handelte, der das Ohr am Puls der Zeit hatte.

SUMMARY

The Literary Legacy of Hermann Samson, the Superintendent of Livonia

Hermann Samson (1579–1643), superintendent of Livonia acted in a time when the city of Riga, then under the power of Poland, had its Lutheran community in opposition with Jesuits acting in the name of Counter-Reformation. After receiving his education from Riga Cathedral School, Samson began to study theology: first in the University of Rostock (1599–1600), then in Wittenberg, where in 1605 he obtained his Master's degree. In 1608, Samson was called back to Riga where he became a preacher and school inspector. In 1611 he was promoted to Reverend of the Cathedral, and in 1616, the main pastor of St Peter's Church, thus becoming the leader of the local Lutheran church life. After the conquest of Riga by Swedish forces in 1622, Samson was appointed superintendent of Livonia. In 1631,

he became professor of theology in Riga gymnasium, and in 1633 a member of the higher consistory of Tartu.

Samson, a prolific author, has been associated with 65 publications in Latin and German, including sermons, funeral orations, wedding poetry, and textbooks. From the viewpoint of cultural history, his sermons – delivered mostly in German – are especially interesting as they provide a commentary on ongoing affairs and provide an insight into the activities of a Lutheran reverend from a bygone era that allows drawing parallels with current social affairs and phenomena. With his sermons, Samson sought to influence the daily life in a positive and penitent manner typical to Lutheranism. In addition to fighting against false faith (Jesuits, Calvinists, and superstition are the overarching themes of such orations), he also gave penitential sermons motivated by unusual occurrences or extraordinary historical events.

The debate between Samson and the Riga Jesuits manifested itself in two aspects: first, the opposing parties published extensive academic works in Latin (such as Nicolai Norvegus' *Confessio Christiana*, Cracow 1604; Hermann Samson's *Anti-Jesuita*, Gießen 1615); second, the opponents also published German-language handbooks and sermons of a more down-to-earth nature. As a warning to the congregation, Samson also delivered sermons that criticised Calvinism. His compilation of witch sermons, published as a handbook, can be regarded as part of the edification literature due to pervasive admonitions as well as instructions on how to use pure faith and prayers to protect against witchcraft and the Devil. It is apparent, however, that the handbook did not spark a witch-hunt.

Samson's penitential sermons, intended to edify the soul and help through hard times, interpret unusual and even frightening incidents. Some of them are related to factual events such as the comet of 1618, the case of a noblewoman with prophetic visions, and the plague that befell the city; others, such as the sermons about the Turkish threat, are based on a general literary tradition. His contrasting discussion of time becomes apparent in the sermons related to Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden. For instance, his sermon after the Swedish conquest in 1621 stressed the need for social cooperation and the established division of roles, while clearly showing joy over the arrival of a new Lutheran era. Conversely, the funeral sermon of Gustavus Adolphus can be interpreted as a catastrophic result of ruining the balance established in the former sermon, implying that the death of the king was a divine punishment.

As a preacher, Samson interpreted the meaning of factual events. While he inevitably did so through the viewpoint of Lutheran ideology, he still assumed the role of an opinion leader. His perseverance with publishing his texts and carefully chosen speeches on themes that fascinated the society leave no doubt that Samson was one of those authors who had an understanding of his time.