

Religious Reading in the Lutheran North

Religious Reading in the Lutheran North:
Studies in Early Modern Scandinavian
Book Culture

Edited by

Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

BOOKS, LITERACY, AND RELIGIOUS READING IN THE LUTHERAN NORTH

CHARLOTTE APPEL
AND MORTEN FINK-JENSEN

Religious reading is a phenomenon that can be studied in many contexts and cultures across the world and for different historical periods. One area where it is not only possible but also important to investigate the characteristics and patterns of religious reading is the Nordic region, comprising Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. Throughout the early modern period religious books dominated the Nordic book markets, and reading was almost exclusively taught to children in a religious or, more precisely, a Lutheran Protestant setting, whether at home, through instruction by a local clergyman or at a proper school. Furthermore, it looks as if the vast majority of the Nordic populations, men as well as women, had reached a basic level of literacy – that is, had acquired enough skill to read printed texts in the vernacular – by the end of the eighteenth century, if not before. It could thus be argued that, relatively speaking, religious reading had an even greater significance in the North than in many other parts of early modern Europe.

The Nordic countries

It may be wise to clarify a few facts about geography, politics and languages in the Nordic region from the very beginning: For most of the early modern period (until 1814), Denmark and Norway were ruled by the Danish crown and largely shared the same legislation. Danish and Norwegian were closely related Scandinavian languages (with many

regional variants), but Danish was used as the common written language. All future pastors had to attend the University of Copenhagen, and the Danish and Norwegian book markets were basically one and the same, with most books being printed in Copenhagen until the early eighteenth century, when more local printing presses were established in both countries. The Faeroes and Iceland (which are not specifically dealt with in this volume) were also under Danish rule, as was Greenland, where Pietist mission work and the printing press became key factors in the creation of written Greenlandic (an Inuit language) in the mid-eighteenth century.

In the eastern part of the Nordic region, Swedish was the dominant language. For most of the early modern period the Swedish crown controlled Finland, and the majority of books for the Swedish and the Finnish book markets (also books in Finnish, a language unrelated to the Scandinavian languages) were printed in Stockholm. In the northern parts of the Scandinavian peninsula, Sami languages were spoken by the Sami people living on the borders of Norway, Sweden, and Finland.¹

Not only language tied the Nordic countries together. The ways in which book culture had been introduced and developed in the course of the Middle Ages were very similar, and the same applies for the advent of the printing press and for the Lutheran reformations. In Denmark, where popular support for the Evangelical ideas was most noticeable, a distinctly Lutheran reformation was established in 1537, and despite being predominantly Catholic, Norway had to abide by the dictates of the Danish crown. In Sweden, a Protestant reformation was much slower in prevailing, and not until 1593 was the Swedish church unequivocally confirmed as Lutheran. Despite these differences in the manner and speed of its introduction, Lutheranism had become firmly established in Scandinavia by the early seventeenth century.²

Other variations were related to geography and patterns of settlement: The western parts, not least Iceland, the west coast of Norway and to some extent Denmark, were in close contact with the British Isles during the Middle Ages, and this had stimulated the development of manuscript culture, especially in Iceland. Connections to Germany, in relation to commerce and church and therefore to culture at large, were manifold throughout centuries, but were not equally strong across the region. And in all countries, clear social and cultural differences can be observed between

¹ See Appel and Skovgaard-Petersen, "The Book", for an outline of the history of book production and book trade in the Nordic region, with further references.

² Grell, *Scandinavian Reformation*; Asche, *Zeitalter der Reformation*.

educated groups in the cities and larger (coastal) market towns, on the one hand, and rural communities, especially far inland, on the other.

Such variations must be borne in mind when dealing with the development of religious reading in the Nordic region. The articles of this anthology will therefore transport the reader to specific times and places in early modern Scandinavia in order to shed light on different aspects of the phenomenon. For a few more pages, however, it may be well worth the reader's while to take in a bird's-eye view of the landscape of books and literacy in the North (even if the picture will, inevitably, be rather coarse-grained). Various reasons are also identified that explain why religious reading played such an important role in early modern Scandinavia, and why it invites further investigation.

The preponderance of religious books

In the Nordic region, as in Europe in general, medieval book culture had been profoundly shaped by the church, although the late Middle Ages witnessed the spreading of writing and manuscripts to most parts of society. Especially after the introduction of the printing press, the world of books expanded further – quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Printed matter came out in hundreds and sometimes thousands of copies, and the most popular titles in the vernacular appeared in numerous editions. A variety of genres were represented, and no end of topics covered in print. Different formats and lay-outs were applied, depending on genre and expected readership. In places where books had traditionally been collected and used, the libraries that existed in churches, at courts and in manor houses expanded even further. However, in the course of the sixteenth and certainly the seventeenth centuries, printed books also found their way into private Scandinavian households, especially in towns, but gradually in rural settings, too.

Nordic clergymen knew Latin, of course, and were part of an international learned culture based on that language. They had learnt Latin from an early age and often continued to read and acquire Latin books. Probate inventories (registers of possession, made after death) allow us to trace patterns of clerical reading culture, and they testify that Scandinavian clergymen also read books in other European languages, notably German.

Nevertheless, the majority of books produced, sold and disseminated throughout the Nordic region from the mid-seventeenth century onwards (if not before) were books in the vernacular. Right up until around 1700, the number of *titles* in Latin would keep up with the total number of new Scandinavian titles published in the Nordic countries. However, when it

comes to the *total* number of books leaving the printing presses, vernacular publications reigned supreme. Books and pamphlets in the Nordic languages (often translated into Danish or Swedish from Latin or German; languages that men with a privileged background knew) were clearly intended for a wider audience, or for “the common man”, as was frequently stated on the title pages or in the prefaces. Moreover, some books were explicitly published for the increasing number of women who had learnt how to read, though only in their mother tongues.

Religious books in the vernacular dominated the stocks of print shops and bookbinder’s workshops. There are many reasons for this predominance, one being the range of direct and indirect subsidies from church and state. These might, for instance, be conferred to initiate a range of religious publications (such as Bible translations and hymn books), to reward clergymen who were active in religious publishing, or to grant privileges to cooperative printers and booksellers. It is important to bear in mind, however, that book markets were essentially commercial, as elsewhere in Europe. Printers and booksellers published and disseminated books that they thought would sell.

Despite similarities, conditions were not identical across the European book markets. Books produced in Latin, German and French, and to some extent Italian, English or Dutch, had many potential buyers and could usually be sold in more than one country. Books in these languages were international commodities and could travel over long distances (as can be demonstrated, for instance, when inspecting libraries collected by Scandinavian noblemen or clerics, which were often very international). In contrast, books printed in the Scandinavian languages had a far more limited market. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries almost all books intended for the Danish-Norwegian book market were produced in Copenhagen, where the censorship authorities were based. And, similarly, the printing presses in Stockholm, joined by a few minor presses in other Swedish and Finnish towns, supplied the market for books in Swedish and Finnish. Compared to the more complex situation in other parts of Europe there was a fairly straightforward relationship between supply and demand. Printers and publishers had to target their market with care, because they could not sell their goods anywhere else. Scandinavian book buyers could still pick and choose, albeit within a fairly limited range of titles in the vernacular. Apart from a very small number of Swedish and Danish imprints from Lübeck and Rostock, all books for the Nordic book markets were printed within the linguistic, national, and confessional boundaries of the Scandinavian kingdoms. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, structures of printing and publication began to change,

with many more provincial presses supplying local markets and censorship authorities being weakened, although the same linguistic barriers still applied.

Little wonder, then, that many publishers in both Copenhagen and Stockholm concentrated on a standard repertoire of bestsellers and, especially, “steady sellers.” Many of these were well-established religious books, which were used in schools and churches and also for private devotion: Luther’s catechisms, prayer and hymn books and popular devotional titles by the likes of Philipp Kegel and Johann Arndt. During the eighteenth century a range of new titles, mainly by Pietist authors, established themselves as “new classics.”

A fair number of books on more secular subjects appeared as well. From the earliest arrival of the printing press, small, entertaining stories as known from the European *bibliothèque bleue* had been published, along with almanacs, medical books, and (at least from the early seventeenth century) a selection of practical manuals on cooking, fishing, bee-keeping, and so on. We shall never know the exact figures for what was once published, and the extant copies of these often unpretentious books are clearly not representative of their original share of the book supply. Nevertheless, private inventories and registers of printers’ and publishers’ stocks seem to confirm the general picture: Most editions, and particularly most *large* editions, on the Scandinavian book markets, with the almanac as the single very obvious exception, were religious books in the vernacular. They appeared in all shapes and sizes, particularly in the inexpensive and widely sold small formats: the octavo, the duodecimo and even smaller sizes. Despite the importance of such books (also) to clergymen, resulting in a presumably high rate of preservation, bibliographical analyses confirm the existence of numerous editions that are now lost. As remarked by a Danish scholar commenting on seventeenth-century Danish hymn books: “One gets a confusing impression of being confronted with scattered pieces of wreckage driven ashore; remnants of a mighty fleet now lost.”³

The dominance of religious books was no doubt more pronounced, relatively speaking, in rural areas compared to towns, and in the peripheral regions of the Nordic countries compared to the capitals of Copenhagen and Stockholm. Here, and in larger towns such as Bergen and Elsinore, supplies of reading material were fairly varied, not least thanks to the presence of foreign booksellers. Frequently readers would also bring books home when returning from travels abroad, and books could be

³ “man (faar) et forvirret Indtryk af at staa over for enkelte ilanddrevne Vragstumper af en stor forsvunden Flaade.” Severinsen, “Salmebøger”, 619.

imported directly by collectors. In most cathedral cities it was also possible to obtain a relatively wide selection of reading matter. This meant that keen book buyers were able to acquire a variety of books, almost no matter where they lived. But in general, only limited selections of books were transported inland, especially where ships could not go. Peddlers carried only small stocks of titles, and it is hardly a coincidence that some of the same titles appear again and again, for instance in small private libraries belonging to Norwegian peasants from the eighteenth century.

Accordingly, for many people in the Nordic region the world of books was primarily a world of religious books. Yet the fact that most reading matter dealt with religion does not in itself explain why it may be appropriate to introduce a special concept of “religious reading.” Readers who read books about certain topics do not automatically belong to a separate reading culture. In early modern Scandinavia, however, there are many indications that the acquisition of literacy skills and a familiarity with books took place in, and were profoundly influenced by, religious environments that focused on a limited selection of religious texts. For major areas, and for long periods of time, it is possible to identify “interpretive communities” as well as more specific “textual communities” in the Lutheran North.⁴

Literacy – levels and varieties

Across early modern Europe the process of learning to read and write was often closely connected to the church, as it had been in the Middle Ages. This was certainly the case in the Protestant North. Following the Lutheran reformations, properties belonging to the Church, including clerical schools, were taken over by the Crown in each individual country. Urban grammar schools were regulated in detail and frequently inspected by deans and bishops, one significant reason being that this was where future members of the clergy were instructed in Martin Luther’s small and large catechisms and received their initial training in Latin. The schools also played an important role as institutions that took care of poor children and orphans.⁵

⁴ The concept of “interpretive communities” goes back to Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text*. For a discussion about the contrast to “textual communities”, see Lindmark, *Reading, Writing*, 219–23.

⁵ The following outline is mainly based on research by Appel and Markussen (on Denmark), Johansson and Lindmark (on Sweden), Fet and Tveit (on Norway). An important, but no longer quite up-to-date Nordic survey, also covering Iceland, is Guttormsson, “The Development”.

Schooling was never confined to these grammar schools, however, which were only attended by a small proportion of boys, primarily from towns and from clerical and some noble families. Basic reading skills were most often taught in more informal settings (and it can be shown that before entering a grammar school, many boys had received reading instruction elsewhere). In Denmark elementary teaching was often organized, fully or partly, by the Church. Especially from the 1620s onwards a variety of contemporary sources testify that many members of the lower clergy instructed children in reading as a way to better prepare them for the most important thing: The learning (by heart) of Luther's catechism. Evidence of other set-ups can be found, too, such as peasants collectively providing board and lodging on a rotating basis, or paying a local schoolmaster a fixed amount per child to teach in a rented room or in his own house. Obviously, such informal teaching did not leave many archival traces behind, and especially instruction in private homes, when parents taught their own children, is difficult to document. Nevertheless, incidental information found in church registers and other sources gives the impression that in all rural and urban parishes some schooling was provided from the late seventeenth century, and in most places long before. And whether the teacher was a cleric or not, the local pastor would test the skills of all young people, as boys and girls had to demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of Luther's catechism before gaining access to Holy Communion, thereby obtaining full adult membership status, not only in church matters, but in society as such (including the right to betrothal and to lease a farm).

In rural Norway and Sweden, where distances within parishes were often considerable and settlements scattered, home instruction by parents seems to have been particularly widespread. The Swedish Church Law of 1686 explicitly made the head of each household responsible for elementary teaching, and also gave the pastors a supervisory duty to ensure that their parishioners lived up to these demands. Literate laymen could be found long before this date and in Sweden, as in Denmark, there are clear indications of rising numbers of readers throughout the seventeenth century. At any rate, this development seemed to be accelerated by the "reading campaign" that came in the wake of the 1686 legislation. Church examination registers (*husförhörslängder*), where pastors wrote down their yearly assessments of the literacy and the "catechism knowledge" of all individuals in their parishes, testify that increasing numbers learned to read and acquired this skill before they embarked on systematic rote-learning. In mid-eighteenth-century Sweden – a traditional rural society with only negligible traces of modernization –

approximately 90 per cent of all parishioners, men as well as women, were registered as capable of reading.⁶ The registers also bear witness to the actual process of change (which naturally did not take place everywhere at exactly the same time or at the same speed). In the seventeenth century, a number of elderly people were still described as illiterate, though with some knowledge of the catechism. Young children, on the other hand, were increasingly reported as being able to read, whereas they had only just begun to learn the catechism by heart. New generations were clearly being brought up with new patterns of teaching, and three consecutive stages of learning took shape, often stipulated in contemporary sources: First actual book-reading, then rote-learning, and finally understanding.

In Sweden, rural schools did not become widespread until the early nineteenth century, and it was only in 1842 that a central ordinance prescribed compulsory schooling for all children. In Denmark, as pointed out above, it had been relatively more common to organize proper schools, also in the countryside, not least because the majority of the rural population lived in villages. Central legislation prescribed the organization of schools in all Danish and Norwegian parishes in 1739 (following up on the Confirmation Ordinance from 1736), but these ambitions soon had to be modified. Ambulatory schools were still allowed and became (or rather: remained) the predominant form of schooling in Norway. So despite variations, it was a common feature in the Nordic region that the dissemination of reading skills was not dependent on formal schooling.⁷ Even so, everywhere the Church, increasingly supported by central legislation, can be seen to have played an active part in creating a population of readers.

Another common Scandinavian denominator was the fact that reading and writing were most often taught separately and were regarded as two different activities. The Swedish pastors were interested in promoting reading, or to be more precise: in promoting the ability to read printed books, first and foremost the catechism, in the vernacular – and so this was the ability they registered in their protocols. Some of them commented on writing, too, and such cases confirm, along with other contemporary sources, that far fewer could write. And while women were just as competent readers as men (in some cases even marginally better, according to the church registers), relatively few women had been trained to write themselves. In Denmark and Norway similar patterns can be

⁶ Johansson, *History of Literacy*.

⁷ In Denmark new and more ambitious educational ordinances from the year 1814 (requiring a minimum of seven years' teaching for all children, though not necessarily in a school) replaced the legislation from 1739.

documented, and when parish schools were formally prescribed in 1739, reading and Christian instruction were stipulated as the overriding goals, whereas writing and arithmetic were optional and had to be paid for by the parents. Accordingly, while the Church and, later, the State could be seen to “push” for the spreading of reading in society, to a much greater extent the dissemination of writing was left to “pull factors”, meaning a demand among people, specifically parents, who were prepared to invest money in order to ensure that their children, especially their sons, acquired this useful skill.⁸

Seen against this background it is hardly surprising that the Scandinavian languages have no single word corresponding to “literacy.” Instead two separate words are used to describe the ability to read and the ability to write: *leskunnighet* and *skrivkunnighet* in Swedish, *læsefærdighed* and *skrivefærdighed* in Danish (corresponding to *Lesfähigkeit* and *Schreibfähigkeit* in German).

From literacy to reading cultures

Whereas long traditions of studies into the history of books and libraries and into the history of schools can be found in all Nordic countries, systematic research into literacy in a historical context is a more recent phenomenon. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Swedish historian Egil Johansson began to publish the results of his investigations into the patterns of literacy rates in early modern Sweden. These findings (on which much of the outline given above is based) attracted considerable attention, also internationally.⁹ They appeared at a time of great interest in the processes and patterns of literacy, particularly because several theories had established close links between high literacy rates and the processes of modernization. Johansson’s picture of a rural, pre-industrial, but literate population became an important corrective to such theories.

In a Nordic context Johansson’s findings also provided important inspiration, particularly in connection with a conference for Nordic historians in 1981. Here, for the first time, historical literacy was placed on the agenda, causing historians from neighbouring countries to take stock

⁸ The concepts of “push” and “pull” in relation to literacy were introduced by Johansson, *History of Literacy*.

⁹ Johansson’s most important publication, *The History of Literacy in Sweden*, reached a wide audience when included as an article in Graff, *Literacy and Social Development*, in 1981. An outline of Johansson’s background, methodologies and seminal influence on Swedish research into literacy and education is found in Lindmark, “Four Decades”.

of national research into the topic and in several cases leading to new research.¹⁰ Some of Johansson's peers reacted with scepticism and pointed to the fact that not only had early modern pastors been prone to exaggerate the performance of their parishioners, but the whole phenomenon of literacy had been misunderstood. What Johansson had found was not a real, full or functional literacy, but only a restricted "religious literacy."¹¹ The Swedish children had been given printed books with words they already knew from Luther's *Small Catechism*. In effect, they had simply recognized and reproduced rather than read the printed words. A similar sceptical line of argument was followed, for instance, in connection with studies into eighteenth-century missionary work in Greenland, where it was claimed that the Greenlanders were only "parroting" the texts presented to them.¹²

Most scholars exploring the history of Scandinavian literacy and book culture have, however, confirmed and in numerous ways supplemented and qualified Johansson's findings. And whereas "the Swedish case" tended to be referred to as a unique exception, recent publications from Danish and Norwegian scholars show that the widespread ability to read printed books in the vernacular was a general trend throughout the Lutheran North.¹³

Important inspiration from new international research into literacy, and from general trends in *histoire du livre* and *the new cultural history* from the early 1990s and onwards, contributed to placing studies of literacy in broader and at the same time more specific historical contexts. In contrast to the situation in the 1970s and 1980s – when literacy was often regarded as a specific skill that people either possessed or did not possess, and which bestowed a range of more or less predefined capabilities and resources upon its owner – most scholars began to recognize that literacy and reading could be many different things. The activities of reading should not be separated from their cultural setting. Therefore the challenge was to try to understand literacy and reading in a historical context rather

¹⁰ Publications from this conference in Jyväskylä, Finland, in Jokipii and Nummela, *Ur nordisk kulturhistoria*. In 1984, at the subsequent Nordic conference, the topic of elementary writing was pursued, see Skovgaard-Petersen, *Da menigmand*. A few English articles presenting this research were published in *Scandinavian Journal of History* 15 (1990).

¹¹ This concept was introduced by Guttormsson, "The Development", 8.

¹² Gad, "Læse- og skrivekyndigheden", 28.

¹³ For Sweden, see Lindmark, "Four Decades", and the extensive bibliography in Graff et al., *Understanding Literacy*. For Denmark, see Appel, *Læsning og bogmarked*, and Horstbøll, *Menigmands medie*. For Norway, see Fet, *Lesande bønder* and *Skrivande bønder*.

than measuring it on a scale of (degrees of) “genuine” literacy. For the same reason, literacy has increasingly been treated as an integrated dimension of cultural studies, rather than as a topic in its own right. Practices of reading have seemed more interesting than literacy levels as such.

Several aspects deserve attention when reading cultures are being investigated. Daniel Lindmark has suggested that the following should be considered: 1) the content of reading, 2) the organization of reading, 3) the aim of reading, and 4) the function of reading.¹⁴ Perhaps the teaching of reading could be added as an important fifth aspect in its own right, because initial instruction practices may be crucial in shaping reading practices. Furthermore, the interaction between reading and other media should constantly be taken into account, meaning the ways in which auditory and visual aids supported (but in some situations possibly substituted or even rendered superfluous) the communication tied to letters and printed pages.

The Lutheran North provides an intriguing framework for scholars interested in investigating the development of early modern reading cultures. Varieties and differences, notably relating to social background, education and gender, can be identified everywhere, but continuities and similarities across time and space are also clearly evident, not least the persisting focus on Luther’s *Small Catechism* as the cornerstone of religious reading. Some general changes are striking, too, when looking at the entire early modern period. In many post-Reformation Scandinavian households a limited number of books had been available and only the male head of the household had been able to read. Two centuries later this situation had shifted in many places. Now both men and women were often literate, and many more genres and titles were available to ordinary readers. What is more, groups of laymen formed such confident reading or interpretive communities that some of them dared to challenge those who were not only their social superiors, but also theological experts.

The present anthology

In this volume we have the pleasure of publishing eight articles on aspects of religious reading in the Nordic countries. The contributions cover developments spanning close to three hundred years (from the mid-sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries) in different parts of the region:

¹⁴ See Lindmark’s essay “Interpreting Religious Reading”, in his *Reading, Writing*, 219. An important aspect, though one which cannot be dealt with here, is the way in which religious reading could take on the function of shaping a specific national identity (among Swedish immigrants in North America).

Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Greenland. They all relate to the world of religious reading, as has been outlined in this introduction, but with varying emphasis. Some articles concentrate on the acts and considerations of (clerical) authors, publishers, teachers, and censoring authorities, while others investigate the practical uses and interpretations of religious literature among different groups of readers.¹⁵

In the first article, “Printing and Preaching after the Reformation”, Morten Fink-Jensen takes a close look at the Danish pastor Rasmus Hansen Reravius and his activities as an author and translator of devotional literature. Reravius belonged to the second generation of Lutheran clergymen after the Reformation, and especially the elaborate prefaces in his books allow us to see his ideas of how the “the common man” ought to practice and benefit from religious literature. Preaching could not stand alone, but had to be supplemented by printing, reading and singing.

The world of oral communication, particularly through singing, is further opened up by Jon Haarberg in his contribution, “Earways to Heaven.” He traces the somewhat overlooked tradition of *singing* the contents of the catechism, stretching right from the Reformation century to the first half of the eighteenth century, at which time the “catechism songs” composed by the Norwegian clergyman Peter Dass experienced almost unprecedented popularity. By analyzing the numerous printed editions and the great variety of tunes applied, Haarberg sheds new light on the interaction between oral and written media in everyday teaching and devotional life.

The spreading in society of the skill to read printed books became an important concern among clergymen in seventeenth century Denmark. In “Printed in Books, Imprinted on Minds”, Charlotte Appel gives an outline of such “catechism policies” and analyses the efforts of two clergymen who tried to take rising literacy standards into account when composing religious literature. She argues that Luther’s *Small Catechism* was highly influential, not only in its own right, as the children’s first proper book,

¹⁵ The idea behind this anthology goes back to a Nordic conference on international print culture, “Published words, public pages”, which was organized by SHARP (The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing) in Copenhagen on 10–12 September 2008. A triple session with a total of eight papers on “Religious Reading in the Nordic countries” was arranged in order to present recent research to an international audience. This seemed especially important given the fact that the majority of scholarly work in this field is still being published in the Scandinavian languages.

but also because it profoundly shaped expectations as to how a book ought to be composed.

The question of what clergymen themselves were likely to read is bound to be a key to understanding the world of books and reading in the Lutheran North. Gina Dahl unlocks the door to seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century book collections of Norwegian clergymen, demonstrating that they contained “Much More than Luther”, as her contribution is entitled. An overwhelming number of different authors in German and other languages were represented, and even though most titles were clearly written by Lutheran theologians, many clerical libraries also contained books by Calvinist (and even some Catholic) authors.

In the fifth contribution, “A Threat to Civic Coexistence”, Ann Öhrberg addresses the emergence of a Moravian reading culture in eighteenth-century Sweden, and discusses how the censoring authorities tried to deal with this phenomenon. She demonstrates how a number of “structural glitches” weakened attempts to control the publication and dissemination of Moravian literature, and how these attempts in some cases may inadvertently have contributed to disseminating and thus strengthening this alternative religious literature.

Thorkild Kjærgaard moves the scene to eighteenth-century Greenland in his article “Genesis in the Longhouse.” When Pietists began their missionary work in the 1720s, they did not know the native language, and the Greenlanders had no system of written communication. Meanwhile, this situation changed dramatically within a short span of time. Written Greenlandic was moulded on the Bible, as it was created in the process of translating the Scriptures and a number of other religious texts. Also, whereas pictures were initially the crucial medium applied by the missionary workers, literacy spread rapidly, not so much because of a “push” from above, but due to a strong “pull” from the Greenlandic population. Kjærgaard argues that literacy and Bible reading profoundly influenced and in fact revitalized native culture, including legends, which until recently have been interpreted as expressions of original, purely oral and non-Christian traditions.

In his contribution “Memory and Meaning”, Trygve Riiser Gundersen delves into the reading culture of the Haugean revival in Norway around 1800. He accounts for and analyses specific, well-documented incidents of laymen demonstrating their use and understandings of religious books, often in opposition to the interpretations of their pastors. In the process, Gundersen also characterizes the scale of Haugean publishing and the many means of disseminating this type of religious literature. Intensive

religious reading was at the heart of the Haugean movement, with the aim of eventually rendering reading superfluous.

Daniel Lindmark's "Popular Education and Religious Reading in Early Nineteenth-Century Sweden" is the final article in this book. Having outlined three levels of religious instruction, upon which Swedish clergymen seemed to agree, and which were linked to specific books (the ABC, the catechism and the exposition), Lindmark focuses on conditions in Kalmar Diocese in order to explore how religious teaching was organized in a number of parishes, and how different books were used – often for a variety of purposes, as was certainly the case with the Bible. The phenomenon of book rewards, which Lindmark also looks at, was used as a means to reward diligence and also to compensate for poverty.

When read together, the contributions to the present anthology will no doubt underscore one of the main arguments in this introduction: That "religious reading" was a complex phenomenon, and that it will often be appropriate to speak about reading cultures in the plural. At the same time certain common features and continuities will also become apparent, especially when comparing developments in the Nordic region with those elsewhere in Europe. The legacy of the Lutheran reformations seems to have created a communal frame of reference across the region and, to some extent, across social groups, promoting a specific curriculum of Protestant texts and specific methods of disseminating, deciphering and understanding them. It may be meaningful after all to speak – though not unreservedly so – of a particular approach to religious reading in the Lutheran North.

CHAPTER ONE

PRINTING AND PREACHING AFTER THE REFORMATION: A DANISH PASTOR AND HIS AUDIENCES

MORTEN FINK-JENSEN

During the 1520s the Evangelical movement had steadily been gaining momentum in the joint kingdom of Denmark and Norway. However, it was not until after King Christian III's accession to the throne in 1536 that a reformation of the Church was carried out. This was confirmed by the promulgation of the Church Order of 1537, a document that followed the teachings of Martin Luther very closely. Large parts of the text had been drawn up by Johannes Bugenhagen, who had been sent as a special envoy from Wittenberg to Copenhagen after the Danish king originally requested that Luther himself travel to Denmark to ensure that the proposed Reformation would, indeed, be exemplarily Lutheran.¹

The Church Order stressed the critical importance of teaching the very basics of true, that is Lutheran, Christianity to the population at large. This was to be done by way of Luther's catechism, with the instruction of the "the young, the inexperienced, and the unlettered Christians" being singled out as particularly urgent.² This duty fell to the pastors and, under their supervision, the parish clerks, and it would remain so for centuries to come. However, leading members of the Church soon realized that this was also a demanding task. In Germany, following his visitation of the parishes of Saxony in the 1520s, Luther polemically claimed that the reformers were, in effect, not charged with reforming a wayward, albeit

¹ Outlines of the Reformation in Denmark-Norway can be found in Grell, *Scandinavian Reformation*, 12–41; Lausten, *Church History*, 85–120.

² "the wngc oc wforfarne oc wlerde Christne." Lausten, *Kirkeordinansen*, 157. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

Christian, population, but rather with preaching the very basics of Christianity to a heathen people. As he lamented in the preface to his *Small Catechism*:

The common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatsoever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching. Although the people are supposed to be Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, they live as if they were pigs and irrational beasts.³

In the opinion of the Evangelical reformers in Denmark-Norway the situation was hardly any different there. Little wonder that they and their successors in the next generation eventually became somewhat disillusioned as the sixteenth century wore on, with the ideal Biblical society that they had undoubtedly envisaged in the wake of the Reformation remaining elusive. Simply preaching the Gospel from the pulpit and rehearsing the catechism with the parishioners was not enough to create a pious Lutheran society.

Additional strategies therefore had to be pursued in order to make the spreading of God's Word more efficient, and use of the printed media was increasingly applied by a number of Danish theologians in their attempts to reach out to, and exert their influence upon, a wider audience than the devout, whose attention they already commanded. This caused a steady increase in publication activities during the latter half of the sixteenth century, relying mainly on Danish translations and compilations of works by German theologians published earlier in the century. The Church supported and acclaimed these activities, as voiced by Niels Hemmingsen, professor of theology at the University of Copenhagen and by far the most influential theologian in Denmark at the time. In 1573 Hemmingsen hailed these authors and translators as "construction workers on the temple of God",⁴ and continued:

³ *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*. Vol. II, part four: *Creeds and Confessions of the Reformation Era*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 31.

⁴ "Guds Tempels bygnings mend." [Jacob Ulfeldt], *Mange deylige Sententzers oc Sprocks, aff den hellige Scrifft, Vdleggelse, huor aff mand kand faa Lærdom oc Trøst, huilcke den værdige Herre D: Martinus Luther haffuer screffuet i sin Bibel oc enfoldige Christne til tieniste, vdsæt paa Danske. Met hederlige oc høylærde Herris D: Niels Hemmingsøns Fortale. Disligeste er her ocsaa indført mange Sprock, som aff andre lærde Mend ere forklarede oc vdlagde* (Copenhagen: Mads Vingaard, 1573), Hemmingsen's foreword, sign. 6 v.

There is much in the holy Bible which simple folk cannot at once understand, wherefore God bestows on many the gift of being able to interpret Scripture. That is: they can take what is shrouded in darkness in one place and explain it by using what is stated with clarity in another, thus combining several passages to give true learning and understanding.⁵

According to Hemmingsen, Luther and Melancthon were unsurpassed in this discipline, but since they were no longer among the living, and because they had only written in German and Latin, which most people in Denmark were unable to read, one had to be grateful for the Danish translators. It was thanks to them and their precious books that the public could learn to tell true Christianity from the many heretical teachings which, as Hemmingsen characteristically put it, flourished with the Devil's aid as a clear sign of the imminent end of the world.⁶

In the early 1570s, when Hemmingsen's influence had reached its nadir, one of his close associates was the clergyman Rasmus Hansen with the Latin byname *Reravius*. He had studied under Hemmingsen, and while serving as a pastor in the late 1560s on his native island of Lolland in southern Denmark, he began translating edifying literature from German into Danish. By 1571 Rasmus Hansen *Reravius* had moved to Copenhagen, where he took up the position of chaplain at the Hospital of the Holy Ghost. The year 1577 saw him return to Lolland as pastor in the town of Rødby, where he died in 1582.⁷ *Reravius* (as I shall call him for simplicity's sake) was a tireless "construction worker", and he continually brought new works to market. He oversaw the publication of at least twenty-five different titles under his own name, and if we include reprints and posthumous editions it roughly triples the total number of prints.⁸

⁵ "Thi der er meget i den hellige Scriffth huilcket simpel Folck icke strax kunde forstaa, derfor giffuer Gud mange denne gaffue, at de kunde vdlegge Scriffthen, Det er, at de kunde det som mørckelige sigis paa en sted, vdlegge met det som klarlige sigis paa en anden sted, oc føre det tilsammen aff atskillige steder, som kand giffue fuld Lærdom oc forstand." *Ibid.*, sign. 6 v.–7 r.

⁶ *Ibid.*, sign. 8 r.

⁷ His date of birth is unknown; it can only be estimated to sometime between 1525 and 1540. Studies of Rasmus Hansen *Reravius* and his writings have so far only been available in Danish with the most recent treatment being Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Når det regner på præsten*, 23–60. A collection of scattered sources documenting the life of *Reravius*, and extracts from a selection of his works, are found in Rørdam, "Reravius".

⁸ Although not entirely up to date, the best bibliographic overview of *Reravius*'s works is Ehrencron-Müller, *Forfatterlexicon*, 6:454–57.

This impressive output reflects his popularity with the readers, but also his close connections with leading members of the Church as well as with the Copenhagen publishers who commissioned quite a few of Reravius's works. By the time of his death Reravius headed the field of Danish translators of devotional literature, and he can fairly be ranked alongside contemporaries such as Peder Tidemand and Hans Christensen Sthen as one of the entire sixteenth century's most important purveyors of popular religious literature in Denmark-Norway.

This article takes a look into Reravius's workroom and shows how, pursuant to the Church Order's demand to instruct the insufficiently edified Christian population, he conceived of his works as resources the common man (*menigmand*) could use to gain an understanding of Lutheran Christianity by way of reading. Reravius himself observes as much in the prefaces to his books, where he would describe, often in great detail, how his works had been prepared and come about: who had asked or even hired him to perform a translation, the circumstances behind the request, the purpose of the publication, and its intended readership. These prefaces, some only a few pages long, some longer essays, reveal how different publishing strategies could be pursued in order for an editor, translator, compiler, and author such as Reravius to get his Evangelical message across.

Analysed collectively, the prefaces demonstrate Reravius's media awareness, and show how his publications were very much designed as companions or handbooks for the Christian reader, usually addressing not just one specific topic, but also targeting a well-defined segment of the reading population. This segmentation applied not just to men, women, or children in general, but also to specific members of these groups: The head of the family, the expectant mother, the adolescent, the grieving widow or widower, the person afflicted with illness, the couple preparing for marriage, and so on.

Furthermore, this article will highlight how Reravius would adopt an overall tripartite "media strategy" to help him achieve his goal of general progress for Christian knowledge and behaviour. The three elements he advocated were the preaching, the printing, and the singing of the Gospel. On several occasions Reravius quite explicitly formulated this strategy, for instance when, in his preface to *Det Gyldene Klenod (The Golden Treasure, 1572)*, he stressed how absolutely essential it was that the Word of God be advanced in a Christian society "both by preaching, writing, and singing, particularly in times like these near the Day of Judgment."⁹ A

⁹ "Denne lærdom giørs saare fornøden behoff, at driffue i den Christne Menighed, baade met Predicken, Scrifft och Sang, synderlige nu vdi denne tid imod den

fourth, visual addition to the strategy in the shape of reproductions of Biblical stories could also be implemented.

Because of Reravius's prominent position, studying his works reveals what type of religious literature the official representatives of the Lutheran state church in Denmark were seeking to convey to the common man. And given the apparent popularity of many of his works, they also lend insight into reader preferences when it comes to religious literature in the latter half of the sixteenth century. However, rather than investigating the experiences or abilities of readers of religious literature, this article will primarily study the process of providing these readers with relevant religious literature. This process concerned more than the narrow link between author and reader. Book publication depended on a host of other factors constituting a complex interrelationship of the book market economy, and involving authors, translators, patrons, censors, publishers, printers, booksellers, and readers. Fortunately, Reravius sheds light on this process as well, and this shall be my point of departure.

Working with Hemmingsen

An example of how closely Reravius followed in the footsteps of Niels Hemmingsen can be found in the book that his mentor supplied with the laudatory foreword quoted earlier. The book ended with an additional acclamatory poem entitled *To the Christian Reader*, by a certain "R:H:R", obviously the initials of Rasmus Hansen Reravius.¹⁰ This poem complimented the translator, a devout nobleman named Jacob Ulfeldt, for his efforts, but it was also a sales pitch highlighting the usefulness of the book. Whether the reader was seeking solace from sin, feared death, was troubled by the Devil, suffered from an illness, or was looking for instruction on how to become a true Christian, this book, Reravius promised, would provide the necessary (Biblical) guidance and answers. This particular translator was, of course, by right of birth entitled to flattering poetry, but he was also a man whose patronage might benefit Reravius. Moreover, Danish theologians were always anxious to secure

yderste dag." Christopher Lasius, *Det Gyldene Klenod, om det fortaffte Faar, Lucae i det XV. Capit: Vdlagt oc skickelige forklaret, ved M: Christophorum Lasium. Vdsæt paa Danske, aff Rasmus Hanssøn. Met hederlige oc værdige Herris Philippi Melanthonis Fortale* (Copenhagen: Mads Vingaard, 1572), Reravius's preface, sign. 4 v. The book was a translation of *Das güldene Kleinot vom verlornen Schaf*, originally published in 1556 by the Spandau pastor Christopher Lasius.

¹⁰ "Til den Christne Læsere". [Ulfeldt], *Mange deylige Sententzers* (see n. 4), sign. Bb 2 v.–Bb 3 v.

the politically influential nobility's support for the Church. Several agendas could therefore lie behind these words of high praise. But even so, such sentiments would have come naturally to Reravius, since they fitted in very well with what he aimed to achieve through his own printed works. The majority of his books aimed at providing the reader with answers to the very questions he had commended Ulfeldt (and ultimately Luther, on whose work Ulfeldt's book was based) for answering. Reravius accordingly considered himself to be one of God's construction workers, and worthy of Hemmingsen's praise.

It seems likely that it was his connection with Hemmingsen that led Reravius to move to Copenhagen. It was certainly an unusual career move for a clergyman to give up a position (even a poorly paid one) as pastor to become chaplain at a hospital. Hemmingsen had long been looking for a Danish translator for his postil, a large collection of sermons in Latin first published in Copenhagen in 1561. The war that broke out between Denmark and Sweden in 1563 made it too uncertain – with a serious shortage of paper looming – to take on such a sizeable enterprise, and not until 1570, after the war had ended, was a new attempt made to launch the publication. Reravius was hired to carry out the translation, but it did not appear until 1576 under the title *Postilla eller Forklaring offuer Euangelia (Postil, or Exposition of the Gospel)*. In his preface, however, Reravius gives many details about the protracted genesis of the Danish postil, informing the public that he had begun his work five years earlier. This coincides with Reravius's move to Copenhagen.¹¹ And upon completing the translation of the postil, Reravius left Copenhagen the following year when he returned to Lolland as the newly appointed pastor in Rødby.

Hemmingsen had studied five years in Wittenberg, and after becoming a professor of theology at the University of Copenhagen in 1553 he rapidly gained a large following of students who regarded him as Melanchthon's

¹¹ Probably around this time, c. 1571, Reravius also issued a translation of three small treatises on witchcraft by Hemmingsen: *En Vnderuisning aff den Hellige scrifft, huad mand dømme skal om den store oc gruelige Guds bespottelse, som skeer met Troldom, Sinelse, Manelse oc anden saadan Guds hellige Naffns oc Ords vanbrug. Item, 33. Propositiones imod Troldom. Der til 33. Propositiones om Spaadom. Screffuit paa latine, aff hederlig oc høylærdt Herre D. Niels Hemmingsøn. Oc udsæt paa Danske, aff Rasmus Hansøn* (n.p., n.d.). The first edition is not extant, and the preserved, undated reprint (from the early seventeenth century) has done away with the part of the preface that was undoubtedly included in the original, and which would have contained information about the circumstances surrounding the translation. It is not inconceivable, though, that this was a specimen translation done prior to Reravius's engagement to translate the postil.

Danish counterpart. Like Melancthon, Hemmingsen was held in high esteem throughout much of Northern and Western Europe, and according to one assessment he “may well have been the most notable personality in that [the sixteenth] century within ecclesiastical and cultural life in the whole Protestant world.”¹² Even if this statement may seem too bold, it is certainly true that his influence in the Lutheran North was extraordinary.

Prior to Reravius’s translation of Hemmingsen’s postil, a German translation was published in Leipzig in 1561, and the following year the Latin edition was also issued in Germany. Both the German and the Latin versions were subsequently printed in more than twenty-five different editions across Germany before 1590. An English translation of the postil appeared in London in 1569 with several subsequent reprints.¹³ Other books by Hemmingsen enjoyed an equally wide distribution; a testament to his international fame. But Hemmingsen’s repute also brought his downfall. When, in 1574, theologians in Saxony invoked Hemmingsen’s authority in an attempt to ward off accusations of crypto-Calvinism from their Gnesio-Lutheran counterparts, an international crisis threatened. The Elector of Saxony put considerable pressure on King Frederik II of Denmark, and Hemmingsen was forced to retract his exposition on the Eucharist. With their author branded as a Calvinist in disguise, books by Hemmingsen began to leave the printing presses of Calvinist Geneva, and eventually, in 1579, he was suspended from his chair at the University of Copenhagen.¹⁴

By then Reravius had already left the Danish capital, and he appears to have been unscathed by Hemmingsen’s fate. Hemmingsen’s suspension also did little to diminish his influence, since his many pupils populated offices both high and low in the Church. However, while working with Hemmingsen, Reravius did appear to have been very well aware of the precarious situation, and he tried to avoid being drawn into the debate surrounding his mentor. As a safety measure Reravius dedicated the postil to Christopher Valkendorf, the highly influential seneschal (*rigshofmester*), in the hope that Valkendorf “as a patron and guardian [would] afford the book protection, and defend it from envious and vicious people and deriders.”¹⁵ Even if the widespread practice of translating

¹² Lausten, *Church History*, 122.

¹³ Ehrencron-Müller, *Forfatterlexicon*, 4:8–9.

¹⁴ Thorkild Lyby and Ole Peter Grell, “The consolidation of Lutheranism in Denmark and Norway”. Grell, *Scandinavian Reformation*, 120–22.

¹⁵ “som en Patron oc Forsuar, vil saadant Arbeyde tage vdi sin beskytning, oc det imod affuendsiuge oc vanartige Menniske oc Bespaattere forsuaere.” Niels Hemmingsen, *Postilla eller Forklaring offuer Euangelia, som almindelige om*

foreign (mostly German) religious literature in early modern Denmark, as opposed to composing original material, can be seen as a precautionary measure, it did not protect the translator from criticism.

The great demand for works by Hemmingsen underlines the Danish theologian's commercial value. When Reravius summarized the history of the postil, he attested to the book's good fortune in Germany, where "there have been sold many thousand copies."¹⁶ It was the German publisher Baltzer Kaus who had financed the publication of the Latin postil in 1561, and in all probability he had made a profit from the venture.¹⁷ Hoping to repeat the sales success, Kaus was willing to take on the enterprise of publishing the Danish translation at his own financial risk. According to Hemmingsen, Kaus then joined forces with Reravius, who accepted the job as translator after both Kaus and Hemmingsen had offered it to him.¹⁸ Reravius tells the story a little differently. In his version, Hemmingsen had quite simply ordered him in 1571 to perform the translation.¹⁹ This would

Søndage oc andre Hellige dage, predickis i den christne Kircke, vdi Danmarck oc Norge: Først screffuen paa Latine, Oc nu paa det ny offuerseet, oc merkelige forbedret aff Niels Hemmingsen, D: Alle Gudfryctige Christne i Husholdning, Husbonder oc Hustruer, Oc alle andre, som Dansk Tungemaal forstaa kunde, til villie oc tieniste, vdsæt paa Danske, aff Rasmus Hanssøn R: (Copenhagen: Andreas Gutterwitz and Hans Stockelmand's heirs, 1576), Reravius's preface, sign. 5 v.–6 r.

¹⁶ "oc er saalt der aff mange tusinde Exemplaria." Hemmingsen, *Postilla* (see n. 15), Reravius's preface, sign. 4 v.

¹⁷ The draft bill for a revised Church Order of 1561 stipulated that all pastors should own certain books, among them the Bible, Luther's *Small Catechism*, the *Loci* by Melancthon, and Hemmingsen's postil, see *Confessio et Ordinatio Ecclesiarum Danicarum Anno MDLXI conscriptae. Den danske Kirkes Lærebekendelse og Kirkeordinans af Aar 1561*, ed. Bjørn Kornerup (Copenhagen: Gad, 1953), 123. Although the bill never came into force, it shows that King and Church believed the postil to be indispensable to all pastors, and many of them will probably have been recommended by their superiors (or have felt obliged) to buy the book.

¹⁸ "Baltzer Kaus, Borgere oc Bogførere i Kiøbenhaffn, tog sig for, at ville paa sin Bekaastning, lade den prente her vdi Riget ... Derfaare gjorde hand forening met Erlig oc vellært Mand, her Rasmus Hanssøn, Reraius, Predickere her i Kiøbenhaffn, at hand vilde samme Postilla vdsætte paa Danske, huilcket hand efter forneffnde Baltzer Kausis oc min begering, tog sig for Hender." Hemmingsen, *Postilla* (see n. 15), Hemmingsen's preface, sign. 2 r.–2 v.

¹⁹ "forneffnde Her Doctor beføl mig nu paa femte Aar siden, at ieg den skulde vdsætte paa Danske." Hemmingsen, *Postilla* (see n. 15), Reravius's preface, sign. 4 v. Reravius reiterated in 1580 that Hemmingsen had "ordered" him to translate the postil: "min gunstige Herris oc Præceptoris D: Niels Hemmingsøns Postilla,

seem to imply that Reravius considered himself almost an employee of Hemmingsen, who was otherwise in no position to demand his services outright. Reravius would normally speak of a benefactor or patron who asked or wished for, but did not order, a book to be published.²⁰

Be that as it may, the publication of the *Postil*, and the introductory words of both Hemmingsen and Reravius, reveal much about the close working relationship between authors, translators, publishers, and printers in sixteenth-century Denmark. Hemmingsen informs us that Kaus, who also ran a publishing business in Germany, promised to have the book printed in Copenhagen so that Hemmingsen might oversee the process on a daily basis.²¹ Perhaps this also called for Reravius's presence in Copenhagen, the more so as Hemmingsen supplied him with handwritten additions and revisions of the Latin sermons, which Reravius then had to translate and incorporate into the original text.

Reravius is likely to have served as the link between the publisher, the printer, and Hemmingsen. Reravius probably supervised the printing, too, and he definitely did the final proof-reading. He states as much in the postil, where in a remarkable afterword (signed R. H. R.) he takes a swipe at the printer's inaccuracy. Once again addressing "the Christian reader", he laments the arduous task of proof-reading, recalling the Greek myth of the giant Argos, who although his head and face were beset with eyes, remained unable to spot the deceiver who eventually slew him. This only goes to show, Reravius says, that one can never be so accurate in one's work as to avoid errors completely, and that this is more true of the proof reader than of anyone else. He therefore apologizes if he has been unsuccessful in his attempt to eliminate mistakes, but says that this was hardly made easier by the print-shop assistants. They were not always particularly meticulous when transferring the letters from the manuscripts they had before them to the founts of the printing press, "especially", as he wryly remarked, "when they do not understand the language."²² Here

som ieg effter hans befaling vdsætte." Michael Bock, *Sorgefulde oc bedrøffuede Hierters Vrtegaard, i huilcken der findis mange suale oc velluctendis Vrter, ympede aff HERrens Paradis, saare trøstelige i all Siugdøm oc Modgang. Vdsæt paa Danske Aff Rasmus Hanssøn R.* (Copenhagen: Andreas Gutterwitz, 1580), Reravius's preface, sign. A 10 r.-v.

²⁰ Besides Hemmingsen, only the bishop Poul Madsen, who was in fact Reravius's clerical superior, is referred to as a master who orders Reravius to do things (see below).

²¹ Hemmingsen, *Postilla* (see n. 15), Hemmingsen's preface, sign. 2 r.-2 v.

²² "Thi det er neppelige mueligt, at nogen Corrector skal kunde see saa flitelige til, at der io skal stundem komme nogle vildelser, Huilcket oc tit oc offte der aff kommer, at mand i Prenteriet icke grandgibelige giffuer act paa oc indsætter, huad

Reravius hinted at the problems that could arise when Copenhagen printers hired journeymen, especially from Germany, to work in their shops. These assistants could not be expected to have any knowledge of Danish, and one can imagine how, when dealing with manuscripts in that language, they must have often been tempted to simply guess at the lettering of a word that was impossible for them to decipher. The fact that Reravius was able to have the printer include such a message can be seen as a subtle way of underlining his point, or perhaps it was the printer's way of making amends.

The translation of the *Postil* was Reravius's sole, albeit important, contribution to the publishing of sermons. Having worked as a pastor and chaplain for almost twenty years he must have done his fair share of preaching, and yet he never sought to publish any of his own sermons.

The career path of a pastor

Quite apart from Reravius's obligations towards Hemmingsen, the pastor's relocation to Copenhagen enabled him to maintain close ties with the Danish book-publishing world. From 1562 – and throughout Reravius's lifetime – Copenhagen was, by law, the only city in the kingdom of Denmark and Norway where the printing of books was allowed, and in the city only two or three printers would actually be operating at any given time. In Reravius's day the printers in Denmark were all Germans (or at least German-speaking), the most prominent being Lorentz Benedicht, Mads Vingaard, and Andreas Gutterwitz. Even the leading publisher, Baltzer Kaus, was a native of Germany who had later become a citizen of Copenhagen. Reravius worked closely with all four men, and his publications were roughly divided evenly between the three printers.

Being in close proximity to the print shops, he could instantly offer his services to a printer/publisher looking for a translator for a text that was to be put on the Danish market. Furthermore, in Copenhagen he was also in a better position to attract customers searching for someone to translate or write books that were to be marketed as a private enterprise. And as his reputation grew, noblemen and affluent citizens would seek him out with commissions to translate particular texts.

On average, Reravius was able to put out about three titles every year, and all works bore dedications to members of the nobility or distinguished commoners. In 1574 Reravius dedicated a book to King Frederik II, in

der tegnis oc scriffuis for dem, besynderlige naar de icke forstaa sig paa Tungemaalæt." Ibid., sign. SS 7 r.