

The Luther effect. The consequences of the Reformation in the area of printed media and communication*

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For obvious reasons, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, an event that scholars do not hesitate to call it of one of the seminal moments in Western civilization,¹ was celebrated with greater pageantry in those countries where the Reformation prevailed than in Poland. The anniversary was accompanied by countless research projects, conferences and scholarly publications, various popularizing undertakings, such as the famous exhibition *Der Luthereffekt* organized by the German Historical Museum in Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, to which the title of this article refers. There were also some marketing, or even commercial, initiatives. The purpose of this article is to trace the short- and long-term effects that the changes initiated by the Reformation have had on the sphere of media and mass communication.

On 31 October 1517 Martin Luther, a Wittenberg University professor, published his *Ninety-Five Theses*, which were intended as an invitation for the local academics to join a theological dispute on the practice of indulgences.² This marked the

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- 1 A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter. Rok 1517, druk i początki Reformacji*, transl. by M. Denderski (Warsaw: 2017), p. 6 [*Brand Luther. How an unheralded monk turned his small town into a center of publishing, made himself the most famous man in Europe and started the Protestant Reformation* (New York: Penguin in Press: 2015)]. [Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish editions].
- 2 Popular imagination stores an image of Martin Luther tacking his famous thesis to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg in a gesture of protest and challenge thrown down to the institution of the Catholic Church. Many sources claim it is a mere legend which is not to be taken too literally (A. Krzemiński, “Korzenie” [Roots], in: *Marcin Luter i reformacja. 500 lat protestantyzmu* [Martin Luther and the Reformation. 500 years of Protestantism], *Polityka. Pomocnik historyczny* [Politics.

symbolic commencement of the Reformation: a movement that aimed at a renovation of the Catholic Church, but ultimately burgeoned into a multidimensional religious, social, political and cultural phenomenon. Contrary to Luther's own expectations, the promulgation of the theses set the stage for a massive dispute with the papacy that led to his being declared a heretic and ultimately to a schism in the church. Unlike many previous heretics, Luther could not be silenced nor his followers pacified; on the contrary, his teachings received widespread publicity and support, and he gained powerful patrons.³ There were a host of reasons for this. Protestants and theologians will undoubtedly emphasize the religious significance of Luther's doctrine, while historians will point to the growing conflict over power and revenue between the papacy and the secular rulers in the sixteenth century, coupled with the escalating social unrest in Germany. And yet, the immediate reason why the 'modest Wittenberg theologian shook the throne of Peter'⁴ instead of being burned at the stake, was the invention of printing, which allowed for the dissemination of his views at a very quick pace for those times. As Elisabeth L. Eisenstein, historian of print and printed books, put it:

» Rarely has one invention had more decisive influence than that of printing on the Reformation. Luther had invited a public disputation and nobody had come to dispute. Then, by a stroke of magic he found himself addressing the whole world.⁵

The theses against indulgences were quickly circulated, both in the original Latin version (published as a four-page pamphlet in Basel and as a full-size poster in Leipzig) and in the German version (transcribed and translated by Luther's students), and were subsequently reproduced countless times. Within just two weeks, the theses, which were intended by the author solely for the local university community, were known throughout Germany and within the span of a month throughout all of Europe. In time, the doctrinal dispute initiated by Luther provided the

Historical assistant] no. 4 (2017), p. 13). Meanwhile, in recent years researchers have begun to support the thesis that this event did indeed take place, although its significance has been largely different: church doors simply used to function as ad boards at 16th-century universities, and many similar invitations to disputes were tacked onto them. (See: A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 6).

- 3 Luther's most important and influential protector was Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, himself a devout Catholic and owner of an impressive collection of nearly 20,000 relics, the display of which brought him considerable income.
- 4 E.L. Eisenstein, *Rewolucja Gutenberga*, transl. H. Hollender (Warsaw 2004), p. 150 [*The printing revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1983)].
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

ideological foundation for the political conflict between the secular power of the German princes, the emperor, and the pope, a conflict that would go on for years, as it were, beyond Luther himself. During this time, the ideas of the Reformation spread through the theologian's Latin- and German-language treatises, sermons, pamphlets, books, and posters.⁶ Between 1518 and 1519, Luther wrote forty-five works (twenty-five in Latin and twenty in German) that had a total of two hundred and ninety-one editions, becoming the most widely printed author in Europe.⁷ As Andrew Pettegree estimates: 'in the 16th century, printers published nearly five thousand editions of Luther's works; this number can be complemented with three thousand other projects that Luther got involved in.'⁸ The information war that Luther began was to profoundly change the face of printing – both the technology of printing and the organization of the printing industry as a whole – and the appearance and market for the printed book.

Johannes Gutenberg's invention of printing with movable type had been known in Europe since at least 1450. This method significantly accelerated printing and, above all, reduced its costs, but publishing books was still an expensive and financially risky undertaking. A printer, who in today's terms is also a publisher, had to invest in paper (in those days its price accounted for half the cost of producing a book) and in workshop maintenance, and the expenses incurred usually did not begin to pay off until a year later, because that's how long it could take to publish a new book of several hundred pages. It was also the printer-publisher who organized the distribution of his books, and the circle of potential buyers was still small; if he did not meet their needs or tastes, he was left with an unsold edition. No wonder that many printers in this early period (including Gutenberg himself) had financial problems and even went bankrupt. In the fifteenth century, books were already printed in over two hundred places in Europe, but the market was dominated by the twelve largest trading cities, half of which were located in the German states. Two-thirds of the books published in Europe were printed in these twelve largest publishing centres, which certainly did not include Wittenberg.⁹ In the period leading up to the Reformation, however, printers, with the new technology already at their disposal, continued to think of books in the same terms as before the invention of printing. As Pettegree writes, 'the archetypal book would have

6 G. Jurkowlaniec, "Słowa, obrazy, dźwięki" [Words, images, sounds], in: „Marcin Luter i reformacja. 500 lat protestantyzmu”, *Polityka. Pomocnik historyczny* no. 4 (2017), p. 41.

7 A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 131.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 384.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

been long, expensive, and in Latin'.¹⁰ Religious texts, academic texts, and chronicles prevailed, and the clientele consisted mainly of clergy, scholars, and students, as well as a few collectors, not many of whom had more than thirty books in their libraries.¹¹ All of this: the appearance of books, their volume, the pace of printing, distribution, subject matter, language, the cost to printers, and the price to the consumer, was about to change thanks to Martin Luther.

Luther probably printed his *Ninety-Five Theses on Indulgences* in the workshop of Johann Rhau-Grunenberg, who accepted jobs from the University of Wittenberg. Luther used this printer's services many times before and since there was no other printer in the city in 1517, and he complained just as many times about the quality and speed of his work. Rhau-Grunenberg had only one typeface, which meant that the text printed at his house could not be varied or embellished in any way; he broke the lines automatically without regard for aesthetics or transparency of the text, made numerous printing errors, and worked very slowly. To accomplish his publishing goals, Luther needed someone more experienced and sophisticated in the craft of printing, so in 1518 he brought Melchior Lotter, one of Leipzig's most renowned printers, to Wittenberg. Interestingly, however, Luther did not let Rhau-Grunenberg's business fail and continued to commission some, usually simpler, printing work with him. Even in later years, when several printing houses were competing in Wittenberg, he divided his commissions fairly among them, thus speeding up the printing process, which was important to the author of the theses on indulgences, and allowing all the printers to make a decent income. Luther was well versed in the craft of printing and systematically (even daily) checked the progress of his works. We can learn how meticulously he supervised the printing of his works from letters that have survived from his forced stay at the Wartburg Castle. Of necessity, he passed on his instructions concerning the format, typeface, volume of publications and whom to commission the work in writing to his associates. What is more, as Andrew Pettegree wrote,

» [Luther – A. M.-W.] had very firm views on how his books should look, and imposed exacting standards. Most of all, Luther understood the aesthetics of the book. He appreciated that the quality and design of the printed artifact that presented his message was itself a visual totem to its respectability and truth.¹²

10 *Ibid.*, p. 176.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Thus the idea to take up cooperation with Lucas Cranach the Elder, the court painter of the Elector of Saxony. He became not only a co-worker but also a close friend of Martin Luther and the author of some of the best-known paintings that are now iconic for the Reformation, including portraits of Luther himself and his wife, and which revolutionized the appearance of printed pamphlets and books. Lucas Cranach the Elder was an outstanding artist of his time, and his woodcuts used to illustrate books and pamphlets and to print posters were also outstanding. Previously, illustrations of this class appeared on the pages of the most luxurious and most expensive books; thanks to Cranach, these exceptionally composed content-rich illustrations¹³ became available to everyone, even in cheap pamphlet editions of Reformation works. Moreover, he achieved something that we could describe by borrowing a term that is used in relation to a popular text editor of our time: he changed the orientation of his works from horizontal to vertical:

» To this point in the history of art, narrative images were most effectively achieved within a landscape format, where the story could flow naturally across the canvas. The book inevitably required an upright, portrait format. (...) This was a unique problem in the history of visual art.¹⁴

Cranach did not regard the 'vertical orientation' of the illustrations commissioned to him as an inconvenience, but consciously composed his works in this way. He also changed the appearance of the title page in his books. At a time when some printers did not decorate them at all, and the more innovative ones added a few decorative elements from separate printing blocks, Cranach proposed printing a vignette from a single woodcut in which the illustrative motifs surrounded an empty space in the centre for the title and author's name like a wide frame. This was an ingenious solution, ensuring the integration of the text with the decorative elements. In this way the artist created a recognizable style and a characteristic visual side of the reformation prints, which with time became more and more similar to each other. Thanks to this, they were easily recognizable among other publications on bookstore stands, and this translated into their commercial success.¹⁵

13 This is important because in this way Luther and his followers also reached illiterate people who 'read' Cranach, such as his most popular series of illustrations to the Apocalypse: *The beast that fought with the two witnesses; The beast spitting out frogs; The Whore of Babylon.*

14 A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, pp. 193-194.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Another change that Luther forced upon the printing industry was the pace of work, the acceleration of the circulation of publications and, consequently, the spread of the Reformation idea. His published texts were a tool of propaganda warfare: the reformer repeatedly responded in print to the decisions of various ecclesiastical bodies (including the pope) in his own cause, entered into polemics with his opponents, and commented on current events. He could not do this with a volume of several hundred pages, which took a year to publish. Luther accelerated the pace of publishing his work in two ways. First, he drastically shortened his texts: twenty-two of his already mentioned forty-five works published between 1518 and 1519 were no more than eight pages long. Such pamphlets could be published in a mere few days. The printers' investment in the paper needed to print them was small, the demand was great, sales were guaranteed, and thus the return on the cost and profit were certain. In the case of larger orders, the preacher would divide them up among several printing houses, and it was normal practice in those days to reprint them at publishing houses in even distant cities, which also accelerated the circulation of publications. The fact that he did indeed plan his publications so that they could reach as many recipients as quickly as possible is evidenced by his instructions contained in letters written at Wartburg Castle, such as this passage: 'But I do want it to be printed on folio paper with Lotter's type-faces, since it will be a large book. I would divide it into four parts of the year, from quarter to quarter, so that it will not be too heavy and expensive.'¹⁶ The solution proposed by Luther in this case was advantageous for the author (it sped up the printing of his work), the printer (it did not require a large investment), and the reader (the cost of buying the book was thus spread in instalments).

Naturally, Catholics also took advantage of the opportunities offered by print. They printed bibles, but also prayer books, devotional works, textbooks for seminaries, religious literature and pamphlets for the laity, as well as – the most profitable – letters of indulgence.¹⁷ That said, in this competition the Catholics were clearly falling behind. Luther wrote far more than his opponents, and no author

16 Quoted after: A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 172.

17 E. Sojka, "Trzeba pytać prostego człowieka i patrzeć mu na gębę" – rewolucja językowa Reformacji: w tłumaczeniu, szkole, druku" ['Ask a simple man and look at his face'. Linguistic revolution of the Reformation in translation, school, and print], in: Ł. Barański, M. Hintz, J. Sojka, *Reformatory [Reformers]* (Bielsko-Biała: 2013), p. 78. It is ironic that the most profitable endeavour was the printing of letters of indulgence, which confirmed that the person who received it was fully or partially absolved from his or her sins. Such a letter only ran one sheet long and was printed on one side only. The printer worked for a single client and did not have to worry about distribution; he was expected to leave a blank space for the handwritten name of the person who received the indulgence. Such indulgence certificates were printed in thousands of copies, especially before any major indulgence sale planned by the Church, for example, in preparation for the war with Turkey (A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, pp. 79-80).

loyal to the pope was as widely read, published as much, or had such enormous print runs. The pamphlet war, most intense between 1521 and 1525, was won ten to one by Luther and his associates Philipp Melancthon, Johannes Bugenhagen, Justus Jonas and many others.¹⁸ Printers were certainly their allies in this war, although many of them did not take ideological or religious sides in the dispute and accepted commissions from both. Printers of the time were not simple craftsmen; on the contrary, they were educated, sophisticated, and spoke many languages; it was up to them to recognize which author or title was worthy of publication and offered a hope of profit. It was clear to see that the more profitable orders came from Luther and his associates. The number of copies printed, the speed with which new publications sold out, and the demand for reprints and new titles were easily measurable indicators of the popularity of Reformation ideas, which translated into profit for the printing business. The writings of Catholics did not guarantee such a profit. They did not arouse interest, did not provoke debate, most of them lived to see only one edition or were never published at all. It should also be mentioned that, as Andrew Pettegree writes, publishers in the German states faced little to no retribution for printing works¹⁹ of heretics. The German empire consisted of a vast number of autonomous political entities – principalities, free cities, ecclesiastical estates – each with distinct laws. What was forbidden in one place was permitted in another, and printers were well versed in this tangle of local jurisdictions, nor did they have to announce which publications were coming out of their workshops, and book production was so decentralized as to be virtually uncontrollable.

The enormous market success of Reformation publishing contributed to the development of the entire printing industry. The establishment of new printing workshops stimulated the creation of new paper mills, bookstores and book fairs, the development of transport. In short, the modern book market was in the making. One example of this was Wittenberg, a city with only one substandard printing workshop in 1517, which was to become a printing hub by the end of the 16th century.²⁰ Until the Reformation, paper mills and printing houses developed similarly in European countries – thriving where there were wealthy courts, universities and centres of trade. However, as Elisabeth L. Eisenstein put it, ‘the fortunes of printers diminished in regions where initially the prospects seemed excellent, and grew in smaller, less populous countries where Reformed religion

18 *Ibid.*, p. 248.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 324.

had taken root'.²¹ Over time, printers began to move their workshops to places where there was a potential market (i.e., growing masses of literate and book-interested readers) and greater freedom of print.²² In the long run, the growing printing industry became a significant part of the economy of the Protestant countries, while books, increasingly popular and widely available, cheaper and of better quality, contributed to the spread of education in these countries.

An important, though less visible, change made by Martin Luther in the book market concerned the writing style. By consciously choosing to publish pamphlets of only a few pages, and by reaching beyond the scholarly theological community, that is to the mass recipient, as we would say today, Luther had to change his writing style to one that was concise, clear and accessible. As Andrew Pettegree wrote: 'in an age that valued prolonged and detailed exposition, complexity, and repetition, it was astonishing that Luther should have instinctively discerned the value of brevity'.²³ He was a thoroughly educated man, an erudite scholar with excellent command of both Latin and German, but he did not write or publish in order to dazzle with his knowledge and refinement, but in order to be read and understood by as wide an audience as possible. This was an innovative approach for the 16th century, but his concise, clear and accessible style, due to its imagery, soon became a model to be emulated by other authors, especially in the German-speaking cultural sphere.

The veritable revolution, however, was Martin Luther's departure from publishing in Latin. This idea had both theological and purely practical justification. According to the reformer, the faithful should communicate with the word of God without the mediation of priests or an institutionalized church, simply by reading the Bible. In order to do that, they firstly had to be able to read, and secondly, they needed a text that they could understand, hence the idea to translate first the New and then the Old Testament into German. Contrary to popular belief, this was not the first translation of the Bible into German, but Martin Luther's translation was undoubtedly innovative and would play a fundamental role in the development of German culture. Unlike the earlier translations, which were intended to remain as close as possible to the Vulgate, the medieval Latin version of the Bible, Luther's intention was first and foremost to produce a text that could be understood by any audience, regardless of their estate, profession or education. This is evidenced by

21 E.L. Eisenstein, *Rewolucja Gutenberga*, p. 165.

22 At the same time in Catholic countries books were still treated as a luxury item, the authors insisted on writing in Latin, and the Catholic Church constantly maintained the Index of Forbidden Books (which incidentally was a kind of publishing guide for Protestant printers and an advertisement that guaranteed them profits), and introduced the institution of *imprimatur*.

23 A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 17.

his choice of vocabulary (highly visual, often referring to the everyday life of the time), the introduction of neologisms that more adequately and accessibly conveyed the meaning of the translated text,²⁴ the avoidance of regionalisms that were not widely understood, and the use of spellings adopted by the imperial office.²⁵ This not only made the Bible more accessible, but also ennobled the local language, which broke the domination of Latin as the language of great matters: liturgy, science and politics. The Bible translated into German not only offered a new way to participate in the faith, but for many it was a primer, and the encouragement to study it regularly made one accustomed to dealing with books. This translation of the Bible had another effect on German culture unforeseen at the time but, in retrospect, extremely important. The Meissen-Saxon version of German that Luther used became the basis for the literary, generally applicable version of German that developed over the following centuries. Thus, on the one hand, Luther is blamed for triggering the division of the German states into Protestant and Catholic, one that was both deep and fateful for centuries, while on the other hand, he initiated the opposite process, that is the formation of the German nation with language as its unifying factor.²⁶ The reformer also wanted to make his own publications more accessible to his followers, especially since the propaganda war against the Catholic Church intensified. Thus, he began to write his sermons, pamphlets, brochures and books in the national language. He also tried to write simply about complicated matters. This allowed him to go beyond the narrow circle of educated theologians and address the lower strata of society directly. Thanks to this, new ideas spread on an unprecedented scale, and the market for Reformation publications also grew enormously.²⁷

In order to receive the word of God without the mediation of priests, first and foremost the faithful also had to be able to read. Luther was well aware that education was a prerequisite for the spread and establishment of Reformation ideas. He took a two-pronged approach to this task as well: on the one hand, by devel-

24 For example *Nächstenliebe* – neighbourly love, on *kleingläubig* – of little faith. These words, as well as numerous original collocations coined by Luther, became an integral part of the German language (E. Sojka, “Trzeba pytać prostego człowieka i patrzeć mu na gębę’...”, pp. 71-72).

25 *Ibid.* It is worth mentioning that in the Catholic Church there were also attempts to translate the Bible into national languages, but they were abandoned and the Vulgate was finally recognized as a binding version by the Council of Trent. At the same time, the study of earlier Greek and Hebrew texts was limited, so the Vulgate was criticized for poor translation by scholars of the time and inaccessible to most of the faithful who did not know Latin.

26 E. Sojka, “Trzeba pytać prostego człowieka i patrzeć mu na gębę’...”, pp. 71-72.

27 A. Petegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 8. The position of the Catholic Church was opposite, as the Franciscan Thomas Murner put it: matters of faith ‘should not be brought into the glare of public controversy’, and any discussion on indulgences ‘should be conducted in Latin, the language of the academic debate’. (Quoted after: A. Petegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 256).

oping the necessary teaching materials; on the other, by making recommendations for the establishment and maintenance of schools. Many of Luther's works were educational, such as his brief prayer booklet, the *Betbuchlein*, and his introduction to the *Deutsche Messe*, but the *Large* and *Small Catechism* played a fundamental role in introducing Lutheranism to new members of the congregation, both children and adults. *Large Catechism* was intended as an aid to those teaching the faith, both clergy and parents, whose role in the religious education of children was to be far more active than in the Catholic Church, while the *Small Catechism* was a religious textbook for children. Luther and his associates also developed innovative teaching aids: for example, *Small Catechism* was printed not only as a book, but also as a wall chart or a text for learning Latin and German, which made it possible to combine language and religious studies.²⁸ Both catechisms were translated into many languages and printed in countless copies throughout Europe.

Popularization of education was a task apart. In the Middle Ages, children of the wealthy and privileged – the nobility, aristocracy, and urban patricians – were taught at home, individually, and this was to remain so. The basic education for the rest was provided by monastic schools, which disappeared when the Reformation dissolved the monasteries. Luther's intention was to replace them with schools run by the communes²⁹ and to change what we would today call the curriculum and teaching methods. The reformed communes began to establish so-called German schools, whose curriculum was more practically oriented and based on the German language. These schools departed from the methods known from monastic schools, that is, repetition of information until it was memorized, and returned to the ancient models of explanation and understanding.³⁰ Another prerequisite for widespread education was a change in parents' attitudes toward the idea of sending their children to school. Luther was aware that, especially in peasant families, this was considered an expensive fad and that children were needed to help parents in their daily work. Therefore, on the one hand, he encouraged parents – for example in a printed *Sermon on the duty to send children to school*³¹ – and on the other hand, he obliged the secular authorities to enforce this duty: in a 1526 letter to Johann the Steadfast, for example, he wrote that the prince

28 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

29 Luther's *Advice to the city councillors of all German cities, that they establish and maintain Christian schools* was one of his most widely circulated works, with eleven editions published in eight different towns (A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 311).

30 E. Sojka, "Trzeba pytać prostego człowieka i patrzeć mu na gębę'...", pp. 74-76.

31 A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 308.

was to be the 'supreme guardian of youth'³² and take over some of the obligations of negligent parents.³³ Another fundamental change in the sphere of teaching was the extension of education to girls. The widespread education of women was essential not only to the model of religiosity that Luther advocated, that is informed Christianity, but also to the realization of his vision of the family and the new role of women within it.³⁴ It is also worth noting here that school curricula for boys and girls were very similar,³⁵ something that would not be obvious in Catholic countries for hundreds of years to come.

Innovative and bold plans for the establishment of a universal education system, formulated by Luther and Melanchthon had far-reaching effects. By the end of the sixteenth century, schools had been established even in small settlements in all German states that had embraced Lutheranism. In Württemberg alone there were four hundred and one schools in the five hundred and twelve existing communes, or an estimated one school for every one thousand people.³⁶ The solutions developed by Luther and Melanchthon in the field of education were permanently incorporated into the legal regulations governing the functioning of the Reformed churches in German cities and states, both those adopted by the authorities (church laws) and those established by the communities (so-called church orders). This model also spread to the other European countries where the Reformation prevailed. The effects of these changes were cumulative for decades or even for hundreds of years, bringing about earlier literacy in these countries, compulsory education for boys and girls alike, equalization of the level of education in towns and villages, transferring the duty to provide education and supervise schooling to secular authorities. It can be said that such a deferred effect was respect for education and the teaching profession that became deeply rooted in the culture. On the other hand, however, it also resulted in a greater acceptance for state interference in the sphere of child rearing in Protestant countries.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 307.

33 Philipp Melanchthon, Luther's closest associate wrote elsewhere that the state in this regard should play the role of a 'common father' (*ibid.*).

34 In contrast to Catholicism, which set as a model of holiness the monastic life and remaining celibate, Lutheranism considered it the natural duty of the faithful to establish a family and fulfil their daily duties. Roles in such a family were more partner-like (Luther's own family was exemplary here; his wife, the former nun Katharina von Bora, was an efficient manager of the estate and of the household, which sometimes included dozens of children, helpers, guests, and the husband's students who lived 'in lodgings' with his family). Women were expected to be able to take care of the family's finances and, above all, the upbringing and religious formation of the children, for which education was indispensable.

35 A. Pettegree, *Marka Luter...*, p. 311.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 310.

It is also safe to say that Martin Luther was one of the forerunners of journalism, and the Reformation pamphlets can be considered the penultimate stage on the road to regular press. Luther not only changed his writing style to that of a typical journalistic statement and consciously addressed his message to the largest possible audience. The smaller format and volume of the pamphlets and the standardized, recognizable layout of the Reformation pamphlets were, after all, a step in the direction of modern newspapers with fixed vignettes. Also, the pace of printing, responding to one publication with another publication or dividing larger texts into four parts, which were to be published quarterly, bring the Reformation publications closer to the classical press, which we expect to be periodic. Luther also appreciated the importance of illustrations and the impact of images, and he deliberately lowered the price of his publications to maximize their audience.³⁷

The war on pamphlets waged by Luther and his followers resulted in the emergence of an engaged press that was used in political conflicts and served not only to inform, but also to shape and mobilize public opinion.³⁸ In other words, it gave birth to press as a forum for discussion, a platform for rivalry and a tool for identification and organisation within individual social groups.³⁹ This is pointed out by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, who sought similarities in the media systems of contemporary European countries. According to both researchers:

» This function of the press clearly contributed to the high literacy rates in Northern and Central European countries and to the central role of the press in social life. The far-reaching roots of historical religious, ethnic and ideological groups, the intensity of the clashes between them and the strength of the institutions they created fostered the development of a press that reached almost all members of these

37 Also the often-cited Pettegree wrote of the effects of changes brought about by the Reformation for the development of the press: 'Printers, who acquired a new public through Luther were loath to see this market disappear; so they fed it by offering other sensations, news of battles and the deeds of kings, natural disasters, spectacular crimes, or extraordinary heavenly apparitions. It is no surprise that by far the most lively market for these printed news pamphlets was in Luther's homeland. These news pamphlets were remarkably similar in design and form to the Reformation *Flugschriften*: like the religious pamphlets they were usually in a neat *quarto* format and four or eight pages long. The developing news market also exploited another format that had developed with the Reformation, the illustrated broadsheet. Like the famous polemical images that had promoted Luther's movement, these broadsheets were able to feed off the highly developed illustrative tradition of the German woodcut industry, the most advanced and sophisticated in Europe.' (*Ibid.*, p. 387).

38 D.C. Hallin, P. Mancini, *Systemy medialne. Trzy modele mediów i polityki w ujęciu porównawczym*, transl. M. Lorek (Cracow: 2007), pp. 153-154 [*Comparing media systems. Three models of media and politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2004)].

39 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

groups, for reading newspapers was a central element of belonging to particular religious, political and/or ethnic communities.⁴⁰

The treatment of the press as a symbol of belonging to a particular social group is manifested in the custom of subscribing to newspapers, which came into being hundreds of years later, of course, but is still observed in Germany today. Quite often, people subscribe two newspapers: one from the community-integrating *Heimatpresse*,⁴¹ and a national daily with whose orientation the reader identifies.

The changes proposed by Luther, and then consistently implemented by himself, his followers and his successors, were revolutionary in many areas. Moreover, in the five hundred years since the publication of his famous ninety-five theses against indulgences, the effects of these changes have been cumulative and synergistic. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein writes: 'localized transitory effects were superseded by widespread permanent ones',⁴² and 'the gap between Protestant and Catholic had widened sufficiently to give rise to contrasting literary cultures and lifestyles'.⁴³ As a result, Protestant and Catholic countries on the European continent – and I do not mean countries whose citizens today are mostly Protestant or Catholic, but countries whose culture was historically shaped by Protestantism or Catholicism – differ considerably in the cultural, economic, political and social spheres. Obviously, when studying social phenomena, especially those taking place over such a long period of time, it is impossible to point to a narrow causal chain from cause A (for example, the Reformation) to effect B (the differences and similarities that exist today in the functioning of the media in various European countries). On the other hand, one can certainly point to factors that initiated and then reinforced certain processes, which after five hundred years, not without the parallel influence of other variables as well, resulted in visible differences.⁴⁴ One such observable difference is, above all, the different participation in the culture of writing⁴⁵ and in the culture of

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

41 This is also indicated by the popularity of the so-called *Heimatpresse*, or local newspapers with very small circulation, which were the powerhouse of the German press market until World War II.

42 E.L. Eisenstein, *Rewolucja Gutenberga*, p. 150.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 151.

44 A classic example, since we are referring to research on the effects of the Reformation, is Max Weber's *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (1904).

45 Authors of a report on the state of readership in Poland define this term as follows: 'Culture of writing is any practice that involves reading and writing, as well as acquiring the texts, knowledge about them, or competence necessary to use them. This is a broad definition in some ways (it includes, for example, the hybrid practices associated with Internet use) and a narrow definition in other ways (it includes only practices – reading books is part of the writing culture, but books themselves are not). Participants of thus understood culture of writing are people who at least from time to time read

the book⁴⁶ in countries where the Reformation prevailed and those where Catholicism held on. The development of the printing industry resulted in greater availability of books, their increasing quality, larger print runs, and lower prices. Advancing literacy, universal education for boys and girls, and the encouragement of daily reading nurtured multitudes of new readers, while at the same time educated people had a growing demand for books, to which the market responded. 'The newly emerging print media began to serve as a means of expression for rival political and religious structures with far-reaching historical roots.'⁴⁷ Books and pamphlets, as well as the press that emerged later, became an instrument of contention, a forum for clashing views, and this was later expected of subsequent emerging media. This created an expectation that the media should not only provide information and entertainment, but also a platform for public debate, as well as a belief in the mission of the public media and in the ethos of the journalistic profession.⁴⁸ Hallin and Mancini, already quoted here, go even further in their conclusions, arguing that:

» Protestantism not only, as we have seen, contributed to the spread of literacy, and thus to the development of mass-circulation of media, but also pioneered the tradition of using print as a tool for religious and, by extension, political and social advocacy. This tradition eventually spread to Catholics, and beyond the religious into other arenas of social life. (...) habits of discourse were transferred from religion to the secular public sphere, producing a cultural model that favoured reading, reasoning, diffusing and defending one's own ideas that encouraged the lay public 'to compare the two sides, think for themselves and choose between alternatives instead of doing as they were told'.⁴⁹

When we talk about the effects of the Reformation, we mainly have in mind the split in the Catholic Church, profound changes in religion and theology, and

and/or write something' (I. Koryś, J. Kopeć, Z. Zasacka, R. Chymkowski, *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2016 roku* [State of readership in Poland in 2016] (Warsaw: 2017), p. 4).

46 Book culture is more than just reading; its researchers analyze not only how many books a statistical inhabitant of a given country reads and buys, but also: whether he or she has books at home and why, whether he or she uses libraries, borrows books from friends and lends them, whether he or she goes to book fairs and meetings with authors, whether he or she finds books an attractive gift, etc.

47 E.L. Eisenstein, *Revolucja Gutenberga*, pp. 146-147.

48 D.C. Hallin, P. Mancini, *Systemy medialne...*, p. 153.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 154.

changes in the model of government in European countries, including the relationship between secular and ecclesiastical power. It is worth remembering the profound cultural and social transformations initiated by the development of new forms of communication, printing and the book market, the culture of reading, universal education, and the tradition of public debate. The effects of these transformations, layered over centuries, are still visible today.

*Translated by Maja Jaros,
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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to trace the consequences – often very distant in time – of the changes in the appearance, content and speed of circulation of publications initiated by Martin Luther.

Striving to reach as many people as possible with his Reformation ideas, Luther used and creatively developed the possibilities offered to him by printing with the use of movable type that had been invented shortly before then. He made his publications more attractive in terms of graphics, made them shorter, sped up their circulation, changed their style for one that was more accessible for the reader; he abandoned the usage of Latin in favour of the commonly understood German

language. All of this resulted in a real boom for the publishing market – the development of the printing sector, an enormous increase in the numbers of printed brochures and books, an improvement of their quality, the development of the book market and the education of masses of recipients of the printed word. Over time, it also accelerated the circulation of information, and led to the creation of pre-journalistic forms. It was followed by an increase in literacy and the development of education – universal and uniform for both boys and girls. This had far-reaching consequences – raising the level of education of the whole society and the level of public debate, as well as encouraging a more active participation in the culture of books.

KEYWORDS: Luther Martin (1483-1546), Reformation, history of the printing press