Nikolaus Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch, 1563–1623*

Addressing the Public – Voicing the Private
The defence takes place Friday 27 October 2023 in the Kierkegaard Auditorium, The Faculty of Theology, Karen Blixens Plads 16, 2300 København S
Nikolaus Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch, 1563–1623*

Addressing the Public – Voicing the Private

Søren Frank Jensen

PhD Thesis
Section for Church History
Faculty of Theology
University of Copenhagen
2023
Nikolaus Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch*, 1563–1623. Addressing the Public – Voicing the Private

Publikationer fra Det Teologiske Fakultet nr. 100

© Søren Frank Jensen


Trykning og indbinding:
Campusprint
Københavns Universitet

Udgivet af:
Det Teologiske Fakultet
Københavns Universitet
Karen Blixens Plads 16
2300 København S
www.teol.ku.dk

Cover page illustrations: Title page illustrations from Nikolaus Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch des Psalters Dauidis* (Nürnberg: Heußler, 1563), Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: C 147.2° Helmtst. (1), and Nikolaus Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids ausgelegt* (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1571), Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: Th 4 61.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would not have been able to write this thesis without the support of colleagues, friends, and family. I am grateful to my supervisor Mette Birkedal Bruun for years of encouragement, thoughtful and careful comments on my writing, and her ability to make the hardest challenges manageable. A sincere thanks is also due to my co-supervisor Lars Cyril Nørgaard for always raising the bar and for his keen eye for all things unexplored. I am thankful to the members of the assessment committee, Johann Anselm Steiger, Herman J. Selderhuis, and Anna Vind, for their critical engagement with my work.

My gratitude goes to all my colleagues at the Centre for Privacy Studies. Thanks in particular to the members of the Dresden and Helmstedt case teams for teaching me the tricks of their trades and for generously sharing their expertise on the early modern period: Natacha Klein Käfer, Paolo Astorri, Natalie Patricia Körner, Dustin Neighbors, Frank Ejby Poulsen, and Johannes Ljungberg. Thanks to Maj Riis Poulsen for assistance with admin and for the vital role she plays in the social life at the centre. A special thanks to my PhD colleagues Bastian Felter Vaucanson, Anni Haahr Henriksen, and Fabio Gigone. Having such spirited friends to share the ride with was a daily gift. Thanks also to Jill Bepler and Lee Palmer Wandel for listening to ideas and answering questions during their visits to the centre.

This thesis was written from the Fall of 2019 to the Summer of 2023. I am thankful to the PhD School and its head, Carsten Pallesen, for making the most of this period despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and to my colleagues at the Section for Church History for inspiration and encouragement. In the Fall of 2021, I had a productive and fun time at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. I am indebted to the Dr. Günther Findel-Stiftung for funding my stay. I would also like to thank the library staff and everyone in the fellowship programme, particularly Elizabeth Harding and Volker Bauer, for their assistance and the welcoming atmosphere they created for me and my family.
I thank Sarah Moran for her careful and swift assistance with my written English. A number of small errors in the original manuscript have been corrected with the permission of the dean. Any remaining mistakes are my own responsibility.

I am grateful to my parents, Marianne and Jørgen, for their support and never-failing interest in what I do. Sincere thanks also to my in-laws, Dorte and Morten, who time and time again have looked after their grandchildren (and their grandchildren’s often sleep-deprived parents). For good company and bad jokes, I thank Mads, Søren, Johannes, and Kristian. Finally, nothing would have come of this thesis without the support of my family. I am grateful to Signe for listening, understanding, and taking care of everything in our life in the final months before submission, and to Kirsten and Jens for being Kirsten and Jens.

Søren Frank Jensen
September 2023
CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES 4

ABBREVIATIONS 6

1. INTRODUCTION 7

2. 1563–1564: THE PSALTERBUCH BETWEEN COURT AND MARKET 22

3. 1565–1569: RESPONDING TO PLAGUE AND CONTROVERSY 56

4. 1571: THE PSALTERBUCH AS AN INSTRUMENT OF DEVOTION 73

5. 1581: THE PSALTERBUCH POST-CONCORD 104

6. 1584–1585: THE PSALTERBUCH AS ELECTORAL LITERATURE 127

7. 1593: NEGOTIATING SELNECKER’S LEGACY 136

8. 1623: THE PSALTERBUCH IN THE NEW CENTURY 161

9. CONCLUSION 177

BIBLIOGRAPHY 180

ENGLISH SUMMARY 208

DANISH SUMMARY 211
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Nikolaus Selnecker, Das Erst Buch des Psalters Dauidis (Nürnberg: Heußler, 1563), title page. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Exeg. 328-5#Beibd.1  31

Figure 2: Nikolaus Selnecker, Das Erst Buch des Psalters Dauidis (Nürnberg: Heußler, 1563), fols 21v–22r. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Exeg. 328-5#Beibd.1  53

Figure 3: Nikolaus Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter des Königlichen Propheten Dauidis/ außgelegt/ vnd in drey Bücher getheylt (Nürnberg: Heußler, 1565), I, fols 17v–18r. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Exeg. 518-1  57

Figure 4: Nikolaus Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauidis ausgelegt (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1571), I, title page. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: Th 4 61  82

Figure 5: Nikolaus Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauidis ausgelegt (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1571), I, fols 18v–19r. Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt  
<urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:1-495100>  93

Figure 6: Nikolaus Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauidis ausgelegt (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1571), I, fol. 38r. Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt  
<urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:1-495100>  96

Figure 7: Nikolaus Selnecker, Der gantzte Psalter Dauidis außgelegt (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1581), fols 16v–17r. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: 363 Theol. (2)  119

Figure 8: Nikolaus Selnecker, Der gantzte Psalter Dauidis außgelegt (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1581), title page. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: 363 Theol. (2)  121
Figure 9: Nikolaus Selnecker, *Der sechste theil des Psalters Dauids* (Dresden: Morgenrodt, 1585), binding. British Library: C.108.d.29

Figure 10: Nikolaus Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids/ zu trost vnd vnterricht frommen Christen außgelegt* (Leipzig: Lantzenberger, 1593), fol. 630v. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 4 Exeg. 1003 w

Figure 11: Nikolaus Selnecker, *Der sechste theil des Psalters Dauids* (Dresden: Morgenrodt, 1585), fol. 6v. British Library: C.108.d.29


Figure 14: Nikolaus Selnecker, *Der Gantze Psalter Davids* (Leipzig: Jansonius, 1623), fols 6v–7r. Stadtbibliothek Braunschweig: C 218 z.s4

Figure 15: Nikolaus Selnecker, *Der Gantze Psalter Davids* (Leipzig: Jansonius, 1623), title page. Stadtbibliothek Braunschweig: C 218 z.s4
# Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Martin Luther, <em>D. Martin Luthers Werke</em> (Weimar: 1883–1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB</td>
<td><em>Deutsche Bibel</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD 16</td>
<td><em>Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts</em>, <a href="http://www.vd16.de">www.vd16.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD 17</td>
<td><em>Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts</em>, <a href="http://www.vd17.de">www.vd17.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USTC</td>
<td><em>The Universal Short Title Catalogue</em>, University of St Andrews, <a href="http://www.ustc.ac.uk">www.ustc.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **INTRODUCTION**

This study compares seven editions of the *Psalterbuch*, a vernacular interpretation of the biblical Psalms by Nikolaus Selnecker (1530–1592). It tracks the modifications, modulations, and transformations of the *Psalterbuch* across a period of sixty years, from 1563 to 1623, and it shows how the work was continually reframed and reshaped in response to shifting historical conditions and in dialogue with other works of devotional literature.

The thesis was written within the framework of the Centre for Privacy Studies.¹ The centre’s research is dedicated to source-based analysis of early modern privacy and the private.² The question that lies at the heart of this thesis is how the distinct character of the Book of Psalms is appropriated in early modern Lutheran biblical interpretation. Many scholars have noted how, throughout the history of its Christian interpretation, the Book of Psalms displays a striking capacity for being moved between the private and the public.³ This thesis interrogates

---

¹ This research was funded by the Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF 138).


what such moves look like in practice. It shows how Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch* complicates any simple binary opposition between public worship and private devotion and rather operates on a spectrum between the two. The editions privilege different types of material: some focus on communal edification, others on individual expressions of lament and praise. How the *Psalterbuch* accentuates these aspects becomes visible in the textual and material differences between its editions.

In this introductory chapter, I present the *Psalterbuch* and give a short introduction to its author, Nikolaus Selnecker. Subsequently, I outline the methodology that has guided my work, before finally offering an overview of how the thesis is structured.

**The Psalterbuch**

The study centres on the *Psalterbuch*’s multi-faceted brand of devotional Psalm interpretation. In a vast ocean of sixteenth-century devotional literature, the *Psalterbuch* is at the same time thoroughly conventional and strikingly distinct. Across editions, its title pages present the work as an interpretation of the Psalms that promises consolation (‘Trost’) and instruction (‘Vnterricht’) to the common man and simpleminded pious Christian (‘dem gemeinen Mann/ vnd Frommen/ einfältigen Christen’). These terms situate the *Psalterbuch* in the tradition of early modern devotional literature understood in the broadest sense as all those publications – sermons, postils, plenaries, catechisms, prayerbooks – that sought to inform, instruct, and comfort the lived Christianity of the laity rather than the trained theologians and academics. Across confessional divides countless such books left the presses in the period, but interpretations of the Psalms were particularly abundant. In fact,

---


6 Accordingly, the Reformation has been described as a media event; Berndt Hamm, ‘Die Reformation als Medienerignis’, *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 11 (1996), pp. 137–166. The role of print in the context of the Reformation has been discussed for decades. Elizabeth Eisenstein coined the idea of ‘typographical fixity’ in her influential *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change. Communications and cultural...
by some accounts the Book of Psalms was the biblical book most often interpreted in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{7}

The *Psalterbuch* was part of a wider trend, but it also stands out. First of all, in sheer size. The first edition came in three folio volumes totalling around 1600 pages. Such bulky publications were costly to produce. Printing large books meant taking on a large investment and being prepared to hold stock for a long time before an edition sold out. Moreover, they required considerable print runs to be a sustainable business for the printer.\textsuperscript{8} There is not much evidence to support strong claims about the exact size of print runs in the sixteenth century,\textsuperscript{9} but common estimations range between 500 and 1,000 copies.\textsuperscript{10} In the middle of the sixteenth century, press operators were required to produce around 3,000 impressions in

---

\textit{Transformations in Early-Modern Europe}, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, repr.; 2005), I, pp. 117–118. In her view, print was a driver in the fragmentation of Latin Christendom into national territories by standardizing the vernaculars and stabilizing the production of the administrative documents needed to enforce dynastic authority. Moreover, the ‘preservative powers of print’ gave permanence to the Renaissance and for the Reformation it ‘provided the stroke of magic by which an obscure theologian in Wittenberg managed to shake Saint Peter’s throne’; ibid., pp. 181–182; 310. Against the fixity of print, Adrian Johns has argued that rather than a monolithic print culture with fixity as an inherent quality there were different print cultures according to particular historical contexts; *The Nature of the Book* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 19–20. As he explains, the ‘first book reputed to have been printed without any errors appeared only in 1760. Before then, variety was the rule, even within single editions’; ibid., p. 31. In the field of Reformation history, Bernd Moeller argued in 1979 that without the advent of printing, the Reformation would not have been possible. He pointedly summarised his argument in the thesis ‘Ohne Buchdruck keine Reformation’; ‘Stadt und Buch. Bemerkungen zur Struktur der reformatorischen Bewegung in Deutschland’, in *Stadtbürgertum und Adel in der Reformation: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der Reformation in England und Deutschland*, ed. by Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979), pp. 25–39 (p. 30). A paradigmatic criticism of his view can be found in the work of Robert W. Scribner who argues that due to low literacy, oral and visual culture was more important than written culture; Robert Scribner, *For the Sake of the Simple Folk. Popular propaganda for the German People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 7.


\textsuperscript{8} Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know. Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 52.


\textsuperscript{10} Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 52.
a day, that is 1,500 sheets of paper front and back.\footnote{Jean-François Gilmont, ‘Printers by the Rules’, \textit{The Library}, 6 no. 2 (1980), 129–155 (pp. 143–144).} A full day’s work would result in printed pages for three copies of the first edition of the \textit{Psalterbuch}. To produce a 500 copy print run of its three volumes, the \textit{Psalterbuch} would occupy a single press for around half a year.

The printed catalogues from the book fairs in Frankfurt indicate that folio volumes such as the \textit{Psalterbuch} were rare.\footnote{As Arthur der Weduwen, Andrew Pettegree and Graeme Kemp point out, these catalogues provide a corrective to the holdings of research libraries which are ‘not necessarily representative of the whole population of printed matter and, in consequence, overstate their contemporary importance in early modern Europe’; Arthur der Weduwen, Andrew Pettegree and Graeme Kemp, ‘Book Trade Catalogue: From Bookselling Tool to Book Historical Source’, in \textit{Book Trade Catalogues in Early Modern Europe}, ed. by Arthur der Weduwen, Andrew Pettegree and Graeme Kemp (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 6.} The printing of Selnecker’s first edition of the \textit{Psalterbuch} coincides with the earliest catalogue from Fall 1564. In this catalogue just two folio volumes were advertised out of over thirty German Protestant publications.\footnote{Die Messkataloge Georg Willers, edited by Bernhard Fabian, 5 vols, Die Messkataloge des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts (Hildesheim; Zürich; New York, NY: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972–2001), I (1972), p. 16.} Of course, the catalogues offer only a very partial view of the book market.\footnote{The ensuing catalogues already add nuance to the picture. In the Spring of 1565, one folio volume is advertised among of eighty-one German publications by Protestant theologians, but in the Fall of 1565, no less than seven folios are advertised among forty publications; \textit{Die Messkataloge Georg Willers}, I (1972), pp. 29–32, 67–69.} The \textit{Psalterbuch}, for instance, was not advertised until 1593.\footnote{\textit{Die Messkataloge Georg Willers}, V (2001), pp. 147–148.} A search in the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC), however, supports the sense of a general trend. Between 1563 and 1623 it currently lists 2,877 folio editions in German printed in the German territories. In comparison it has 10,772 octavo editions and no less than 28,822 quarto editions, around ten times as many as the folio editions.\footnote{USTC with the filters: ‘Germany’; ‘German’; ‘1563–1623’ [accessed 30 June 2023].} There were many interpretations of the Book of Psalms, but few as bulky as the \textit{Psalterbuch}.

Secondly, the composite character of the \textit{Psalterbuch} attracts attention. It is a complex object of study. Its apparent unity is destabilized not only by its many editions, but also its content. The editions have different dedications and illustrations, and along with the continual revision of the work, material such as prayers, an index and, after his death in 1592, a funeral
sermon for Selnecker is included. To further complicate its status as one coherent work, Selnecker employs a variety of literary genres and speaks in a range of voices in it. The bulk of the Psalterbuch consists of verse-by-verse homiletic interpretations of each Psalm, but they are continually interspersed by prayers, poems, hymns, and versifications of Psalms, and throughout the commentary, Selnecker ventures into various forms of catechetical material.

This alerts us to the fact that sixteenth-century biblical interpretation came in wide range of forms, which makes it difficult to treat exegetical developments in generalized accounts. The preoccupation of post-Reformation theologians with biblical exegesis in general and the Psalms in particular has not yet received the scholarly attention it deserves. What Anselm Steiger and Kenneth Appold have noted about the seventeenth century also holds true for the

---

17 In this it was not unique either. Timothy Wengert, for instance, has characterized Melanchthon’s In Psalmos aliquot Davidos (VD16 M3468) as a ‘peculiar smattering of psalm translations […] and commentary’; ‘The Biblical Commentaries of Philipp Melanchthon’, in Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) and the Commentary, edited by Wengert and Graham (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 106–48 (p. 119).


period when the *Psalterbuch* was published: the practical application of principles of Lutheran exegesis is underexplored. Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch* offers a rich source for the investigation of sixteenth-century Lutheran Psalm interpretation in practice. This study builds on the growing body of scholarship dedicated to this theme and contributes to this line of scholarly conversation by focusing on a single work in its different editions.

It has always been difficult to pin down exactly how many editions and print runs there were of Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch*. Even in the 1623 edition, the title page and the ensuing dedication give different numbers: the former counts five editions, while in the latter Nicolai Selnecker (1574–1619) states that his father’s work is now being printed for the third time. In the eighteenth century Karl Goedeke counted a total of nine editions, but he omitted the six-volume edition printed in Dresden in 1585, and he also cites two editions, one from 1589 and another from 1621, that I have been unable to track down in any library or early modern book fair catalogue.

---


23 Karl Goedeke, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der Deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen. Von Karl Goedeke Zweiter Band. Das Reformationszeitalter*, 18 vols (Dresden: Ehlermann, 1886; repr. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011), II (1886), §126 (p. 173). Neither edition is listed in the catalogues from the Frankfurt and Leipzig book fairs, but this is no decisive evidence against their existence as only the editions from 1593 and 1623 are advertised in the catalogues; *Die Messkataloge Georg Willers, IV (1978)*, pp. 115–231; *Catalogus universalis, hoc est designatio omnium librorum, qui hisce mundane vernalibus Francofurtensisibus & Lipsiensibus anno 1621. vel novi vel emendatores & auctores prodierunt* (Leipzig: Abraham Lamberg, 1621; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag <www.olms-online.de>); *Catalogus universalis, hoc est designatio omnium librorum, qui hisce mundane autumnalibus Francofurtensisibus & Lipsiensibus anno 1621. vel novi vel emendatores & auctores prodierunt* (Leipzig: Abraham Lamberg, 1621; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag <www.olms-online.de>). According to Goedeke, the edition from 1589 was printed in Helmstedt. Christoph Reske only lists a single printer in Helmstedt active in
The VD16 lists seven editions, leaving out the 1584–1585 edition. The VD17 does not list any editions. As far as I know the 1584–1585 and 1623 editions have not yet been studied, and there may well be more editions out there. For the present study I have relied mainly on online versions of the editions, but I have also consulted physical copies in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, and the Stadtbibliothek in Braunschweig. Due to travel restrictions, I have only been able to access scanned excerpts from the copy in the British Library of the edition from 1584–1585.

**Nikolaus Selnecker**

The *Psalterbuch*’s publication history spans a sixty-year period, from the wake of the Peace of Augsburg (1555) over the formulation of the Formula of Concord (1577) and into the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War (1518–1548). It appeared in a world where the deaths of Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon were still fresh in the memory of their followers, and by its final publication the Lutheran landscape was reshaped by key-figures in the new century such as Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) and Johann Arndt (1555–1621). This post-Reformation period, sometimes referred to as ‘the confessional age’, was once neglected, if

---

1589, Jakob Lucius, who served as printer for the newly established University of Helmstedt from 1579–1597; *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet. Auf der Grundlage des gleichnamigen Werkes von Josef Benzing*, 2nd edn (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), p. 396. VD16 lists one publication written by Selnecker and printed by Lucius, a funeral sermon from 1592; Nikolaus Selnecker, *Eine Christliche Leichpredigt/ Bey der Begrebnus des Weyland Ehrnvesten [...] Herrn Eckart Luebbern/ Buergermeistern der alten Stad Hildeßheim [...]* (Helmstedt: Lucius, 1592), VD16 S 5482. Lucius also printed a disputation in 1598 to which Selnecker contributed material; Daniel Hofmann, *Propositiones de Deo, et Christi tum persona tum officio [...]* (Helmstedt: Lucius, 1598), VD16 H 4184. In the context of such limited activity, an edition of the *Psalterbuch* from Helmstedt in 1589 seems to me unlikely, though not at all impossible. In the *Psalterbuch* from 1623, Nicolai Selnecker writes the first part of the dedication, but because of his death, his widow Maria Treube (1579–1629) takes over. She dates her dedication 24 March 1623; Selnecker, *Der Gantze Psalter Davids* (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’. However, her husband, Nicolai Selnecker, already died in 1619. We know that dates in dedications can be revised, as this was for instance the case in the edition of the *Psalterbuch* from 1565 where Selnecker’s original dedication from 1563 was outfitted with a new date matching the time of publication; compare Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter des Königlichen Propheten Davids/ aufgelegt/ vnd in drey Bücher getheylt. Das Erste Buch/ Nemlich/ die ersten fünfzig Psalmen/ [...] geprediget/ vnd in Druck gegeben* (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1565), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ and *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’. It is possible that something similar happened in the four-year gap between Nicolai’s death and the final printing of the *Psalterbuch* in 1623. Accordingly, an edition from 1621 cannot be ruled out.

24 See VD16 S5637–S5647.
not downright dismissed as rigid and lifeless by scholars, but since the 1980s, it has been studied intensely by historians and church historians alike.\(^{25}\)

Selnecker has benefitted from the increased scholarly interest in the period. By his contemporaries, Selnecker was often characterized as a turncoat who would shift theological position at his own convenience, and we still encounter this perception in the late nineteenth century.\(^{26}\) Testifying to the diversity of the offices he held and the writings he produced, scholars of church history, theology, and literature have focused on topics such as Selnecker’s christology,\(^{27}\) his involvement in confessional conflict and the formulation of the Formula of


Concord, his hymns and versifications, his funeral sermons, his Luther biography, and his relationship to the Dresden court including his outspoken criticism of the secular authorities.

Selnecker was born in Hersbruck in 1530. A gifted musician, he began his career as an organist in Nürnberg when he was only twelve years old. He studied theology in Wittenberg where he boarded with Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) before serving as court preacher

---


at the electoral court of Saxony from 1558 to 1565. This was followed by a turbulent time marked by brief stays in Jena as professor (1565–1568), in Wolfenbüttel as court preacher (1570), in Gandersheim where he was involved in the organisation of the *Pädagogium Illustre* (1571) from which the University of Helmstedt emerged a few years later, and in Oldenburg where he prepared an ordinance for the church (1573). In 1574, Selnecker moved to Leizpig where he taught at the university as professor from 1574 and preached in the *Thomaskirche* as superintendent from 1576. In 1577, he co-authored the Formula of Concord.

When Christian I came to power in 1586 and began a Calvinist reform of the electorate, Selnecker was deposed and later expelled (1589). He fled to Halle and Magdeburg before serving as superintendent in Hildesheim (1590). In 1591 he was called back to Leipzig by a new, Lutheran-minded Elector, but he died five days after his arrival, on 24 May 1592. Selnecker was a prolific writer. VD16 currently lists 281 publications in his name. In those publications, we find more than 135 hymns and melodies, and in the course of his career Selnecker composed versifications of all 150 David Psalms.\(^{34}\)

**Methodology**

The exact character of the *Psalterbuch* depends on the copy one picks up. The first edition was printed in three volumes from 1563 to 1564, and by 1623 it had been published at least nine times. While these editions feature a mostly stable core of homiletic Psalm interpretations, other material was kept, added, or removed with each printing, and the content is framed and presented differently across the sixty years that the book was issued. We see variations in titles and typography, shifts in illustrations and dedications, and the inclusion of registers, prayers, and even whole books as the *Psalterbuch* was repeatedly adapted and re-purposed. Individual volumes and editions are furthermore dedicated to specific people and display varied arrangements of text on page according to different typographical hierarchies. Although Selnecker refers to ‘his *Psalterbuch*’ as if it were a single, stable work, it was in fact from the beginning a series of volumes that took on new layers of meaning with each revision.

\(^{34}\) Fuch provides an overview in *Psalmdeutung im Lied*, pp. 183–193.
Previous research has mentioned these differences across the editions only in passing. Wolfgang Sommer notes that Selnecker would have seen the multiple printings of the Psalterbuch as a testament to his work’s importance, and Robert Kolb interprets them as an indication of its wider significance in the late sixteenth century. Disregarding the Psalterbuch in its different guises in favour of its impact as a theological work, however, is not without consequences. For example, although Sommer is otherwise circumspect in his historical contextualization of the first edition of 1563–1564, when he describes the overall aim of the Psalterbuch as a contribution to Lutheran unity in a time of doctrinal dispute he cites the dedication of the 1571 edition. While this characterization of the work and Selnecker’s aims is not wrong, it conflates the two editions and neglects the eight years between them as well as their differences. Herman J. De Vries similarly downplays the variation in the editions, which he characterizes as ‘[s]lightly edited and revised versions’, and when Guido Fuchs mentions how the editions were improved upon over time, he more or less repeats the Psalterbuch’s claims to potential readers (and buyers) on the title pages of the later editions.

Likewise, the selections studied by these scholars lead to different views on the Psalterbuch as a whole, for instance when it comes to its readership. De Vries explains how the Psalterbuch was written for ‘the laity […] and not the theologians’. Fuchs imagines a combined readership and believes it was ‘nicht nur den Gelehrten zugedacht, sondern […] auch für das fromme Studium in den Familien bestimmt’. In his analysis of the Christology in the interpretations of Psalms 8, 22, and 110, Kolb asserts that Selnecker ‘was writing for preachers and wanted to aid them in applying the psalms to their people’s lives’, whereas

36 ‘Als eine katechismusartige Zusammenfassung der Hauptinhalte des christlichen Glaubens will Selnecker mit seiner Psalterauslegung vor allem einen Beitrag zur Einigkeit und zur rechten Lehre in der Zeit der lutherische Lehrstreitigkeiten geben’; Sommer, *Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft*, p. 90 n. 55.
38 Vries, ‘Nikolaus Selnecker’s Psalter Commentary (1565)’, p. 58.
39 Fuchs, *Psalmdeutung im Lied*, p. 76.
Sommer, in his analysis of Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 101, maintains that the sermons were preached in a courtly context in which Selnecker underlined ‘das persönliche Verhalten der Fürsten, die er […] an ihre eigentlichen Amtspflichten zu erinnern versucht’. These examples illustrate that the audience of the Psalterbuch is difficult to pin down, and I suggest that this has to do with the unstable and hybrid character of the work. When comparing the editions, we see how they address different readers and appeal to diverse forms of engagement. Taking a closer look at the revisions of the Psalterbuch can thus help us better understand the motivations of its producers and the experiences of its audiences, and how these shifted over the decades it remained in print.

My approach to the Psalterbuch as a series of differently staged (and therefore distinct) texts is inspired by the concern in literary scholarship with the paratext. In 1987, Gérard Genette dedicated his Seuils to the elements in books that adorn and surround a central text, ‘presenting’ it to the public. These include internal elements like titles, prefaces, illustrations, blurbs, and chapter headlines, but also external ones like interviews, letters, and diaries. In spatial terms, paratexts constitute a threshold between the outside and the inside of the text, a framing device that prepares the reader for what he or she is about to read. According to Genette, paratexts are not solely transmitters of information, but actively shape the meaning of the central text.

Genette has been criticised for having too narrow definitions of ‘text’ and ‘paratext’ which

---

40 Kolb, ‘The Doctrine of Christ in Nikolaus Selnecker’s Interpretation of Psalms 8, 22 and 110’, pp. 322, 319 n. 25; Sommer, Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft, p. 92.

41 An article by De Vries on the different title page prints of the Psalterbuch points to the importance of comparing, and taking seriously, the differences between the various editions. Across the three title pages from 1563, 1571 and 1581 he finds a growing identification of Selnecker with King David; Herman J. De Vries, ‘Nikolaus Selnecker and Visual Portrayal of the Psalmist’, Daphne, 26 (1996), 33–51.

42 Gérard Genette, Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). In Genette’s terminology, the paratexts operate in service of the ‘main’ text: ‘the paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its raison d´être. This something is the text’; Genette, Paratexts, p. 12.

43 Genette spatially distinguishes two overall categories of paratexts: ‘Peritexts’ are located in the same volume as the text; ‘epitexts’ are located outside of it; Genette, Paratexts, pp. 4–5.

44 Genette, Paratexts, p. 2.
consider only the written word; scholars such as D.F. McKenzie and Jerome McGann have expanded his concepts by setting the materiality of texts at centre stage. In 1985 McKenzie argued that the material form of a text affects its meaning, and thus ascribed expressive significance to books as physical objects. McGann has suggested a thoroughly ‘materialist hermeneutics’ that considers typefaces, page format, paper, bindings, and book prices, and he has shown how shifts in these features can completely change the meaning of a work despite continuity in textual content. All three authors argue for a destabilisation of meaning across seemingly similar texts as their respective paratexts vary and shift.

The significance of both paratexts and materiality has also been discussed in scholarship on the early modern period, with attention given to the particular historical features of both books and their paratexts. In contrast to Genette, whose work is based on modern subject matter and who defines the paratext as a feature to guide the reader into the text, Helen Smith and Louise Wilson suggest that Renaissance paratexts resemble ‘an ever-expanding labyrinth’ that may just as well lead the reader back to somewhere outside the text as into it. If we approach this material from a twentieth-century perspective we risk overemphasizing the importance of the text as the carrier of meaning, and of the author as

---

45 McGann argues that Genette neglects material textual features and in contrast asserts that ‘all texts, like all other things human, are embodied phenomena, and the body of the text is not exclusively linguistic’; Jerome McGann, The Textual Condition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 13–14. To be fair, Genette is aware of the potential importance of material paratexts; Genette, Paratexts, pp. 7, 33–34.

46 ‘In the pursuit of historical meanings, we move from the most minute feature of the material form of the book to questions of authorial, literary, and social context. These all bear in turn on the ways in which texts are then re-read, re-edited, re-designed, re-printed, and re-published’; D.F. McKenzie, ‘The Book as an Expressive Form’, in Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 9–30 (p. 23).


50 Smith and Wilson, Renaissance Paratexts, p. 6.
the driving force in its production. Typography, page layout, and images were important elements of early modern literary culture and the complex interaction between these elements was never merely decorative, but actively shaped the reception of the text. Finally, in Lutheran literature, the relationship between theology and typography as expressed in the concept of Scripture complicates any simple distinction between text and paratext.

In this thesis I analyse and compare how the different editions of the Psalterbuch were framed, and how these framings responded to different contexts and situations. The outside world spilled over into the pages of the books, and each comes with particular paratextual emphases that invite different ways of engaging with its content. The early editions cast Selnecker as a central actor at the Dresden court and offer a window into the conflict that arose from his harsh remarks about the nobility. The homily is their central genre. Later editions highlight Selnecker’s role as mediator between confessional parties, and in these volumes prayers and hymns take centre stage. The final editions seek to shape Selnecker’s legacy and establish strong connections between himself, King David, and Martin Luther. Here the primary content is framed as a testimony to a better past.

---


53 Nikola von Merveldt, ‘Vom Geist im Buchstaben. Georg Rörers reformatorische Typographie der Heiligen Schrift’, in Die Pluralisierung des Paratextes in der Frühen Neuzeit. Theorie, Formen, Funktionen, ed. by Frieder von Ammon and Herfried Vögel (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), pp. 187–224 (p. 193). This is also true for Selnecker’s Psalterbuch. Genette’s concept is helpful in identifying the different ways the work presents itself to its readers. But when we turn to the actual interpretations, any simple distinction between auxiliary and main text becomes complicated. On the level of theology, the main text in the Psalterbuch is the Book of Psalms. Accordingly, its verses are printed in bold when inserted into the running text. But until all verses are printed before the interpretations from 1571 and onwards, this also means that the central textual event is only available in excerpts. In terms of sheer extent, the homilies account for the vast majority of the Psalterbuch’s pages. But as time goes on, they recede into the background as hymns, prayers, and Scripture are emphasized instead.
Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in seven chapters, each dedicated to an edition of the *Psalterbuch*. Each chapter includes three components: historical context, literary context, and the edition. In the first section, I present an overview of the historical context at the time of the publication. Where was Selnecker and what was going on around him? This helps us understand the world, the edition of the *Psalterbuch* was entering, and it directs our attention to specific themes that call for further investigation. In the second section, I describe other contemporary publications related to the *Psalterbuch*, either in terms of their content or context. This part establishes a literary context based on material overlaps or physical proximity between the *Psalterbuch* and other publications. Many of the editions share texts, images, or other traits with books published around the same time and understanding the relation between the *Psalterbuch* and similar publications helps us gain a clearer view of how the *Psalterbuch* is conventional and how it is distinct. In the third section, I analyse the edition focusing on how its paratexts present it to readers. The order of the three elements is guided by the source material, and while some chapters begin with the historical context and end with the paratexts of the edition, other chapters move back and forth between the levels to more clearly illustrate my analytical perspectives.

These chapters are followed by a conclusion. Here, I summarise the main findings of each chapter and outline how the study contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about Lutheran devotional literature, the diversity of sixteenth-century biblical interpretation, and possible approaches to the study of early modern privacy.
Selnecker stages the first edition of the *Psalterbuch* as emerging from his devotional practice at the electoral court and as an aid to a public over which looms the threat of chaos, caused specifically by evil, polemical, and ungodly books. The exact processes of its genesis, however, are blurry at best. Selnecker variously presents the content of the *Psalterbuch* as originating in sermons that he preached or from interpretations that he wrote. The *Psalterbuch* was his first large vernacular publication and as such constitutes an act of self-introduction to a wide readership, and Selnecker presents himself as well-educated and well-connected. The edition was published in three volumes, each over 550 pages long, and was printed between the Spring of 1563 and into 1565. Homilies make up the bulk of the edition, and they are printed in large and readable typeface and given ample room on the pages.

Each volume features extensive paratextual framing devices. The first is prefaced by an illustrated title page with the electoral coat of arms, a dedication to Anna and August, and two panegyric poems. The second and third volumes both include poems dedicated to the soon-to-be Emperor Maximilian II (1527–1576). The second volume also includes a

54 Nikolaus Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch des Psalters Dauidis/ Namlich/ die ersten Fünffzig Psalmen/ ordentlichen nach einander/ dem gemeinen Mann/ vnd Frommen/ einfältigen Christen zu gut/ vnd in dieser elenden zeit zu Trost vnd Vnterricht/ außgeleget vnd geprediget/ Durch M. Nikolaum Selneccerum, Noribergensem, Churfürstlichen Sächischen Hofpredigern* (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1563); *Das Ander Büch des Psalters Dauids/ Von dem Ein vnd fünfftzigsten biß auff den Hunderten Psalm/ ordentlich nacheinander/ dem gemeinen Mann/ vnd frommen einfeltigen Christen zu gut/ vnd in dieser gar elenden zeit zu trost vnd vnterrichtung aufgelegt/ Durch Nicolaum Selneccerum, Noribergensem* (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1564); *Das Dritt Büch vnd letzte Theil des Psalter Dauids/ Außgelegt durch Nicolaum Selneccerum, Churfürstlichen Sächischen Hofpredicanten* (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1564/1565). The dedications are signed 7 May 1563, 28 January 1564, and 28 May 1564. While the title page of the final volume states that it was printed in 1564, the printer’s mark at the end of the volume reads ‘Gedruckt zu Nürnberg/ durch Christophorum Heußler. M. D. LXV’; *Das Dritt Büch* (1564/1565), fol. 301’. The volumes are foliated after the introductory material and end on fols 271, 324, and 301 respectively.

55 There is a large overlap between the editions from 1563 and 1565. Vries treats the introductory material from the 1565 edition in his study; Vries, ‘Nikolaus Selnecker’s Psalter Commentary (1565)’, pp. 55–82.
dedication to the city council of Breslau and Selnecker patrons in the city. In the third volume we encounter a dedication to the Council of Nürnberg and a poem from the author to his reader. Finally, the second and third volumes both feature short dedications to different patrons tucked in before the expositions of Psalms 94, 110, and 120. Together, these paratexts stage Selnecker as a prominent and electorally backed theologian and they present his work as a hesitant intervention into a chaotic book market.

**Selnecker at the Electoral Court**

When the first edition of the *Psalterbuch* was published Selnecker had already been at the electoral court for five years. In 1557 Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) had recommended him to August for a vacant position as third court preacher, and on 6 January 1558, Selnecker was ordained for the office. He appears to have been well-liked and trusted by the electoral couple, and after his arrival in Dresden Selnecker gradually took on additional responsibilities. In April 1559 he was entrusted with the direction and education of the court choir, the *Curfürstliche Hofkantorei*, and in February 1560 he began tutoring the hereditary prince Alexander (1554–1565), the fourth child and second son of Anna and August. Selnecker also accompanied the Couple on their travels, and when Anna’s father King Christian III of Denmark died in 1559 it was Selnecker, rather than one of his senior colleagues, who delivered the funeral sermon in Dresden.

---

56 The second volume is dedicated to ‘Den Edlen/ Ehrnuesten/ und Weisen Herrn/ Burgermeystern/ und Rath der lüblichen Keyserlichen Stad Preslaw/ zc. meinen großgünstigen Herren und Patronen’; Selnecker, *Das Ander Büch* (1564), unpaginated dedication. In the dedication he singles out ‘den beyden Herrn/ Morenberger vnd Nicolausen Redinger/ meinen günstigen Herrn vnd Patronen’; ibid., unpaginated dedication. Nicolaus Redinger (1525–1587) was a wealthy merchant and banker.

57 The third volume is dedicated to ‘Den Ehrnuesten/ Fürsichtigten/ Erbaren und Weisen Herre/ Burgermeistern und Rath der lüblichen Reichstadt Nürnberg/ meinen günstigen lieben Herren und Patronen’; Selnecker, *Das Dritt Büch* (1564/1565), unpaginated dedication.


59 A printed version of the sermon is included in Selnecker, *Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten vber Keyser/ Kön. Chur vnd Fürsten/ Todt vnd begengnis [...]* (Magdeburg: Wilhelm Roß, 1590), VD16 S 5658.
In April 1547, Moritz of Saxony (1521–1553) sided with the emperor against the protestant princes of The Schmalkaldic League. He overtook the title of Elector from his cousin Johann Friedrich I (1503–1554) and expanded his territory towards the north and east so that it included Wittenberg, Magdeburg and Meißen. These territorial acquisitions gave Electoral Saxony a beneficial position along the Elbe, and during the reign of Moritz’ successor, his brother August of Saxony (1526–1586), the electorate was transformed into a prominent financial and cultural centre in Northern Europe.\textsuperscript{60} Mining was an important foundation for Saxony’s wealth, and August’s policies focused on the development of business: better production methods in the ore mountains, stronger trade with Leipzig, minting and forestry; higher taxes and no export of raw materials.\textsuperscript{61} August was an avid patron of the arts and driven by an ambition to present himself as modern European ruler, he brought Italian artists to Dresden to renew the city’s architecture, art, music, and theatre according to the latest fashions.\textsuperscript{62} Part of this effort was a modernisation of the Dresden castle which included the construction of a new court chapel.\textsuperscript{63} The chapel was completed under August in 1555.\textsuperscript{64} A court choir whose main responsibility was to sing at the services in the new court chapel was founded by Moritz already in 1548. Moritz brought Johann Walther the Elder (1496–1570), who had worked closely with Luther, to Dresden and he to organize the choir in Dresden in accordance with Lutheran principles for church music.\textsuperscript{65} Selnecker would most likely preach on the Psalms at weekday services in the chapel. The

\textsuperscript{60} Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, \textit{Court Culture in Dresden. From Renaissance to Baroque} (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 9; Sommer, \textit{Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft}, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{61} Sommer, \textit{Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft}, pp. 77–78. In 1168 a silver ore was found around Freiberg, and tin was mined in the area from 1230 and onwards; O’Kelly, \textit{Court Culture in Dresden}, pp. 6–7.

\textsuperscript{62} O’Kelly speaks of an ‘Italianisation of Dresden’; O’Kelly, \textit{Court Culture in Dresden}, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{63} O’Kelly, \textit{Court Culture in Dresden}, p. 37.


\textsuperscript{65} O’Kelly, \textit{Court Culture in Dresden}, p. 23. In its founding year, the choir consisted of twenty members, eleven men singing bass, alt, and tenor voices, and nine boys for \textit{diskant} voices, in 1555 it had grown to 38 people; Eberhard Schmidt, \textit{Der Gottesdienst am kurfürstlichen Hofe zu Dresden. Ein Beitrag zur liturgischen traditionsgeschichte bis zu Heinrich Schütz} (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), p. 163.
earliest liturgical ordinance for the court chapel is from the 1581, long after Selnecker’s departure from Dresden, but it informs us that the Psalms should be prayed or sung during the weekday services. Two full cycles were to be completed each liturgical year. The ordinance also specifies that there should be daily services in the court chapel, in the morning and evening.

During his time in Dresden, Selnecker seems in particular to have been close to the Electress, Anna of Saxony. Selnecker’s relationship to Anna continued after he left Dresden in 1565. It was sustained largely through letters and books. Their correspondence spans more than twenty years, and Anna exchanged more letters with Selnecker than any other theologian. When Selnecker was suspected for heresies in the 1570s and 1580s, he wrote to Anna to let her know that the rumours were false. Selnecker also asked for Anna’s permission to dedicate his interpretations of the Psalms to her, and he dedicated works not only to Anna and August, but also to their children. It was not uncommon for Anna to return the favour of a dedication with financial support, and besides Selnecker, Johann Habermann (1516–1590) and Hieronymus Weller (1499–1572) also received support in this way. Finally, when Anna was entrusted with the education of a Danish nobleman, Corfitz Grubbe, she had him live in Selnecker’s house from 1575 to 1577.

---

66 Starting with Psalm 1 on the Saturday before Second Sunday after Easter to Psalm 150 on Monday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity. On the next day a new cycle began. It was completed on Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent. The long Psalm 119 was distributed across 20 days in each cycle; Schmidt, *Der Gottesdienst am kurfürstlichen Hofe zu Dresden*, p. 55.

67 The earliest liturgical ordinance from court is from 1581, that is, after the FC and the conflict around Philippism in the 1570s. Schmidt interprets the written materials as signs of the consolidation of Electoral Saxony in ordinances: Church, School, and Policie ordinances were completed by 1580. Now on to smaller matters such as the gottesdienst at court + after Phillipism + problems with Giovanni Battista Pinelli, need for control; Schmidt 42.

68 As Pernille Arenfeldt has shown; ‘Gendered Patronage and Confessionalization’. See also Katrin Keller, *Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen (1532-1585)* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2010), pp. 126–127.


70 Arenfeldt, ‘Gendered Patronage and Confessionalization’, pp. 8, 9, 11.

theologians including Selnecker, the electorate was accused of being under a ‘Weiberregiment’.\(^{72}\)

### Catechisms and Psalters

Selnecker was already publishing during his years in Wittenberg; these early works are in Latin, for example a collection of consolatory commonplaces from Scripture and versifications of Jeremiah.\(^{73}\) He only started publishing in German in 1561 after joining the Dresden court. His first vernacular publications include a devotional interpretation of the Letters of John dedicated to Anna of Saxony, and a translated and expanded version of the consolatory commonplaces dedicated to the electoral couple’s daughter Elisabeth of Saxony (1552–1590).\(^{74}\) Both books are small objects: a quarto of 133 leaves and an octavo of just sixty-four. In terms of both size and its paratextual embellishment the *Psalterbuch* dwarfs both, and would have acted as an imposing presentation of Selnecker to a wider audience.\(^{75}\)

The *Psalterbuch* was not Selnecker’s only large-scale publication from his Dresden years. He writes in his dedication to the first volume that both it and his *Paedagogia Christiana* are examples of and testimonies to his efforts to preach the Gospel without discord or sophistry

---


\(^{75}\) The large folio format in itself had a representative function as the book would need a table or a stand to be read; Gitta Bertra, ‘The History and the Analysis of Illustrated Title Pages’, in *Gateways to the Book*, ed. by Gitta Bertram, Nils Büttner, and Claus Zittel pp. 61–91 (p. 65). Margaret Aston has highlighted the difference between small books that could be carried and concealed and large books that belonged in libraries and studies, ‘Lap Books and Lectern Books: The Revelatory Book in the Reformation’, in *The Church and the Book*, ed. by R.N. Swanson (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 163–189.
at court. The Paedagogia Christiana, first printed in 1565, is a detailed exposition of Christian doctrine based on the elements of Luther’s Catechisms, and it is similar to the Psalterbuch in several ways. In its dedication Selnecker reiterates central themes from the Psalterbuch’s opening, voices that same ambivalence towards the number of books currently being printed, and contends that this book contains nothing new. He further explains that he wrote the book because he was preaching the Small Catechism at court.
That these two publications constitute a pair is further underlined by the fact that the same poem is featured in the paratextual material in both works. Written by Georg Fabricius, it appears after the dedication in the first volume of the *Psalterbuch* as ‘In Pædagogiam et Psalterium Selnecceri Georgius Fabricius K’, and immediately after the title page in the first edition of the *Paedagogia Christiana* as ‘In Pædagogiam Christianam Georgius Fabricius ad Lectorem Christianum’. As an introductory poem it fits better in the *Paedagogia*; the six couplets, like the rest of the *Paedagogia*, are in Latin, and the poem invites readers old and young to learn (‘Disce puer […] disce senex’) the things necessary to avoid being led astray on the path of the sects (‘in varias […] sectas’). It tells of how Nathan taught (‘docuit’) Solomon the precepts (‘precepta’) that God gave Jacob, and it concludes with a call for the reader to cultivate ‘these doctrines in your mind’ (‘Hæc […] dogmata mente cole’). In accordance with the overall ambition of the *Paedagogia*, the poem appeals to the intellectual rather than the affective faculties, and whereas the *Psalterbuch* – as its title pages states – deals with both instruction and consolation, the *Paedagogia* and the poem lean heavily towards the first category.

Together, the *Psalterbuch* and the *Paedagogia Christiana* constituted Selnecker’s grand entry onto the theological stage of Electoral Saxony. The choice of these two genres, interpretation of the Psalms and of the Catechism, is rooted in Selnecker’s appointment at court, his preaching, his tutoring, and his direction of the court choir. If we take a step back, however, the two publications also form a confessional counterweight to the Calvinist *Geneva Psalter* of 1562 and the *Heidelberg Catechism* of 1563.

In his reform of Christian worship John Calvin promoted congregations singing metrical Psalms set to simple melodies. They should be sung in unison and without musical accompaniment, so as to not distract from the meaning of the words, and Calvin contended that this musical practice would help worshippers commit Scripture to memory. He encountered metrical psalmody in Straßburg after being exiled from Geneva in 1538, and the

---


80 Selnecker, *Paedagogia Christiana [...]*, verso of title page; Selnecker, *Das Erst Büß* (1563), unpaginated.
following year published his first collection of seventeen metrical Psalms. Calvin expanded these in 1545, but the full metric versification of all 150 Psalms was only printed in 1562 after his death, having been prepared by his successor Theodore Bèza (1519–1605) and Clément Marot (1496–1544).81 Luther, by contrast, had only prepared versified versions of seven biblical Psalms for congregational singing.82 To make up for the lack of German versifications Ambrosius Lobwasser (1515–1585) prepared a German translation of the Geneva Psalter; this was completed as early as 1565 but not printed until 1573.83 Lobwasser’s Der Psalter deß Königlichen Propheten Davids quickly gained popularity and became an important vehicle for the conversion of multiple territories from Lutheranism to Calvinism, and was accordingly harshly criticised by Lutherans.84 Both interpretations and versifications of the Psalms thus became sites of demarcation for confessional identity.85


A similar trajectory can be traced in the catechetical genre. After Melanchthon’s death in 1560 Friedrich III (1515–1576), Elector of the Palatinate, turned to Zürich and Geneva for both inspiration and personnel and initiated a shift towards what has been described as a Melanchthonian-Reformed confessional profile.86 Friedrich commissioned a catechism that would support this new direction while staying within the framework of the Augsburg Confession, to which all non-Catholic territories in the Empire had to subscribe.87 It was composed by a team led by Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583) that included members of the Heidelberg theological faculty, Palatine superintendents, and influential pastors, and the text was printed in Heidelberg in 1563.88 The Heidelberg Catechism was met with strong opposition, especially from Gnesio-Lutherans such as Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575) and Tilemann Heshusius (1527–1588), and it offers a paradigmatic example of how catechism as a genre became profoundly confessional.89 This provides deeper context for Selnecker’s claims about the chaos of the publishing landscape and the damage done by evil books in the German territories, and the production of the Psalterbuch and Paedagogia should be viewed in light of this confessionalisation of devotional literary traditions.90

---

86 Lyle D. Bierma, ‘The Theological Origins of the Heidelberg Catechism’, in Profil und Wirkung des Heidelberger Katechismus. Neue Forschungsbeiträge anlässlich des 450jährigen Jubiläums, ed. by Christoph Strohm and Jan Stievermann (Göttingen: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015), 13–22 (pp. 17–18). In the same volume, Irene Dingel underscores the confessional difference of the Catechism to the positions of both Luther and Melanchthon on key issues such as Christology, the Lord’s Supper, and images of God; ‘Die lutherische Kritik am Heidelberger Katechismus’, 226–241, (p. 227–228).


88 Catechismus Oder Christlicher Vnderricht/ wie der in Kirchen vnd Schulen der Churfürstlichen Pfaltz getrieben wirt (Heidelberg: Johann Mayer, 1563), VD16 P 2166.


90 A striking example of how the two genres might merge can be found in Heinrich Heshusius’ Psalmocatechesis from 1594 to which Selnecker contributed an introduction; Psalmocatechesis. Das ist: Concordantia oder Einhelligkeit/ deß heiligen Catechismi vnd der Psalmen Davids/ in Predigten verfasset (Leipzig: Lamberg, 1594), VD16 H 2986. See Halvorson, Heinrich Heshusius and Confessional Polemic in Early Lutheran Orthodoxy, pp. 135–136.
Figure 1: Nikolaus Selnecker, Das Erst Bäch des Psalter Dauidis (Nürnberg: Heußler, 1563), title page. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Exeg. 328-5#Beibd.1
Chapter 2

The Edition

Upon opening the Psalterbuch we are immediately presented with an image of its author: a woodcut on the title page portrays Selnecker and King David engaged in musical performance (see figure 1). In quintessential Renaissance style the composition employs one-point perspective with a central vanishing point, and the scene is neatly divided in three sections. Selnecker is depicted seated behind an organ on the right side of the illustration. The organ pipes extend to an open window above him, and his name and age is inscribed on the side of his instrument as ‘NIC[olaus] SELNEC[erus]: AN[no] ET[tatis]·S[uae]·XXX’. Mirroring him on the left side of the illustration is David, seated on a throne with a harp in his hands. Between them a young man pumps air into Selnecker’s organ while gazing back at the biblical king, suggesting that Selnecker’s music is directly animated and inspired by David. Reading from left to right, the music from David’s harp travels into Selnecker’s organ, through its pipes, and out of the open window, flowing from the courtly setting into the space beyond the castle walls. The illustration thus stages Selnecker as a courtly interpreter and disseminator of King David’s music, and it presents the content of the Psalterbuch not as words printed in a book, but instead as divinely inspired music.

The woodcut was probably composed specifically for the Psalterbuch. Its visual

91 The title page draws on the tradition of emblematics, and a subscription confirms that we are in fact looking at David and Selnecker: ‘Selneccere pia sic uultus mente ferebas, Dauidicæ iungens organa pulcra lyrae’. The study of early modern emblematics is rich. For a short introduction, see Alastair Fowler, The Mind of the Book: Pictorial Title-Pages (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 42–49; and Peter M. Daly, Literature in the Light of the Emblem, 2nd edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

92 Vries interprets the illustration along the same lines, but sees the open window rather as a sign of divine illumination bestowed upon Selnecker; Vries, ‘Nikolaus Selnecker and Visual Portrayal of the Psalmist’, p. 40.

93 All editions of the Psalterbuch printed by Heußler feature the same woodcut as well as the electoral coat of arms, both signed ‘M.S.’. This signature has been connected to the artist Melchior Schwarzenberg whose woodcuts were included in Hans Lufft’s Luther Bible from 1534; Karl Michael Wiechmann, ‘Die mekenburgischen Formschneider des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts Zusammenfassung: Melchoir Schwarzenberg’, in Jahrbücher des Verein für Mecklenburgische Geschichte und Altertumskunde, 23 (Schwerin: Bärensprung, 1858), pp. 102–104; see also S. Pelgen, ‘Schwarzenberg(er), Melchoir’, in Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens Online, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004337862__COM_190933> [accessed 28 February 2022]. Schwarzenberg, however, was active in Wittenberg from the 1530s to the 1550s, which makes the appearance of his work in 1563 in Nürnberg unlikely. Georg Kaspar Nagler lists a number of similar M.S.-signatures, and he identifies two different signatures from Nürnberg in the period when Selnecker published his Psalterbuch. One ‘M.S.’ mainly fashioned works by Luther with woodcuts; the other mainly did coats of arms; Georg Kaspar Nagler, Die Monogrammisten und diejenigen bekannten
programme is unconventional compared to contemporary Davidic title page illustrations in vernacular Bibles and Psalm interpretations, where David is often depicted on his knees, in prayer or penitence, and located on the outskirts of a city or inside a castle. Sometimes he plays his harp but more often it rests on the ground beside him, and David is usually pictured alone or accompanied only by God bursting through the skies. In these illustrations David and his surroundings are presented somewhere on a spectrum between contemporary Germany and a biblical past, according to early modern conventions. In comparison the illustration on the Psalterbuch offers a thoroughly contemporary presentation of the Old Testament king, as he is accompanied by two non-biblical individuals with no sign of God present. The illustration offers a striking combination of the divine and the mundane.

Since the Middle Ages David had served as the central biblical symbol for the idea of the sacred kingdom, and rulers positioned often themselves as ‘new Davids’. In early modernity, David remained the royal model par excellence. This applied too in Electoral Saxony, where around ten years after the initial publication of the Psalterbuch in 1574 August took part in carnival celebrations enacting the story of David and Goliath, with

---

94 The depiction of David outside in prayer was particularly popular on Luther’s Psalter mit den Summarien; see for example Der Psalter mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luth. [...] (Leipzig: Rhambaw, 1561), VD16 ZV 18623; Martin Luther, Der Psalter Deudsch Mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luther. [...] See also the discussion of the title page on the 1574 edition below; pp. 81–84. In Adam Petri’s third volume of Luther’s Old Testament from 1525, David is alone on his throne, playing his harp inside a castle; Martin Luther, Das dritt teyil des alten Testaments [...] (Basel: Adam Petri, 1525), VD16 B 2914, fol. 21r. Similarly in the German Bible from 1534 where David in portrayed playing his harp inside a castle while looking out of a window towards God who appears in the sky; Biblia/ das ist/ die gantze Heilige Schrift Deudsch. Mart. Luth. (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1534), VD16 B 2694, III, fol. XVIIIr. Another illustration that depicts the Dresden court and King David can be found on the copper etching made by David Conrad for the Geistreiches Gesang-Buch/ An D. Cornelii Beckers Psalmen und Lutherischen Kirchen-Liedern (Dresden: Paul Hamann, 1676), VD17 3:307776Y, unpaginated.


himself in character as the victorious underdog.\textsuperscript{97} The title above the illustration in the \textit{Psalterbuch} also underscores the edition’s contemporary, courtly origin. Rather than a musician at the court of King David, it introduces Selnecker as electoral court preacher (‘Churfürstlichen Sächischen Hofpredigern’). Read in this light, the illustration takes on another dimension as a representation of Selnecker fulfilling his daily duties in the court chapel of the electoral court with Elector August on the throne as an early modern David.

Turning to the next page, Selnecker’s association with the electoral court is further stressed in an illustration of Elector August’s coat of arms that bears the initials of his motto: ‘A.G.V.B.D.W’ (‘Ach Gott, [Erhalte] Uns Bei Deinem Worte’).\textsuperscript{98} The escutcheon is only printed in the first volume; the second and third open instead with panegyrics for Maximilian II whose reign would begin in July of 1564.\textsuperscript{99} Signaling his proximity to power even at the imperial level, Selnecker explains that he wrote the first poem in January 1564 in Dresden when Maximilian visited the city. Across the dedications, which I will spend more time analysing below, Selnecker continues to foster the sense that he has an extensive, powerful network. The first volume is dedicated to the electoral couple, and Selnecker explains that he

---

\textsuperscript{97} O’Kelly, \textit{Court Culture in Dresden}, pp. 20–21.

\textsuperscript{98} The missing ‘E.’ in the abbreviation was supplied in later editions. When a coat of arms was printed as part of the dedicatory material, it was typically placed either on the page of the dedication or, as is the case in the \textit{Psalterbuch}, on the verso of the title page leaf. This space was often left empty, but it could serve a variety of functions; Andre Horch, \textit{Buchwidmungen der Frühen Neuzeit als Quellen der Stadt- und Druckgeschichte} (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), p. 108. For example, the space is used for a poem in Selnecker’s \textit{Paedagogia Christiana} from 1565 and for a list of errata in a treatise on the Lord’s Supper from the same year; Selnecker, \textit{Paedagogia Christiana} (1565); Selnecker, \textit{Bericht Von der waren gegenwertigkeit des leibs vnd bluts vnsers Herrn Jesu Christi in seinem H. Abendmal/ gestellt […]} (Heidelberg: Johann Mayer, 1565), VD16 S 5455. Genette mentions that in early modernity, the pages immediately following the title page were usually reserved for printing licenses (the privilege); Genette, \textit{Paratexts}, p. 33 n. 23. The privileges grew out of an effort to regulate the book markets and protect the commercial interests of the printers who took the risk to invest in a particular publication. Often a book would be printed in another country under different jurisdiction; Shef Rogers, ‘Imprints, Imprimaturs, and Copyright Pages’, \textit{Book Parts}, pp. 51–64, (pp. 57–58). In Germany, privileges were accorded by the Emperor or the local authorities, and besides organising the book market and make it safer for printers to invest in new projects, it was also a way for the authorities to favour their chosen printers as well as to monitor more closely what was being printed; Lucien Fevbre and Henri-Jean Martin, \textit{The Coming of the Book. The Impact of Printing 1450–1800}, trans. by David Gerard (London: NLB, 1976), pp. 239–243 (p. 241).

\textsuperscript{99} ‘Nicolaus Selneccerus Dresdæ pridie idus Ianuarij, M.D.LXIII quo tempore Rex Maximilianus Dresdae fuit et quo die ante annos quadraginta quinque imperator Maximilianus proauus Regis Maximiliani obijt’; \textit{Das Ander Bücher} (1564), unpaginated [sp iii].
is sending them the Psalterbuch because he delivered the sermons on which it draws at their court.¹⁰⁰ In the second and third volumes he thanks his patrons in Breslau for supporting him during his time in Wittenberg, as well as the city of Nürnberg for everything it has provided him with as his fatherland.¹⁰¹ The Psalterbuch thus presents Selnecker as a theologian legitimized by authorities at all levels of Christian society, from city officials to the elector, the ruler of the empire, and the biblical King David.

Dedications: The Psalterbuch between Preaching and Print

Each of the three volumes has a different dedication. These dedications offer standard features such as an emphasis on the author’s humility and lamentations over the rushed nature of the work.¹⁰² As we follow the Psalterbuch in its different iterations, these conventional features, however, enter into new relations with Selnecker’s revisions of the work and the outside world.¹⁰³ After the title page and the coat of arms, the first volume from 1563 features a lengthy dedication to the electoral couple, Anna and August of Saxony. Selnecker opens his first dedication to Anna and August with an impassioned denunciation of the current state of the German book markets in which Selnecker explains how much damage evil books are currently causing:

Viel bücher machens ist kein ende/ vnnd viel Predigen macht den Leyb müde. Man findet jetzt vberal vnzeliche viel Bücher in alle sprachen/ gut und böse/ vnnd sind der Scribenten so


¹⁰¹ Selnecker, Das Ander Bûch (1564), unpaginated dedication; Das Dritt Bûch (1564/1565), unpaginated dedication.

¹⁰² The defensive tone of the dedication has been noted by Wolfgang Sommer and Herman De Vries has emphasized how Selnecker works within established literary conventions when he describes how he was persuaded to publish the Psalterbuch for the good of a wider audience; Sommer, Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft, p. 90; Vries, ‘Nicolaus Selnecker’s Psalter Commentary (1565)’, pp. 61, 66–68. See also Karl Schottenloer, Die Widmungsvorrede im Buch des 16. Jahrhunderts (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953).

¹⁰³ Selnecker’s dedications operate within the conventions of the genre, but as Andreas Keller notes, how dedications change over time is worth comparing, because the differences provide a window into changing historical dynamics; Frühe Neuzeit. Das rhetorische Zeitalter (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), p. 27.
A chaotic mix of books currently floods the markets, and the evil books threaten to suppress the good books altogether. Printing has become a vehicle for shameless self-promotion, a way to make a name for oneself, and as a result threatens the lives of people of all estates as well as the stability of society. The citation of Ecclesiastes 12:12 (‘There is no end to the making of books, and much preaching tires the body’) is a striking choice as the programmatic opening for a large book full of homilies, but as Selnecker argues in the course of the dedication, the problem is not so much the number of printed books but their character.

The verse from Ecclesiastes was a common vehicle for authors to express their conviction that too many books were being printed, and the concern for the negative effects of print was a widespread topos. Erasmus of Rotterdam (c. 1469–1539) blamed print for facilitating the production of a swarm of books of inferior quality that took focus away from the ancient classics that people ought to read; Jean Calvin (1509–1564) complained about the many bad books that were printed and called for more learned books by pious men; and the jurist Giovanni Nevizzano of Asti (d. 1540) worried that the multitude of books made it difficult

104 Selnecker, *Das Erst Buch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [⋆ij]°.
105 For example in 1585 the Anglican Archbishop of York Edwin Sandy referred to Ecclesiastes 12:12 in a collection of his sermons; Sarah Bastow, ‘Sin and Salvation in the sermons of Edwin Sandys: “Be this sin against the Lord far from me, that I should cease to pray for you”’, in *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England*, ed. by Jonathan Willis (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 209–222 (p. 212). It was also used in other genres, for instance in a work on geometry by the Altdorf professor Daniel Schwenter (1585–1636); *Geometriae practicae nnoe et aucta* (Nuremberg: Simon Halbmayern, 1627), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [ij r]. Dietrich Reinking (1590–1664) also uses the same reference in his *Biblische Policey* (Frankfurt am Main: 1653), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [⋆iij’], VD17 23:325928Q. Thanks to Lars Nørgaard and Paolo Astorri for the reference.
the find the ones you actually needed. The secular authorities were also concerned about books, and censorship intensified in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Selnecker anchors his critique of excessive printing in Luther, quoting a treatise from 1527 on the Lord’s Supper in which Luther attacks his opponents for printing anything that comes to mind, not taking the time to see whether their thoughts make actual sense. Luther’s attitude to the printing industry shifted in the course of his career, which points to contemporary anxieties and uncertainty about the rapidly shifting landscape of the written word. In the Weihnachtspostille of 1522 he writes without any reservations that the Bible is the only book people need. However after the Peasant’s War he begins to express the need for proper aids to help people read and understand Scripture, and in a lecture on Ecclesiastes from 1526 he laments that too many books of inferior quality are being printed – for every good book there are ten bad ones.

Selnecker was not alone in his fear of the multitude of books spilling from the presses. For him the fundamental problem is that most books currently on the market are full of

---


107 Hasse mentions for instance the implementation of the oaths for printers and indexes of banned books, Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter. p. 15. In 1558, the Danish king Christian III wrote a letter to August, his son in law, explaining that he ought to make sure that all new books were overseen by the authorities. If left to its own devises, the market would produce far too many evil books that would in turn suppress the good ones; Charlotte Appel, Læsning og bogmarked i 1600-tallets Danmark, 2 vols (København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2001), I, p. 383.

108 ‘D. Lutherus in seinem Buch wider die Schwermegeister/ die Sacramentirer (das die Wort Christi/ das ist mein Leib/ noch vest stehen) spricht vnter andern von leichtfertigem Buchschreibern also: Ach wehe/ vn[d] aber wehe allen vnsern Lehrern vnd buchscreibern/ die also sicher daher faren/ vnd spyen herauß/ alles was jnen ins maul fellet/ vnd sehen nit zu vor einen gedancken zehen mal an/ ob er auch recht sey’; Selnecker, Das Erst Büch (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [ij’]; Martin Luther, Das diese wort Christi (Das ist mein leib. etce) noch fest stehen widder die Schwermgeister (Wittenberg 1527), unpaginated [Av’], VD16 L 4274; WA 23, p. 71.


110 Holger Flachmann, Martin Luther und das Buch, p. 198.

111 ‘Fit enim, ut cum unus bonus liber editur, edandur et decem alii mali, sicut et nobis contingit’; ‘Ecclesiastes Salomonis cum annotationibus D.M.Lutheri’, in WA 20, p. 200; cited in Flachmann, Martin Luther und das Buch, p. 194.
disputation, quarrelling, and strife, while books that offer instruction and consolation through straight-forward interpretations of Scripture are hard to come by:

Wenn jetziger zeyt ein Meß oder Marcht im Teutschlandt gehalten wirdt/ da man frembde Bücher hin bringet vnd verkauft/ ist es nicht war/ man findet allweg mehr Bücher/ die vol disputierens vnd zanckens/ vol scheltens vnd lesterns/ vnd vol streytiger hendel sind/ die doch zu nichts/ als zu dem schulgezenck allein dienen/ denn das man feine Lehr vnd Trostbücher finden vnd kauffen künde/ die fein schlecht vnd recht das Wort Gottes aufläget/ vnd rechte raine Lehr füreten.\(^{112}\)

Selnecker frames this bleak view of the markets in apocalyptic terms. The evil books are a symptom of a deeper disorder, just one form of the divine punishment being inflicted upon Germany for its lack of regard for the word of God.\(^{113}\) Yet in actual fact, in terms of quantity polemical texts accounted for just a fraction of publications in the second half of the sixteenth century, and just a small portion of the religious books on the market were dedicated to theological exposition and controversy. Bibles, psalters, catechisms, and prayerbooks left the presses in far great numbers.\(^{114}\)

Selnecker offers his *Psalterbuch* as a reluctant but necessary effort to remedy the perilous state of the publishing landscape as he describes it. He states that he feels compelled to enter the public sphere, where books are the weapons in a battle being fought over God’s word:

Zum letzten/ weil alle Rottengeister/ Sacramentirer/ Antinomer/ Enthusiasten/ vnd dergleichen gesinde/ jetzt kecklich vnd durstiglich schreiben/ vnd mit heymlichen listen vnd Practicken/ vnd offentlichten Büchern vielen Kirchen vnd Schulen grossen schaden thun/ Warumb solten denn wir/ die wir bey dem Wort GOTTES schlecht vnd recht bleiben/ vnsern mut fallen lassen/ vnd nicht auch mit Hertzen/ Mund/ vnd Handt keck erden/ vnd

---

\(^{112}\) Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’[\[\]]\(s\). He does mention that there are still good books out there, people just do not care for them. The good books are written by teachers from Wittenberg: Martin Luther, Philipp Melanchthon and Johannes Brenz: ‘Guter Bücher hette man/ Gott lob/ vili/ wenn man darbey bleibe. Wir haben ja das Wort Gottes an jm selbs in mancher schöner sprach rain vnd lauter. So sind viler trefflicher Lehrer schritten vnd außlegunge fürhanden/ vnd has vns Gott zu vnser zeyt mit dem schritten D. Lutheri/ Philippi/ Brentij/ vnd anderer trewer Mitlehrer zu Wittenberg/ dancken können’; Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’[\[\]]\(s\).

\(^{113}\) ‘Wolan/ wie das Teutschlandt auff alle seeyen/ vnd in allen Stenden abnimbt/ vnd gestrafft wirdt/ also gehet es auch zu mit den Büchern. Unser vberdrüß der waren Lehr/ vnd vndanckbarkeyt gegen dem Wort Gottes/ sicherheit/ vnd der Weltweysen klugheyt/ wir auch mit der zeit gantz vnd gar vom wort kommen/ vnd ein neyen Lombardum einfürn’; Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’[\[\]]\(s\).

\(^{114}\) ‘The bedrock of religious print remained the same categories of book that had fuelled the German press since the first polemical fires had dimmed in the late 1520s: bibles, psalters, catechisms and prayer books’; Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 223.
According to Selnecker, his non-Lutheran opponents blithely use print to advance their views despite the damage it does to both churches and schools. His dedication thus betrays an ambivalence towards the book trade; on the one hand, he laments the current situation, while on the other, he seems keenly aware of a gap in the market, a longing for simple and edifying interpretations of Scripture, that his own publication can fill, and he even states that he has been approached by book printers keen on printing his sermons on the Psalms.

In the end Selnecker embraces print, but he distances himself from the forces of the market. He states that the Psalterbuch is modeled on traditional and time-tested sources from three different categories: the first is Scripture, the second the Augsburg Confession, and the third what he has learned from his teachers, not least Philipp Melanchthon:

Das ich aber auch von diesem meinem Psalterbuch sage/ soll/ kann/ wird ich nichts mehr noch bessers rhümen/ (weil es die Welt doch nicht anders nennet/ denn rhümen) denn allein wie Paulus 2. Cor. I. spricht: Wir schreinen nicht anders/ denn das ihr vorhin wisset/ wenn jrs leset. Was in Gottes Wort/ oder in Prophetischen/ und Apostolischen schriftten/ aufdrückerlich verfasset/ und GOTTES Wort selbs ist/ was inn den Sechsischen/ und Meinischen Schulen und Kirchen nach der Augspurgischen Confession gehet/ wird/ was wir auch von vnsern alten Preceptoribus in Theologia zu Wittenberg und von andern trewen Lehrern anderstwo gehöret haben/ was die schlechte/ rechte/ einfeltige Lehr ist/ was den glauben stercket/ das gewissen tröstet/ und das leben informirt/ und zur besserung hillft/ daran halte ich mich. [...] Es ist nichts newes/ ungerumt/ noch selztams in diesem Buch/ das ich wol bezeugen. Niemand wird mirs vbel deuten. Was ich darff Predigen/ das darff ich auch schreiben.

The Psalterbuch is thus purportedly a written account of what Selnecker has preached and

---

115 Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.


117 Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [*iiii*].
contains nothing new. Not only has he consulted the writings of Martin Luther, Johannes Bugenhagen (1585–1558), Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560), Johann Förster (1496–1556), and Hieronymus Weller (1499–1572), but he has also been trained by many of the same theologians, and in the narrative of his trajectory from Nürnberg to Wittenberg and Dresden the dedication teems with names of venerable Lutheran theologians. He repeats Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, and Förster, and further adds Veit Dietrich (1506–1549), Wenzeslaus Link (1483–1547), Georg Major (1502–1574), and Paul Eber (1511–1569), as well as his colleagues in Dresden: Daniel Greser (1504–1591) and the court preachers Christian Schütz (1526–1592) and Ambrosius Keil (1520–1567).

Accordingly, Selnecker can convincingly claim that he is not an autodidact, basing his writings only on what goes on in his own head, but rather a ‘solidly Lutheran’ author who proudly hews to the simple, grammatical sense of Scripture espoused by his eminent teachers:

Zum andern/ so habe ich nicht meiner eygenen außlegung/ oder meinen gedancken allein guolget/ noch etwas frembdes vnnd vngereumbtes gesucht/ sondern den rechten verstand/ genuinam & Grammaticam sententiam behalten/ das ist (wie die Papisten reden) ich bin gut Lutherisch. […] Also habe ich […] den rechten einfeltigen verstand/ vnd eigentliche meinung behalten.

Now we turn to Selnecker’s other argument for the Psalterbuch’s theological correctness and authenticity, namely that it grows out of his preaching at the electoral court, and the author recounts this genesis in elaborate detail. He states that he had begun to preach on Luther’s Small Catechism at court, but he needed to find an alternative better suited to the travelling that was often required of him. The Psalms were just that. Selnecker tells of giving his first sermon on them in the mining village of Marienberg on September 23, 1561, and that he was spurred to continue his interpretations by the people around him:

118 Selnecker, Das Erst Bůch (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [iii].
119 Selnecker, Das Erst Bůch (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’. Vries describes these teachers in more detail, arguing for their position on the mainstream of Lutheranism; ‘Nicolaus Selnecker’s Psalter Commentary (1565)’, pp. 69–76 (p. 76).
120 ‘Bin also kein/ ἀυτοδίδακτος ἢ ἀυτόματος, selbsgewachsener Lehrer/ der ich allein auff meinen kopff ruhete/ vnd wie leyder der brauch/ newe schwarm/ allegorias/ vn[d] frem[m]de deutung suchete/ sonder ich bleibe bey dem Wort/ vnd bitte Gott/ er wölle mich hayligen inn seiner Warheit/ sein Wort ist die Warheit’; Selnecker, Das Erst Bůch (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [iii].
121 Selnecker, Das Erst Bůch (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [iii].

Selnecker thus presents the Psalter as an ideal travel companion from the beginning of his career onward, and later, in the 1590s, he would state that it has always been his ‘vade mecum’, a book that has accompanied him throughout his life.123 In this first dedication his travels are physical (he moves around the Electorate), and this provides a touchstone for his later use of the travelling topos, when his journey becomes primarily spiritual.

As Selnecker continued to preach on the Psalms he was asked by high-ranking people who had heard his sermons to share them and to prepare them for print.124 He was however hesitant to move too fast, and states that the Electress likely remembers that he had declined to print his sermons until he had practiced and taught the whole Psalter.

Als ich aber fort gefaren bin/ vnd etliche psalm absoluirit/ bin ich von vilen/ auch hohes standes Leuten (derer etliche die psalm gehöret hatten) offtmals gebeten/ und angeredet/ auch durch schrieffen erschet worden/ jnen aintzige psalmen/ sonderlich den 16. vnd 22. mitzutheylen/ vnd in druck zuuerfertigen/ welches ich doch [...] nach der gebur abgeschlagen/

122 Selnecker, Das Erst Büch (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [viiiij’].

123 See below pp. 143–144.

Now that the *Psalterbuch* has been printed, Selnecker expresses his hope that it will offer a good example for others, one rooted in how he teaches the Gospel without discord and sophistry (‘ohne gezencck/ vnd sophisterey’) at the Dresden court. Throughout the dedication Selnecker emphasizes that his interpretations of the Psalms originate in electoral court’s devotional practices, and that they grow organically out of his official duties, travelling, teaching, and preaching.

This narrative in the dedication to the first volume is however challenged later in the same volume, and also in the dedications to the other volumes. In a list of *errata* at the end of the first volume, Selnecker gives a final evaluation of his work. He states that because it was composed hastily while travelling mistakes have been made, and that he hopes he will have time to be more thorough in the following volume. He was, it seems, unsuccessful, for in the third volume the sense of the *Psalterbuch*’s hurried composition surfaces in the dedication, challenging its overall coherency. Selnecker states that he has had just three months to complete the whole volume, and that as a consequence he will touch only on the most important things in the interpretations that follow. He has also changed the markers of legitimacy according to the new situation; this time around there is no mention of electoral practices, and that they grow organically out of his official duties, travelling, teaching, and preaching.

---

125 Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [_Abstract:orchisterey’].

126 Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.

127 ‘Was die ersten Psalmen nach einander belanget/ die zumal spröd/ vnd elend ausgelegt sind/ vnd auff den Raisen elendes/ vnd offt vnuersehens geschrieben worden/ sollen dieselbigen/ wils GÖtt/ fleissiger inn die nachfolgenden zween Theil gebracht werden’; Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), fol. 271’.

preaching at court, and Selnecker instead gives his own motives for publishing as proof of the quality of his book. Books written out of self-interest fade away quickly, he explains, but those written in great haste can still have a lasting impact. In these examples, the Psalterbuch emerges less as a collection of sermons preached at court and more as the offhand result of a busy author.

**What is the Psalter?**

Across the introductory material of the three volumes of the Psalterbuch Selnecker presents the ability to understand the meaning of the Psalms as dependent upon Christian practice. In the dedication of the first volume, instead of going into detail about the distinct qualities of the Psalms he states that everyone who studies the Psalter already knows what kind of a book it is. Moreover, it requires an experienced interpreter who has been broken by hardship and temptation (‘cross’) to understand it.

Ich habe mich aber eben an ein groß/ trefflich/ vnd Gaistreich Buch gemacht/ welchs fürwar ein man vn[d] erfarne[n] versuchte[n] vn[d] durch vil vn[d] mancherlei creutz gezogenen vnd recht gebrochenen Doctor vnnd auffleger erfordert/ der ich noch lang nicht werden kan. Denn was der Psalter Davids für ein Buch ist/ erfahren alle/ so sich darinnen vben/ vnnd studirn. Es ist auch kein heilliger/ noch trefflicher Man[n]/ oder Lerer Regent oder Christ/ jemals in der Christenheyt gewesen/ der anders der Kirchen/ vnnd seiner vnnd ander Leut Seligkeyt hat recht vnd mit ernst dienen wölle/ der nicht das Buch hoch gehalten/ vnnd als einen vnergründlichen lebendigen Brunnen/ darinn GOTTES Weißheits/ will/ vnnd Warheit/ starck vn mit macht/ sanfft/ vnnd gewaltig fleust/ angesehen/ vnnd sich darob in seinem gantzem leben verwundert hette/ daher es auch billich ein kleine Bibel genen[n]et worden/ da offt in einem wort/ ja in einer Sylben ein schöne Lehr/ vnnd ein feiner trost ist/ vnnd allhie gewißlich war ist/ was die gelehrten Medici von jrem Hippocrate sagen/ Nihil paruum, nihil commendendum, nichts ist so klein/ das zuerachten were/ vn[d] nit ein nutz mit sich brechte.

---

129 ‘Ich darff wol eine Regel setzen/ auß der erfarung genommen/ daß alle Bücher/ die in der Kirchen CHRJsti auß Ehrgeitz/ oder sonst aus geitz/ oder auß rachgirigkeyt geschrieben werden/ da die Sribenten nicht furchnlich auff GOTTes Ehr vnnd Namen/ vnnd auß die schlechten recht Warheit sehen vnnd acht geben/ keinen bestandt haben/ sondern gar bald vergeben/ als ware sie nie geschrieben worden […]’; Selnecker, *Das Dritt Büch* (1564/1565), unpaginated dedication.

130 In the second volume, Selnecker returns to and underscores the need for experience: ‘Ich sehe gar wol/ daß der Psalter wil fürwar ein rechten Mann haben/ der nicht allein gelehr vnnd künstreich/ sondern erfahren vn versucht/ gebrochen/ vnnd inn manchem Creutz gesteckt ist’; Selnecker, *Das Ander Büch* (1564), unpaginated dedication.

131 Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ (iii)].
In Selnecker’s account all Christians who strive for salvation hold the Psalms in high regard. They are an inexhaustible source for God’s wisdom, will, and truth, and the Psalter is a ‘small Bible’ in which every single syllable contains instruction and consolation. In the second volume of the Psalterbuch, Selnecker explains in more detail that there is really no need for his interpretations, because the Psalter itself contains more instruction and comfort than any commentary might provide. Every time one picks it up and begins to read something new emerges:


For Selnecker, Luther has made the meaning of the Psalms clear, and he has nothing to add on that count. In the Psalterbuch the court preacher will instead elucidate the powerful, secret effects (‘heimlichen würcung’) of consolation that the Psalms have on everyone who continually engages with them.

Ich wil jetzt nicht reden von dem verstand des Psalters/ der vns in der Teutschen Sprach durch den tewren Man[n]/ vnd vnsern trewen Propheten D. Lutherum also gegeben/ vnd hell vnd klar gemacht ist/ daß man nicht vil disputiren darf/ vnd sich die gelehrten Juden selbs darob müssen verwundern/ vnd solches Werk mit der Welt gelt vnd gut nicht mag bezaelt werden/iewol wol solches/ vnser art nach/ wenig erkennen: Sondern ich rede fürmelich von dem trost/ kraftf vn[d] heimlichen würcung/ die alle Christen/ so fleissig mit dem Psalter umbgehen/ darin[n] befinden/ vnd offt in einem Vers schöne lehre vnd reichen trost ergreifen/ daß sie sich darob billich verwundern/ vnd Gött dafür dancken. Es ist je der Psalter ein gemeine Schatzkam[m]er aller guten lehre/ darauβ ein jeder kan nemen/ was jme zü seiner nott[v]rfft bequem vnd gelegen ist. Es heilet die alten wunder der Seelen/ vnd kommt den newen wunden bald zu hülf/ stercket vnd trostet/ sprict Basillius. Jst man frölich/ so zeigt der Psalter die rechte frewd an/ die wir in Gott haben. Jst man trawrig/ so weiset er/ wie man Gott die not klagen/ vnd trost/ rath vnd hülfte suchen vnd finden sol. Es findet ein jeder/ in waserley sachen er ist/ wort/ Psalmen vnd meinung darinnen/ die sich gantz vnd gar auff seine sachen reimen/ vnd jm so eben sind/ als were sie allein umb seinen willen also gesetzt/ daß er sie auch selbs nicht besser setzen noch finden kan/ noch wüntschen mag/ wie dauon Doctor Lutherus in seiner Vorrede auff den Psalter handelt.

---

132 Evoking Luther’s preface to the Psalms from 1528; WA Bibel 10/1, p. 98.
133 Selnecker, Das Ander Büch (1564), unpaginated dedication.
134 Selnecker, Das Ander Büch (1564), unpaginated dedication.
Selnecker builds his practice-based understanding of the Psalms around two authoritative texts that constitute a central axis in post-Reformation Psalm-interpretation: Basil of Caesarea’s (c. 329–379) interpretation of Psalm 1 and Luther’s introduction to the Psalms from 1528. Basil focuses on the Psalms as providing spiritual healing, portraying the Book of Psalms as a treasury in which everyone can find what they need to make their wounded souls whole. Luther focuses on the language of the Psalter, explaining how the Psalms always seem to be composed for the individual who engages with them, their content rhyming with whatever existential situation the reader finds him- or herself in. The Psalter provides a rhetorical vehicle that allows those who use it to authentically express their inner states, an exemplary language for joy as well as lamentation. Basil and Luther both centre the relationship between the individual and the Psalms, expressing in different ways the idea that the holy verses match the needs of each Christian.

Two of the poems in the opening material of the Psalterbuch underscore this idea that the Psalms speak in a distinct, intimate voice to each individual reader. In the first volume we find a rhymed summary of the Psalter, *Ein schöne Lobred/ vnd kurzzer Innhalt des gantzen Psalter Davidis*, which is signed ‘Johann Sachs’ – probably the Nürnberg Meistersinger Hans Sachs. It consists of two stanzas of eleven lines that rhyme in couplets, and establishes a stark contrast between what ‘believers’ and the ‘ungodly’ find in the Psalms. For the first group, the music flowing from David’s harp conveys the power and mercy of God, and echoing the promise on the title page of the Psalterbuch the poem describes how

---


137 Sachs and Selnecker were both published by Christoph Heußler in Nürnberg. His output was similar to that of his colleagues, and consisted of a mix of devotional literature, theology, and math books. In 1558, the small shop was entrusted the printing of a collected edition of Sachs’ poems, and the large order provided a significant income for the business. See Irmgard Bezzel, *Leonhard Heußler (1548–1597). Ein vielseitiger Nürnberger Drucker und geschickter Verbreiter von Neuigkeitsberichten* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), p. 3–4
this vision provides consolation and instruction (‘Trost vnd Lehr’). The second stanza details God’s anger towards unbelievers and states that they will be eradicated unless they change their ways through penitence.

In the third volume we find a poem from ‘author to reader’ (‘Avtor ad lectorem’) immediately after the title page. Written in Latin, Selnecker’s two stanzas of nine lines each encourage diligent reading of the Psalter, stating that to read the Psalms is to truly speak with God: ‘Psalterium quisquis legis, considera, Tecum Deum, tecum deo vere loqui’. As an introduction to Selnecker’s interpretations the poem blurs the distinction between Psalter and Psalterbuch. Whatever one needs, he writes, he or she will find it ‘here’ (‘hic inuenis’ and ‘Hic repperis’), in the form of sentences, words, models and prayers (‘Sententias, & verba, formas et precuum’). On the level of the poem, these things are found in the Psalter, according to the theological understanding of the Psalter as a treasury and small Bible. But on another level, in the context of the book, it can also be read as a reference to the physical volume in the hands of an actual reader. With diligent reading (‘lectionis sedulæ’) of the Psalterbuch, that reader will find on its everything necessary for salvation (Nihil deest, quod ad salutem pertinet). In light of the threat posed by evil books, the Psalterbuch thus stands as a powerful counteroffensive.

---


139 ‘Dargegen anzigens darneben Die Straff/ vnd GOTTes Grimm vnd Zorn/ Der den Gottlosen ist geschworn/ Die GOTT verachten vnd kein Wort/ Durch falsche Lehr/ durch Brandt vnd Mordt/ Auch verfolgen die Christlich Gmain/ Leben in aller Sünd vntrain/ Wie die endlich sollen durch GOTT/ Auff Erdent werden außgerott/ Wo sie durch Buß nicht keren vmdb/ Sollichs elt inn der Psalmen Summ’; Selnecker, Das Erst Būch (1563), unpaginated ‘Ein kurtze vorred oder lob deß psalters’.

140 ‘Psalterium quisquis legis, considera,/ Tecum Deum, tecum deo vere loqui:/ Solatur ipse te, vocat, docet, regit./ Nutrit, fuet, ducit, sua tenet manu./ Te suscipit, sustentat, erigit: tibi/ Medetur, & fauet, tuusque permanet/ Deus, pater, consultor, & dux vnicus./ Quid à Deo quæsto requira amplius?/ Hoc Christus intercessor omne perficit./ Quæcunque necessitas, hic inuenis/ Sententias, & verba, formas et precuum,/ Opem, medelam, cornu viuum copiae./ Vitam, viam, leuamen, et solatium/ Nihil deest, quod ad salutem pertinet./ Huc huc manus, huc huc pedes, huc lumina./ Huc verte mentem: Literas et Spiritum/ Hic repperis. Legas, idem testaberis,/ Nec poenitebis lectionis sedulae’; Selnecker, Das Dritt Būch (1564/1565), unpaginated ‘Avtor ad lectorem’.
Reading the Psalterbuch

The first edition of the Psalterbuch is essentially a large collection of homilies accompanied by prayers, hymns, and poems. The edition contains homiletic interpretations of all 150 biblical Psalms. These interpretations, however, vary in content and extent. Some interpretations are long, for instance the interpretations of Psalms 22 (sixty-seven pages), 51 (fifty-seven pages), 101 (ninety pages), and 110 (ninety pages). Others are very brief. Selnecker’s complaints about the rush to complete the Psalterbuch gains credence in the course of the third volume where several Psalms are dealt with in a few short sentences. Already in the first and second volumes, Selnecker skips Psalms 47 and 79, explaining how they have been treated in other parts of the Psalterbuch. While these short interpretations stand out in the first volumes of the Psalterbuch, Selnecker adopts a similar strategy repeatedly towards the end of the third volume. Psalm 136 does not need much interpretation, because it has been treated in Psalm 104, Psalm 137 has been dealt with in Psalm 74, Psalm 138 speaks about the duties of authorities, but this topic has already been discussed in Psalm 101, and Psalm 139 has been interpreted in Psalm 131.

The composite character of the Psalterbuch becomes more pronounced in Selnecker’s interpretations of Psalms 94, 110, and 119. Before his treatment of Psalm 94, Selnecker adds a short dedication in Latin to an old friend from Wittenberg, Johannes Redinger, the son of the Breslau merchant Nicolaus Redinger to whom the second volume was dedicated. Selnecker and Redinger studied together and Redinger has sent Selnecker letters and gifts.

141 Selnecker, Das Erst Bûch (1563), fols 145v–178v; Das Ander Bûch (1564), fols 3v–31v; Das Dritt Bûch (1564/1565), fols 1v–46v, 122v–167v. Despite how they stand out in the Psalterbuch where most interpretations are significantly shorter, these longer interpretations have attracted the most attention from scholars. Wolfgang Sommer analyses Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 101, and Robert Kolb focuses on Selnecker’s interpretations of Psalms 22 and 110; Sommer, Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft, pp. 89–104; Kolb, ‘The Doctrine of Christ in Nikolaus Selnecker’s Interpretation of Psalms 8, 22 and 110’.


In return, and because it is almost Christmas, Selnecker dedicates his interpretation of the Seven Psalms for Christmas to him (‘volui sequentes iam ordine suo septem Psalmos tuo dedicare nomini’). On the following pages Selnecker brings together Psalms 93 and 94–100 and creates from them a new Christmas Psalm under the title: ‘Sieben Weyhenacht Psalm/ als der Drey/ Fünff/ Sechs/ Sieben/ Acht/ vnd Neun vnd neunzigste/ vnd Hunderte Psalm Dauids zusammen gezogen’. The section of rewritten Scripture ends with a ‘Finis’, before Selnecker interprets the Psalms one by one to avoid the accusation that he is teaching something ‘new’. In itself Selnecker’s Christmas Psalm stands out in the Psalterbuch and the dedication only increases the sense that the text may have had a life on its own before its inclusion in the work.

Similarly in Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 110. Before the interpretation he has added a dedication to the Nürnberg jurist Georg Kandler (active from 1549–1586). Here, Selnecker explains how Psalm 110 is often ‘der fürnemmbste Psalm gennet wirt’, and he hopes that his interpretation will be well received by his old friend. The relationship is one between patron and client, despite Selnecker’s claim that he is not looking for any favours in return, though he does mention all the good things, Kandler has done for him. The ensuing interpretation stands out in comparison to the majority of Selnecker’s interpretations. First, because of its length – as mentioned above the interpretation stretches across ninety pages –

\[144\] ‘Doctrina et virtute insigni domino iohanni redingero’; Selnecker, Das Ander Bücher, fol. 305v. The dedication is signed 5 December 1563.

\[145\] Selnecker, Das Ander Bücher, fol. 308r–308v.

\[146\] ‘Wir wollen nun ordentlich ein jeden psalm in sonderheyt für vns nemen/ damit wir nicht angeklagt werden/ als machten wir was new es’; Selnecker, Das Ander Bücher, fol. 309v.


\[149\] ‘Ich bitte aber gar fleissig/ jr wölltet jetzt mit diesem Psalm für gut nemen/ vnd nicht anders gedencken/ denn daß er euch zügesendet werde von einm guten trewen Freunde/ der euch von jugent auß ist bekant geweißt/ dem jr auch allzeit vil guts gehan habet’; Selnecker, Das Dritt Bücher (1564/1565), fol. 122r.
but also because of its, in the context of the Psalterbuch, rather detailed and technical treatment of christology.\footnote{Selnecker for instance explains that wherever Christ is, he is present as true God and true human with these Latin phrases: ‘Christus ist warer Gott vnd Mensch vnzertrennlich in einer person/ vnd wo Er ist/ da ist er warer Gott vnd Mensch/ sine confusione naturarum, & sine diuulsione personae, & vbique retenta virtusque naturae propietate’; Selnecker, Das Dritt Büch (1564/1565), fol. 140’. The christological excursus has been analysed in more detail by Robert Kolb; ‘The Doctrine of Christ in Nikolaus Selnecker’s Interpretation of Psalms 8, 22 and 110’, pp. 323–329 (p. 328).}

Finally, Selnecker includes another dedication before Psalm 120. It is addressed to Moritz Heling (1522–1595), pastor in the Sebaldskirche in Nürnberg.\footnote{‘Weil auch E.E. vil derselben Psalmen from[m]en Christen zu gut in teutsche sprache gebracht/ so habe ich nit vnterlassen können noch wöllen/ E.E. in disem meine[n] Psalterbuch auch heimzusuchen/ vn[d] vnser alte vn[d] Christliche freundschaft zu ernewe}[n] vn[d] Christs/l furchtbar/ vn[d] vnser alte vn[d] Christliche freundschaft zu ernewen/ vnd wo Er ist/ da ist er warer Gott vnd Mensch/ sine confusione naturarum, & sine diuulsione personae, & vbique retenta virtusque naturae propietate’; Selnecker, Das Dritt Büch (1564/1565), fol. 140’. The christological excursus has been analysed in more detail by Robert Kolb; ‘The Doctrine of Christ in Nikolaus Selnecker’s Interpretation of Psalms 8, 22 and 110’, pp. 323–329 (p. 328).} Selnecker explains how the following Psalms (120–134) form a distinct group in the Book of Psalms, the Psalms of Ascent. Since Heling has translated Luther’s interpretation of these Psalms into German, Selnecker explains that he wanted to dedicate his own interpretation of the Psalms in his Psalterbuch to him.\footnote{‘Dem Ehrwürdigen vnd Achtbarn Herrn/ M. Maruricio Helling/ Prediger zu S. Sebald zu Nürnberg/ meinen günstigen Herrn/ vnd alten freund. N.S.’; Selnecker, Das Dritt Büch (1564/1565), fol. 236’. The dedication is signed May 1564.} Unlike the interpretations of Psalms 94 and 110, the interpretations of the Psalms of Ascent were explicitly composed for the Psalterbuch. Together the three dedications underscore the composite character of the Psalterbuch and give the sense that some of its interpretations may consist of repurposed material.

To further complicate its status as one coherent work, the edition contains several other genres than homilies. Some of them are followed by a prayer printed on its own page under a large headline (for instance: ‘Ein Gebett auß dem Zwölfiten Psalm.’\footnote{Selnecker, Das Erst Büch (1563), fol. 57’.} This is the case after Psalms 1, 12, 18, 21, 22, 41, and 109.\footnote{Selnecker, Das Erst Büch (1563), fol. 10’, 57’, 130’, 144’–144’, 179’–179’, 244’–245’; Selnecker, Das Dritt Büch (1564/1565), fol. 120’.} Other interpretations are followed by hymns: Psalms...
The hyns are also printed on their own page and they are accompanied by an indication of the melody on which they can be performed, for example ‘Der Erste Psalm/ Jm Thon/ Durch Adams Fall ist gantz verderbt’, or ‘Ein Lied auß dem Achtzehenden Psalm/ Jm Thon/ Es ist das Hail vns kommen her’. Inside the homilies, Selnecker sometimes includes other hyns, for example in Psalms 23, 43, 65, 80, 93, 110, and 111. Moreover, the homilies are continually interspersed by poems, for instance in Psalms 1, 3, 15, 32, 37, 38, 42, 46, 51, 52, 56, 60, 63, 64, 73, 75, 77, 80, 82, 84, 89, 94, 100, 101, 104, 119, 121, and 135. Finally, Selnecker a few times ventures into catechetical question and answer sections, for example in Psalm 37 and Psalm 41.

The fundamental framework for the homilies is one of pastoral edification. The paradigmatic person in the homilies is the first person plural. Selnecker positions himself as the guide of a community and addresses his reader as a member of the same group, sharing for instance confessional membership confessional membership and secular authorities. In the Psalterbuch, Selnecker picks up the Book of Psalms to explain it in simple and short interpretations. As he writes at the beginning of the fifth book of the Psalter before his interpretation of Psalm 107:

155 Selnecker, Das Erst Bücher (1563), fols 13‘, 28‘–29‘, 129‘, 130‘; Selnecker, Das Ander Bücher (1564), fols 79‘, 255‘, 295‘–296‘; Selnecker, Das Dritt Bücher (1564/1565), fols 120‘–121‘, 168‘, 257‘.

156 Selnecker, Das Erst Bücher (1563), fols 13‘, 129‘.

157 Psalm 23 (I, fols 180‘–180‘), Psalm 43 (I, fols 249‘–250‘), Psalm 65 (II, fols 101‘–102‘), Psalm 80 (II, fol. 223‘), The Christmas Psalms (93, 95–100; II, fols 308‘–309‘), Psalm 110 (III, fols 143‘–144‘), Psalm 111 (III, fol. 187‘).

158 Selnecker, Das Erst Bücher (1563), fols 10‘, 18‘–19‘, 65‘, 209‘, 231‘, 235‘, 248‘, 262‘; Selnecker, Das Ander Bücher (1564), fols 3‘, 5‘, 12‘, 32‘, 55‘–56‘, 72‘–72‘, 93‘, 99‘, 166‘, 168‘, 173‘–174‘, 190‘–190‘, 195‘–196‘, 226‘, 228‘, 236‘, 245‘, 270‘–271‘, 303‘, 223‘–224‘; Selnecker, Das Dritt Bücher (1564/1565), fols 10‘, 19‘, 18‘, 77‘, 226‘, 227‘, 231‘–231‘, 238‘, 274‘. Some of these poems are in Latin (Psalms 1, 38, 51, 73, 94, 104) and some are in Latin with a German translation (Psalms 77, 80, 101).

159 In Psalm 41 the section has the headline: ‘Kurtze Fragen auß dem Einvndvierzigsten Psalm’; Selnecker, Das Erst Bücher (1563), fols 243‘–244‘. See also Psalm 37; ibid., fols 281‘–284‘.

160 Robert Kolb has described how Selnecker’s interpretative style is closer to Luther’s ‘narrative, discursive university lecture’ than a more analytical and tightly structured model preferred by Melanchthon; Kolb, ‘The Doctrine of Christ in Nikolaus Selnecker’s Interpretation of Psalms 8, 22 and 110’, p. 319.

161 In Psalm 2: ‘Dise wort solten vnsere Herrn heutigs tags betrachten’; Selnecker, Das Erst Bücher (1563), fol. 14‘. They also share confessional membership, see for example Psalm 2: ‘wie wir auch jetzt sehen an den Sacramentirern/ Türcken/ Juden/ vnd andern Feinden Christi’; ibid., 13‘.
In the homilies, Selnecker looks at (‘betrachten’) the Psalms and explains (‘erkleren’) what the they show (‘zeigen’). The interpretations are replete with a variations of the phrase: ‘Auß diesem Psalm haben wir nun das zu lernen [...]’. The key is to understand what the Psalms teach because their instruction provide consolation for a Christian life under the cross. In his interpretation of Psalm 63, Selnecker outlines a number of things that the Psalm teaches before highlighting the consolation found in its instruction:


It is important to note that the homilies are a mixed form. Often Selnecker moves between collective instruction, individual responses, and the voice of David as in this passage on Psalm 3:1:

Wir dienen Got/ Aber was haben wir daunon in diser welt/ denn neid/ haß/ verachtung vnld vnruhe/ ja auch offt krancheit vnld den tod? Was ligt aber daran? Ein rechter Christ sagt: Jeh wil mich zu Gott durch embsigs gebett wenden/ vnld wil zu jm sagen: Ach HERR/ wie ist meiner Feinde so vil/ vnld setzen sich so vil wider mich? 

162 Selnecker, *Das Dritt Büch* (1564/1565), fol. 103‘.


165 Kolb notes Selnecker’s focus on pastoral Seelsorge; Kolb, ‘The Doctrine of Christ in Nikolaus Selnecker’s Interpretation of Psalms 8, 22 and 110’, p. 325.

166 From Psalm 63; Selnecker, *Das Ander Büch* (1564), fol 86–88’.

167 Selnecker, *Das Erst Büch* (1563), fol 17’–17’.
Here, Selnecker’s interpretation makes it possible for his reader to speak along with the Psalm and use it a vehicle for true Christian prayer.

The homilies make up the majority of the *Psalterbuch*. When Selnecker includes different material, it comes with a shift in the basic rhetorical modality. Rather than looking at and explaining the Psalms, the prayers increase the affective intensity and speak from the heart. Selnecker for example concudes his interpretation of Psalm 1 by summarising the consolation that comes from staying close to the word of God:

Darumb sollen wir getrost vnd vnerschrocken sein/ vnd vns nichts jrren lassen/ was die welt von vnsrer lere/ leben vnd wesen helt vnd vrtailt. Jst Gott für vns/ wer kan wider vns sein? [...] Also ist nu diser Psalm ein feine tröstliche ermanung zum Wort GOttes/ vnd ein herrlicher trost.\(^{168}\)

The prayer that follows the interpretations opens with a dramatic: ‘Jch bitte dich hertzlich/ daß du in mir/ durch deinen heyligen Geist/ lust vnd lieb zu deinem heyligen Wort/ zum Gebet vnd deiner anrüffung allzeit machen vnd erhalten wöllest’. From the homily to the prayer, Selnecker moves from instruction to petition, from reflecting on the instruction and consolation of the Psalm to performing it.\(^{169}\) A parallel shift, albeit from instruction to praise can be found in the hymns included in the edition. For example in Selnecker’s hymn based on Psalm 87 where a Christian congregation praises God and expresses resilient confidence in his continual support. Its fifth stanza goes:

Darumb loben den Herren Gott/ wir all inn frewd von Hertzzen/ Jnn seiner Kirch/ inn aller not/ Es sey lust/ oder schmertzen/ O Gott wir dancken dir/ O Herr/ für dein Genad/ vnd heylsam Lehr/ Durch deinen Sohn gegeben.\(^{170}\)

The first edition of the *Psalterbuch* offers a combination of genres that privilege instruction,\(^{168}\)*Selnecker, *Das Erst Bûch* (1563), fol. 10*.*

\(^{169}\) See also the transition in Psalm 12. Here the final paragraph of the homily explains what the Psalm teaches: ‘Zum Dritten/ sollen wir allhie lernen’, and the consolation found in that instruction: ‘Vnnd das sollen wir auß diesem Psalm vns zu einem Trost behalten/ vnd ins hertz schreyben/ Laß zancken/ wüten/ toben/ schreyen vnd murren/ wer nicht ruhen wil/ Bleib du bey dem Wort GOTTES/ vnd laß dich daun nicht abtreiben’; Selnecker, *Das Erst Bûch* (1563), fols 56\(^{-}\)–56\(^{\prime}\). In the prayer that follows a collective prays for good teachers and again the petition is heartfelt: ‘Mache/ daß sie auß anigem hertzen lehren/ vnnd inn dir aining sindt/ vnd gib jnen ein demütigs hertz. O HERR GOtt/ es thut not. Schaffe du hülff[...]’; ibid., 57\(^{\prime}\).

\(^{170}\) *Selnecker, Das Ander Bûch*, fol. 255\(^{\prime}\).*
petition, and praise respectively, but the homilies make up the bulk of the volumes and constitute their pastoral and instructive framework. These homilies vary in length and content, and some of them seem to have had a life outside of the Psalterbuch before being included in it.

Figure 2: Nikolaus Selnecker, Das Erst Büch des Psalter Davids (Nürnberg: Heußler, 1563), fols 21v–22r. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Exeg. 328-5#Beibd.1

**Page Layout**

The first edition of the Psalterbuch establishes the typographical matrix on which the ensuing editions are built (see figure 2). In line with Selnecker’s emphasis on its origins in preaching,
the page layout is spacious with ample room for the homiles. With forty lines per page, the typeface is generously large and readable. To facilitate navigation, the volume has running heads that designate the Psalm in question (‘Kurtze Außlegung des’ on verso pages and ‘[1–150] Psalm Davids’ on recto). Large headlines further divide the Psalterbuch into the traditional five books of the Psalter (Psalms 1–41; 42–72; 73–89; 90–106; 107–150).¹⁷¹

The basic structure in the interpretations is provided by verses from the Psalms interspersed in the running text, which are printed in a larger typeface and with larger margins. Prayers and hymns at the end of the interpretations are given their own pages, but while the prayers are printed in the same large typeface as the verses from the interpretations, the hymns use the same typeface as that of the running text of the homiletic commentaries. Vernacular verse in the interpretations is also printed with that latter typeface, but indented and in a single-column layout.

We see the printer working to settle on a format. In the beginning of the first volume, Heußler experiments with the size of the typeface, printing verses from the Psalms in a larger typeface when they are set off from the running text. Occasionally, he also uses the larger typeface when Scripture is embedded in that running text.¹⁷² In Psalm 16, for instance, Selnecker uses Psalm 16:2 ‘Ich muß vmb deinen willen leyden’ as a chorus, and it is printed in a large typeface embedded in the text four times across four pages.¹⁷³ But these formatting practices drop off after the first few instances, appearing again only once in the beginning of the second volume.¹⁷⁴ Compared to the first volume, in the second and third the page layout is even more spacious with nearly every paragraph bracketed by empty lines. In general, the 1563–1564 edition features a great deal of blank paper, allowing also for typographic indulgences such as the long and spacious list of Jesus’ ancestors in Psalm 110.¹⁷⁵ The development of a stable format across the three volumes furthers the uneven impression of the Psalterbuch.

¹⁷¹ I 245v; II 160v, 272v; III 103r.
¹⁷² For instance in Psalms 2, 3, and 5; Selnecker, Das Erst Büch (1563), fols 14r, 15v, 17v–18v, 23v.
¹⁷³ Selnecker, Das Erst Büch (1563), fols 77v–78v.
¹⁷⁴ Psalm 52 in the second volume; Selnecker, Das Ander Büch (1564), fol. 33r.
¹⁷⁵ Selnecker, Das Dritt Büch (1564/1565), fols 136v–137v.
Conclusion

The *Psalterbuch* is Selnecker’s first large-scale vernacular publication. It was released alongside his *Paedagogia Christiana*, and together the two publications can be seen as a Lutheran counterweight to the Calvinist *Geneva Psalter* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. In Selnecker’s narrative he takes no joy in entering the spotlight, but feels compelled to do so by the threat that ungodly books pose to the well-being of people and states. The *Psalterbuch* further stages Selnecker as a preacher with exclusive access to the courts of King David and Elector August, and with a wide-ranging network of magistrates and academics. What he lacks in the experience of hardship and temptation, he makes up for in network and training, and the *Psalterbuch* comes with a promise that he will share his privileged insights with the readers of his book. Selnecker’s account of its genesis moves between sermons preached at court and notes jotted down while travelling the Electorate. Across the three volumes, the composite character of the *Psalterbuch* becomes clear: multiple dedications, Psalms treated only in passing, and interpretations that appear to have had a life before being included in the work. Altogether, the first edition of the *Psalterbuch* reads as a non-uniform collection of homilies accompanied by several hymns, poems, and prayers.
3. 1565–1569: Responding to Plague and Controversy

In 1565 the Psalterbuch was printed for the first time as a single work, titled Der gantze Psalter Davids. It was issued as three separate volumes printed in 1565–1566 and in another print run in 1569. When the edition first left the press in Nürnberg in 1565, Selnecker was no longer at the electoral court. The end of his tenure in Dresden had been marked by conflict, and for the next decade Selnecker moved often as he searched for stability. This reality is elided by the Psalterbuch; the edition printed in 1565–1566 and 1569 give the impression that Selnecker is still court preacher. Events in the outside world, however, do bleed into the edition in at least two different ways that will be the focus of this chapter. First, the plague haunted Dresden during these years, and Selnecker’s response to the epidemic is incorporated in the new edition. Second, Selnecker’s outspoken critique of

---

176 Selnecker, Nikolaus, Der gantze Psalter des Königlichen Propheten Davids/ außgelegt/ vnd in drey Bücher getheylt. Das Erste Buch/ Nemlich/ die ersten fünfzig Psalmen/ ordentlich nach einander/ dem gemeinen Mann/ vnd frommen einfältigen Christen zu gut/ vnd in diser elenden zeit zu trost vnd vnterricht/ geprediget/ vnd in Druck gegeben/ Durch M. Nicolaum Selneckerum, Noribergensem, Churfürstlichen Sechstischen Hofpredigern (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1565); Das Ander Buch des Psalters Davids/ Von dem Ein vnd fünfzigsten bis auff den Hunderten Psalm/ ordentlich nach einander/ dem gemeinen Mann/ vnd frommen einfältigen Christen zu gut/ vnd in diser elenden zeit zu trost vnd vnterrichtung/ außgelegt/ Durch M. Nicolaum Selneckerum, Noribergensem (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1565); Das Dritt Buch vnd letzte Theil des Psalter Davids/ Außgelegt durch M. Nicolaum Selneckerum, Noribergensem (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1566). In the following, I abbreviate the three volumes as Der gantze Psalter (1565/1566), I–III.

the secular authorities in the *Psalterbuch* became a liability, and in reaction he made adjustments both inside and outside the covers of the book.

The edition is shorter, despite several inclusions and expansions. The printer, Christoff Heußler has cut no less than 200 folios in total from the three volumes of the *Psalterbuch* in 1565. The poems to Maximilian that opened the second and third volumes of the first edition have been removed, as have the dedications before Psalm 94, Psalm 110, and after Psalm 119 as well as the list of errors at the end of the first volume. Heußler uses a smaller typeface that allows for up to fifty lines per page, ten lines more than the first edition, making the pages visually more dense (see figure 3).

---

178 The first volume ends on folio 216; the second on 249; the third on 221. In the edition from 1563 to 1564, the volumes end on 271, 324, and 301.
The title page presents the Psalterbuch as one work in three volumes and cross references between interpretations in the volumes increase the sense of coherency. Moreover, Selnecker has expanded his treatment of multiple Psalms, especially in the third volume. Thereby he has reduced the sense of rush that was prevalent in the previous version of the volume, and his complaint in the dedication about not having enough time to complete the volume now reads more as a rhetorical pose of humility than actual matter of fact.

The Psalterbuch and the Prophets

The title page now names David a ‘royal prophet’. This puts the edition into conversation with a series of interpretations of the Old Testament prophets that Selnecker released between 1565 and 1569. The Psalterbuch reads as the first publication in this body of work, but unlike the full folio Psalterbuch, these smaller quarto volumes are repeatedly featured in the catalogues from the Leipzig book fairs in the years from 1565 to 1569 indicating further dissemination and availability. In 1565 Selnecker published his interpretation of Lamentations, and in the following years his interpretations of Jeremiah and Zephaniah (1566); Jonas, Nahum, and Habakkuk (1567); Daniel (1568); Hosea, Joel, Micah

---

179 For instance the headlines added above Psalm 2 and Psalm 46 where Selnecker refers to the interpretations of the same Psalm that will follow in the second volume and third volumes: ‘Idem hic Psalmus infra Psalmo 80. & Psal: 79. repetitur’ and ‘Infra Psalmo 110. idem hic Psalmus repetitur, & explicatur’; Der gantze Psalter (1565/1566), I, fols 11r, 216r.

180 See Psalms 47, 136, 137, 138, 139, and 140; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter (1565/1566), I, fols 218r–220v; III, fols 187r–193r, 193r–196r, 196r–199r, 200r–205r, 206r–207r. Selnecker’s statement about the short time he has had to complete the third volume is still included in the dedication: ‘Denn ich ja zu diesen letzten Theil nicht vil vber ein viertel Jar frist vnd termin gehabt’; ibid., III, unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [Ai].


(1568);185 and Isaiah (1569) were all sold at the fairs.186 The title of the Jeremiah text is remarkably similar to that of the new edition of the Psalterbuch, mentioning difficult times and stating its aim as instruction and consolation, and in it Selnecker explains that after interpreting the Psalms he has decided to make brief summaries (‘Summarien’) of all the prophets. He states that the interpretation of Jeremiah, like the Psalterbuch, stems from his preaching at court.187 Across his dedications to these interpretations, Selnecker returns to the theme of ‘dangerous times’, a topos he links to topics ranging from his own experience of living ‘under the Cross’ in a ‘house of lamentation’, to a broad critique of the three estates in society,188 the hardships of plague and war,189 the divisions in the church,190 and the impending apocalypse.191 In short, after leaving Dresden in the Spring of 1565, Selnecker

---


186 Die Messkataloge Georg Willers, I (1972), p. 228 (‘Fastenmesse’, 1569); Selnecker, Der herrliche Prophet Esaias/ in diesen schweren vnd kümmerlichen zeiten/ zur lehre/ zum trost/ vnd zum gewissen vnd waren unnterricht in den gefehrlichen spaltungen/ so in die Kirchen von alten vnd newen Rottengeistern eingefüret werden [...] (Leipzig: Jakob Bärwald, 1569), VD16 ZV 1781. Selnecker also published interpretations of Ezekiel, and Amos and Obadiah in 1567 but they are not listed in the fair catalogues; Selnecker, Der herrliche Prophet Ezechiel/ frommen Christen zum Unterricht vnd trost/ zu diesen schweren vnd gantz gefehrlichen zeiten ausgelegt (Leipzig: Jakob Bärwald, 1567), VD16 ZV 1784; Der Prophet vnd ernster Bußprediger Amos vnd Obadias/ ausgelegt [...] (Leipzig: Jakob Bärwald, 1567), VD16 ZV 1793.

187 Selnecker, Der gantze Prophet Jeremias (1566), unpaginated dedication [B<sup>r</sup> Kap–B<sup>r</sup> Nr].

188 Zum dritten/ ist Jeremias ein solcher prophet/ des Predigtien sich gantz vnd gar schicken vnd reinen mit vnser jetzigen elenden zeit/ in allen vmbstenden/ wir sehens an/ wo vnd wie wir wollen/ in der Kirchen/ im Weltregiment/ vnd im gemeinen Leben’; Selnecker, Der gantze Prophet Jeremias (1566), unpaginated dedication [B<sup>r</sup> Nr].

189 ‘Der Barmhertzige gnedige Gott erzeige vns seine hülffe/ vnd stehe vns bey/ in dieser argen vnd gefährlichen zeit/ darinn Pestilenz/ Krieg/ Tewrung/ vnd vntrew im schwang gehen [...] Es ist ja vberall nu Abend worden’; Selnecker, Der herrliche Prophet Ezechiel (1567), unpaginated dedication [begins on A ij].

190 In the title to the interpretation of Isaiah; cited above note 187.

mobilizes the prophets to articulate a bleak view of the world and offer consolation. The new Psalterbuch indicates that it should be viewed in relation to these other interpretations of the prophets and in the context of the difficult times they address.

The Plague and the Psalms

From 1566 to 1568 the plague held Dresden in a tight grip, causing hundreds of deaths. A hospital dedicated to its victims (the Pestilenzenhaus) was financed by August of 1568. Just before this severe outbreak, Selnecker responded to the constant threat of the plague in his Christlicher bericht which was printed in 1565 as a consolatory instruction on Christian life in times of ‘deadly air’, as the title states. In this work, Selnecker follows the established traditions of the genre, interpreting the plague as an instrument of God’s wrath and prescribing repentance. As he explains, God preaches his word not only in the Bible and through teachers, but also through signs like plague, famine, and war. The work includes interpretations of Psalm 91, a catechetical question-and-answer section, a letter encouraging a friend to prayer, and prayers for children, parents, the sick, and the dying.

On the title page of the Christlicher bericht Selnecker is presented as ‘Hoffprediger zu Dresen’, and in what appears to be a joint effort with the electoral court its publication was followed the next year by a kurtzer Bericht by the court physician Johann Neefe (1499–

---

194 Nikolaus Selnecker, Christlicher bericht/ Wie sich ein jeder Christ/ inn Sterbsleufften/ trösten vnnd halten soll [...] (Leipzig: Berwald, 1565), VD16 S 5508.
196 ‘Auff solche weis gehet Gott mit vns vmb/ gantz Veterlich vnd gnedig/ so lang/ bis er seinen zorn nimmer halten kan/ vnnd wird selbs vnser Bussprediger/ wenn man sein Wort nicht leiden will/ vnnd wir vn vns von trewen Lehrern nicht wollen straffen vnnd weisen lassen/ so mus Gott selbs kommen/ vnnd die Buss predigen. Das thut er nu mit Zeichen am Himmel/ vnnd sonst/ vn mit Pestilentz/ Tewrung/ Krieg/ vnnd andern plagen [...]’; Selnecker, Christlicher bericht, unpaginated ‘Von Sterbsleufften/ ein trost geschrieben an einen guten Freundt’ [Jf].
1574). Like Selnecker, Neefe explains that the plague is the result of God’s anger at the people’s hidden sins. He further stresses that the powers of medicine should be employed not only against the eternal death but also the temporal, and he recommends a regime of fleeing the city, cleansing the air with fire, and avoiding crowds and dead animals, and he adds various medicinal recipes. Hundreds of vernacular treatises across the spectrum of medical and theological perspectives like Selnecker’s and Neefe’s were printed in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries across the German-speaking territories, and in 1565 alone seven examples in addition to Selnecker’s were printed in Magdeburg, Eisleben, and Frankfurt.

A major addition to the new edition of the Psalterbuch is the inclusion of Selnecker’s Christlicher bericht. He adds most of its different texts to his interpretation of Psalm 91. Upon entering the Psalterbuch, and shifting from quarto to folio format, Selnecker’s Christlicher bericht is printed without its dedication. It thus loses most of its explicit connection to the epidemics of the 1560s and to responses such as Neefe’s. Rather than a

---


199 Heinrichs, Plague, Print, and the Reformation, pp. 5, 198–99. Heinrichs’ book offers an appendix of the treatises printed in the period he studies; ibid., pp. 165–226. Publication of plague treatises peaked in the 1560s and then declined as it became increasingly common for civic authorities to issue plague mandates; ibid., pp. 10, 12. Different epidemics flourished across Europe in the late medieval and early modern period, and it is difficult to say exactly what the plague was. The term denotes a broad category of epidemics that were described with different terms such as ‘Pestilenz’, ‘Pest’, ‘Fieber’, or just ‘Sterbenszeiten’; Heinrichs, Plague, Print, and the Reformation, p. 2. See also Martin Christ, ‘Preaching during Plague Epidemics in Early Modern Germany, c.1520–1618’, Studies in Church History 58 (2022), 91–111 (p. 95).


201 The Christlicher bericht opens with a dedication to Hans Harr, the electoral Kammermeister, in which Selnecker explains that he is publishing this book because of the plague that is currently haunting much of Germany: ‘Ich hab etliche wochen her in dieser trawerzeit/ die Klaglieder des Propheten Jeremie für mich genommen/ vn[d] nach meiner gabe ausgelegt/ darneben auch diese Schrift verfertigt/ zum vnterricht vnd trost der einfeltigen[n]/ zu dieser zeit/ darin vns Gott fast im gantzen Deutschland mit schwerer Pestilentz heimsuchet/ vnd gibt vns auff mancherleye weis seinen zorn zuerkennen/ das wir jhe nicht leugnen können/ das wir in grosser gefahr sind’: Christlicher bericht, unpaginated dedication [Aij’]. The letter to a friend, however, is still signed ‘Dresen/ den 8. Octobris/ 1564’, so the connection to the present is not completely severed; Selnecker, Der gantzé Psalter (1565/1566), II, fol. 215°. In the Psalterbuch, a sermon by Cyprian is also not printed, most likely because Selnecker already cites passages from it in his treatment of Psalm 90. Here, he explains that it is an old instruction on how to deal with the
solution to contemporary problems, the *bericht* is transformed into an extensive interpretation of Psalm 91 prompted by events narrated in the Bible. Selnecker had already connected the Psalm to the plague in the earlier version of the interpretation: ‘Man hat aber ein weil diesen Psalm in Sterbsleufften pflegen zu predigen vnd außzulegen’.\(^{202}\) Psalm 91 was a *locus classicus* for such elaborations;\(^ {203}\) it was traditionally (and by Selnecker) linked to 2 Samuel 24:13–15 where God punishes David with, in Luther’s translation, *Pestilentz*.\(^ {204}\)

In the new edition of the *Psalterbuch*, the *Christlicher bericht* forms a coherent sequence across seventy pages.\(^ {205}\) It augments the devotional register of the *Psalterbuch* and adds distinction to Selnecker’s intended audience. The previous edition from 1563 to 1564 already had hymns labelled ‘Kinderlied’ as well as a prayer for children. These texts, however, were scattered across the three volumes, and rather than modelling the voice of children they speak about children or emulate the general identity of the Christian as a child of God.\(^ {206}\)

---

\(^{202}\) Selnecker, *Das Ander Büch* (1564), fol. 287r.


\(^{204}\) WA Bibel 9/I, p. 386.

\(^{205}\) Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter* (1565/1566), II, fols 195v–230r. Selnecker further expanded his interpretation of Psalm 91 in the edition from 1571; see below, p. 92.

\(^{206}\) See for in the ‘Kinderlied’ after Psalm 18 where the congregation speaks as children of God, not children in age: ‘Du hast vns außerkoren/ zu Kindern allermeist’; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter* (1565/1566), I fol. 108r. The ‘Kinderlied’ after Psalm 87 speaks about children, not from them: ‘Geborn werden kinder viel/ Die Gott nun recht erkennen. Sie ehren Christum sanfft vnd still/ vnd jn jm Heyland nennen’; ibid., II, fol. 174r. Likewise, the ‘Kinderlied’ after Psalm 128 does not speak from the position of the child, but describes how the man who fears God will have a blessed and fruitful family life: ‘Es wirdt sein Weib gantz fruchtbar sein/ Gleich ein Weinstock voll Trauben fein. Vnd seine Kind vmb seinen tisch/ Gleich wie die Balsam zweige frisch’; ibid., III, fol. 174r. Similarly in the ‘Kinder Gebett’ after Psalm 109 where the identification of the speaker as God’s child is general and applicable to all Christians: ‘Dafür dancke ich dir/ mein GOTT vnd HERR/ vnd bitte dich/ du wöllest [...] mir alle meine Sünde vnd misssethat vergeben/ vnd mich dein Kind vnd Erben lassen sein vnd bleiben’; ibid., III, fol. 81r.
In the prayers added to the *Psalterbuch* from the *Christlicher bericht*, Selnecker lets children pray for the health of their parents:

Wir arme Kindlein kommen zu dir/ vnd bitten dich/ du wöllest vns zu Gnaden annemen/ der du auch ein Kindlein von vnsert wegen worden bist [...]. Erhalte vnsere liebe Eltern/ Vater vnd Mutter/ bey guter gesundheit in langem leben.\(^{207}\)

And in a hymn that follows immediately below the prayer they sing to baby Jesus and pray for his help in their suffering:

Vater vnser im Himelein/ zu dir kommen wir Kinderlein/ vnd bitten dich von hertzen fein/ wolst vnser schirm vnd schaten sein. O du hertz liebes Jesulein/ hilff vns durchs bitter leiden dein/ Send vns dein liebe Engelein/ das sie ja stetigs bey vns sein.\(^{208}\)

Likewise, the head of the house prays for the members of his household; specifically his wife, children, and domestic staff:

HERR Gott himlischer Vater/ Ich dancke dir von grund meines Hertzens/ das du mich/ mein Weib/ Kinder/ vnd Gesind bißher so gnediglich behütet/ vnd durch deine liebe Engel für allem vbel bewacht vnd bewaret hast/ vndn bitte dich [...]. Wöllest auch mich vnd die meinen/ mein Weib/ meine Kindlein/ die du mir gegeben hast/ vnd mein Gesind für allem vbel/ Leibs vnd der Seelen gnediglich behütet.\(^{209}\)

The collection also includes a prayer for the Christian as a member of society in which the petitioner asks that his effort will serve his neighbour and earn him his daily bread:

HERR Gott Himlischer Vater/ Ich wil nu wider an main Arbeit gehen/ vndnd die Werck des beruffs vnd Ampts nach deiner gabe außrichten/ wie du mir befohlen hast vnd wil meinem Nechsten dienen/ vnd mein Brodt erwerben.\(^{210}\)

Moreover, the collection includes a prayer for recovery and strength in the face of sickness and death:

\(^{207}\) Selnecker, *Der gantzé Psalter* (1565/1566), II, fol. 229\(^{v}\).

\(^{208}\) ‘Ein Kinderliedlein/ Jm Thon/ Erhalt vns HErr’; Selnecker, *Der gantzé Psalter* (1565/1566), II, fol. 229\(^{v}\).

\(^{209}\) Selnecker, *Der gantzé Psalter* (1565/1566), II, fol. 228\(^{v}\).

\(^{210}\) Selnecker, *Der gantzé Psalter* (1565/1566), II, fol 228\(^{v}\).
HERR GOtt himlischer Vater/ Weil du mich von wegen meiner grossen Sünde mir Leibs schwachheit/ vnd fehllicher Krankheit angegriffen hast/ So bitte ich dich/ du wölltest mir vmb deine Sohns Jhesu Christi willen/ alle meine sünde gendlich vergeben.\textsuperscript{211}

The theme of death is further emphasized in a hymn where an individual prays for a blessed hour of death. Here, the voice of the dying is vividly performed, contrasting the failing bodily and metal facilities with the hope of becoming a member on Christ’s body:

HERR JHesu Christe Gottes Sohn/ Der du sitzt inn dem Höchsten Thron/ zu dir ruff ich auß hertzen grund/ verlaß mich nicht zur letzten stund. Mein Gliedmaß fallen gar dahin/ verfallen sind auch all mein sinn/ vernufft ist weg/ der leib stirbt ab/ vnd muß hinunter in das Grab [...] O HErr ich denck an deinen Tod/ An dein heilig Fünff Wunden rot/ Du bist ja mein/ vnd ich bin dein/ An deinem leib ein Gliedmaß klein.\textsuperscript{212}

These prayers and hymns all speak to specific situations and model in an affective rhetorical register how children, the head of the house, the member of society, and the sick can voice their petitions.

The letter in the interpretation of Psalm 91 strikes similar a tone of intimacy. The recipient of the letter is addressed directly, but his or her identity is not revealed. The ‘you’ functions as a placeholder for any given reader and it allows Selnecker to express his hope for consolation in an affective and personal register to whoever holds his book in their hands:

Von Sterbsleuffen/ ein trost geschrieben an einen guten Freundt. GOttes Gnad/ Fried vnd Segen/ durch Jhesum Christum seinen lieben Son/ vnsern HErrn sey mit vns allen/ Amen. Ewer Creutz ist mir ein hertzlicher leid/ vnd ich bitte Gott trewlich/ das er ewer vnd vnser aller gnedigklich verschonen/ vnd vnser sünde vns vmb seines Sohns willen vergeben wollte/ vn[d] die streaffen lindern. Ich kan aber euch weder raten noch helfen/ den[n] allein durch das gebett/ vnd wort Gottes.\textsuperscript{213}

Similarly, the catechetical questions and answers perform a conversation in which a ‘you’ is addressed. It reads as an invitation to the reader to become a direct participant:

Warumb lest GOtt dem Teufel so vil Gewalt? DArunb/ dieweil du seinen guten Worten nicht folgen wilt/ wie er dich von sünden heist ablassen/ vnd zu heiligem leben vermanet/ so

\textsuperscript{211} Selnecker, Der gantz Psalter (1565/1566), II, fol 229°.
\textsuperscript{212} Selnecker, Der gantz Psalter (1565/1566), II, fol 230°.
\textsuperscript{213} Selnecker, Der gantz Psalter (1565/1566), II, fol 213°.
Occasioned by the plague, Selnecker outlines a stratified devotional programme expressed in an affective register of prayer, consolation, and catechetical instruction. With the inclusion of the Christlicher bericht, the Psalterbuch now offers distinct models for speaking with God. The prayers for specific members of the household, the staged conversation of the catechese, and the sense of intimacy in the letter all increase the tangibility of the ‘common Christian’ addressed on the title page of the edition.

Selnecker and the Secular Authorities

The 1565 Psalterbuch’s introductory material offers no indication that Selnecker had left the electoral court around the time of its publication. The same woodcut portraying Selnecker at David’s court is used again on the title page, and Selnecker is still presented as ‘Churfürstlichen Sechsischen Hofpredigern’. Moreover, the dedication in the first volume is the same as that of the 1563 edition, which presents him as still at court, but it is now signed ‘die obitus Ottonis Magni, 1565’. This would mean that Selnecker had signed the dedication on 7 May, when he had in fact already left the court months earlier. The point being that the edition from 1565 tries to connect Selnecker to the electoral court, maybe exactly because the status of that relationship was strained.

Despite Selnecker’s emphasis on his closeness to the Saxon authorities, the publication of the previous edition had aroused accusations that he held worldly authorities in contempt, and he had to defend some of the Psalterbuch’s statements. Selnecker had signed the final dedication in the first edition of the Psalterbuch on Trinity Sunday (28 May) 1564, and less than two months later, across two Sundays in July (23 July 1564 and 30 July 1564), he had

---

214 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter (1565/1566), II, fol 217r.
215 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter (1565/1566), I, unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.
castigated the court’s hunting practices from the pulpit in the court chapel. He even wrote directly to August to remind him of his responsibilities as a Christian ruler. This critical engagement with the temporal authorities had been prompted by events that unfolded shortly after the finalization of the Psalterbuch.

On the Seventh Sunday after Trinity (July 16), Selnecker fell ill and was unable to perform service at the court chapel. In his place, Martin Hofmann (1535–1575) from the Frauenkirche in Dresden filled in, and preaching before the ducal household, Hofmann derided the harms done by hunting to the common people, whose crops were often destroyed. Selnecker came to the defence of his colleague from the pulpit. Controversy ensued, and on August 8 after interrogations at court Hofmann was forced to leave Dresden. Selnecker’s intervention on behalf of his colleague also did not go unnoticed, and not long after Hofmann’s dismissal Selnecker asked August to be relieved of his duties. He left the electoral court on 15 March 1565, to take up a post as professor at the University of Jena on 26 March.

The conflict must have troubled Selnecker. In the new edition of the Psalterbuch he adds a passage to his interpretation of Psalm 112, reasserting his heartfelt support for the nobility, and also defensively explains that his criticism is taken straight from Martin Luther. Moreover, he underlines that he holds the nobility in general high regard and that his rebukes are only levelled against the ‘ignoble nobility’ who do not live up to the responsibilities of their position. He is thus saddened that Christian noblemen accuse him of being their enemy:

> Ich habe eben vil geredt/ vnd eben von wegen solcher reden vnd predigten bereit vil drowens hören müssen/ so es doch nicht meine wort sind/ sondern vast durch vnd durch auß den schritten Doctoris Lutheri genommen sind/ vnd mit der gemeinen augenscheinlichen erfarung leichtlich können bewiesen werden/ daran es mir nicht fehlet. Es ist mir aber sehr leide/ das fromme ehrliche vom Adel sich dieser wort vnd predigten annemen/ vnd mich als ein Edelsman feind außschreyen/ der ich doch alle ehrliebende vom Adel von hertzen ehre vnd liebe/ vnd halte sie in jhrem Stande neben anderer Oberkeyt sehr hoch/ wie billich. Ich rede aber von dem vnedeln Adel die sich jhres Stands nicht allein vbernemen/ denselben mißbrauchen/ vnd vnfletig leben/ sondern nicht werd sind/ das sie menschen sollen heyssen/

217 The events in the summer of 1564 are recounted by Dibelius, who bases his account on sources lost in World War II; Dibelius, ‘Zur Geschichte und Carakteristik Nikolaus Selneckers’, Beiträge zur sächsischen Kirchengeschichte, 4 (1888), 1–20 (pp. 13–14). See also Sommer, Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft, pp. 86–89.

218 Wolfgang Sommer, Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft, p. 89.
wil geschweigen Christliche Edelleut/ wer frömekte/ ehr/ vnd tugent lieb hat/ wird mit meiner warheit wol zu friedem sein/ wer aber anders gesinnet ist/ der thue was recht ist/ oder ja/ was jn gelustet/ für dem Richtstul Jesu CHristi wollen wir wider zusammen kommen/ Amen.219

Save for the concluding ‘Amen’ the paragraph does not break the flow of the text.220 Rather, it blends seamlessly into the interpretation, as if it had always been there.

The added passage seems to be a preliminary version of the position taken by Selnecker in his Kurtzer Bericht from December 1566.221 In this short text of around thirty pages, Selnecker defends his position on the secular authorities and answers those who accuse him of having spoken ill of them in his sermons on the Psalms and on Jeremiah. He offers contrasting images of the nobility in theory and in reality, and this strategy allows him to reiterate his high regard for the nobility and simultaneously justify his criticism because the estate does not live up to its responsibilities. Selnecker presents himself as having merely tried to fulfil his duties as a preacher in admonishing the elite for their sins in his Bußpredigten. But now chaos has ensued. With gravitas he states that the Elbe, Moldau and Saale Rivers have been set on fire, and that people scream about his subversive animosity towards nobles and courtiers.222 His troubles even assume biblical proportions as he

---

219 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter (1565/1566), III, fol. 131r–131v. Compare Das Erst Büch (1563), fols 194v–194r.

220 Later, in the edition from 1571, Selnecker makes yet another addition, immediately before the passage added in 1565. Here, he cites a nobleman who has written a verse about how virtue makes noble – it is not enough to have the right name. According to Selnecker, he is thus in agreement not only with Luther, but also the nobility itself in his view of this estate: ‘[…] sonder sind in der meinung/ das sie sagen/ Tugend macht Edel/ vnd/ Ein adelich Blut/ helt sich adelich/ vnd ist aller ehren werth/ wie die schönen Verslein lauten/ die newlich ein frommer Freyherr/ einem vom Adel in sein Buch schriebe: Quid genus est? nihil est: nomen uirtute paratur: Et uirtus nostros nobilituitu auos’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), III, fol. 127r.

221 Selnecker, Kurtzer Bericht M. Nicolai Selneckers auff die vnwarhafftige anklage/ Das er von denen vom Adel/ nichts oder gar wenig halte/ Vnd spóltlich dawon in seinen Psalmen/ vnd anderswo solle geprediget vnd geschrieben haben […] (Jena: 1566), VD16 S 5591.

compares the threats against his life to David being chased by Saul (1 Samuel 23:7–24:22).223 Before turning to the controversial passages from his sermons, Selnecker acknowledges that the nobility is ordained by God, who instituted the three estates for the common benefit of society.224 It is, however, necessary for Selnecker to distinguish between the estate and the people who belong to it, and the only people who should feel the sting of his critique are those who fail to live up to the ideals of nobility.225 By contrast, good nobles rejoice when such deficiency is exposed.226 Selnecker then cites a few paragraphs from the interpretation of Psalm 112 in his Psalterbuch from 1565, which states that most of the nobility live without the fear of God.227 The excerpts describe in vivid detail the nobility’s excessive eating and drinking (and its bodily consequences) and lament that they have turned their obligations on


226 ‘Die ander regel ist: Wer schuldig ist/ vnd wen das gewissen vberzeugt/ der murret/ so jn die warheit gesagt wird/ wie das gemeine sprichwort lautet: Welcher hund getroffen wird/ der bellet. Wer vnschuldig ist vnd ein gut gewissen hat/ der weis nicht allein/ das er nicht gemeinet werden/ sondern lobts vnd billichets/ so öffentliche laster/ jthum vnd ergernis/ gestrafft vnd gerüet werden’; Selnecker, Kurtzer Bericht, unpaginated [Biiij].

their head so that piety has become contempt for the word of God, justice has become violence, and honour has become vainglory:


He concludes that it is no wonder that most people despise the nobility.

As in the example just cited, Selnecker has outfitted the cited passages from the Psalterbuch with several new and more exact references to Luther. For instance, in the Psalterbuch he writes ‘Solchs sage ich von dem vnedlen Adel’, and when he cites the passage in the Kurtzer Bericht: ‘Solchs sage ich von dem vnedeln Adel (Lutherus Psal: 121. Et Psalm 118)’. Accordingly, when Selnecker challenges his readers to find statements that have not already been articulated before by trusted authorities on the topic, he can easily answer: Luther has written similar things over and over again. He proceeds to paraphrase several of Luther’s interpretation of the Psalms to support his argument.

The Kurtzer Bericht was published after the 1565 edition of the Psalterbuch that includes the revised interpretation of Psalm 112. In case readers of the Kurtzer Bericht wanted to examine the controversial passages with their own eyes, Selnecker guides them to a version of the text in which the rebuke is already mitigated by the inclusion of the new paragraph. The Kurzter

---

228 Selnecker, Kurtzer Bericht, unpaginated [C’–C’]. Compare Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1565), III, fol 131f.

229 Selnecker, Kurtzer Bericht, unpaginated [C’]. Compare Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1565), III, fol 131f.

230 ‘Höret aber ein wenig lieben Junckern/ die jr so sehr zornig seid/ vnd sagt mir doch/ was habe ich gelert oder geschrieben/ das nicht zuvor alles durch trewe Lehrer mit warheit/ nicht geschrieben sey?’; Selnecker, Kurtzer Bericht, unpaginated [Ciij].

231 He cites and paraphrases Luther’s interpretations of Psalms 111, 118, 121, and 147; Selnecker, Kurtzer Bericht, unpaginated [Ciij]–[D’].
Bericht leads its reader to a specific location in the Psalterbuch that Selnecker has prepared – instead of, for instance, his interpretation of Psalm 101 which in fact offers a longer and more in-depth criticism of the secular authorities.232

The Edition from 1569

Selnecker started his professorship at Jena in the spring of 1565, probably hoping to settle into a stable life. In 1567, however, power shifted hands in Ernestine Saxony; Johann Wilhelm I (1530–1573) took control of the duchy after his brother, Johann Friedrich II (1529–1595), was deposed by imperial forces under August’s command and imprisoned under a life sentence.233 Johann Wilhelm shifted the confessional course of the duchy further away from that of Electoral Saxony, replacing the Philippist professors in Jena with Gnesio-Lutherans such as Johannes Wigand (1532–1587), Johann Friedrich Coelestin (d. 1578), and Timotheus Kirchner (1533–1587), who had been exiled during the Flacian Controversy in 1561.234 Selnecker was among those forced to leave, and he returned to Electoral Saxony in August 1568 to take up a position as professor of theology at the University of Leipzig.235

In August 1568, Heußler’s print shop in Nürnberg had been inspected and Heußler arrested. Apparently he had printed pamphlets by Matthias Flacius that clashed with the theology promoted by the city council of Nürnberg.236 This attack on Flacian publications was prompted by Elector August. When the city council of Leipzig expressed fear that Flacian texts might reach its spring book fair, August banned all trade of such books and asked the city council in Nürnberg to follow suit, as controversial publications might otherwise be

232 As Wolfgang Sommer has shown in his chapter on Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 101; Sommer, Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft, pp. 89–104.

233 Hund, Das Wort ward Fleisch, p. 138.

234 Irene Dingel, ‘The Culture of Conflict in the Controversies Leading to the Formula of Concord (1548–1580)’, in Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550-1675, ed. by Robert Kolb (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 15–64 (pp. 53–54).


236 On May 20 1570, Heußler was released and returned to his business; Reske, Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet, p. 751.
imported to Saxony book traders.\textsuperscript{237} The conflict between the Saxon territories would only escalate after the Reformation of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in 1568. The \textit{Altenburger Religionsgespräche}, which began in the fall of 1568 and stretched into the spring of 1569, were supposed to reconcile the theologians from ducal and Electoral Saxony but in the end instead strengthened the opposition between the two parties.\textsuperscript{238} The 1569 edition of the \textit{Psalterbuch}, printed amidst these rising tensions between Ernestine and Albertine theologians, seems to a reprint of the 1565 edition.

**Conclusion**

In comparison with the first printing, the editions of the \textit{Psalterbuch} from 1565 and 1569 feature subtle modulations, inclusions of new material and omissions of old. The new edition presents the \textit{Psalterbuch} as a coherent work. The shortest interpretations from the previous editions have been expanded and Selnecker’s dedications to friends and patrons before specific Psalms have been removed. When the edition first left the press in 1565, Selnecker was no longer in Dresden. The end of his tenure in Dresden was marked by conflict, and for the next decade Selnecker searched for stability. The new edition, however, offers no indication that Selnecker had left the electoral court. On the contrary, Selnecker adds a passage to his interpretation of Psalm 112, reasserting his heartfelt support for the nobility, and he outfits the dedication to the electoral couple with a new date that seems to strengthen his ties to the court. Together, the updates blur the chronology of the events narrated, soften and justify Selnecker’s controversial critique of the nobility. A major addition to the new edition of the \textit{Psalterbuch} is the inclusion of Selnecker’s \textit{Christlicher bericht}, a consolatory instruction on Christian life during outbreaks of the plague. It augments the devotional register of the \textit{Psalterbuch} and adds distinction to Selnecker’s intended audience. As

\textsuperscript{237} Irmgard Bezzel, \textit{Leonhard Heußler (1548–1597). Ein vielseitiger Nürnberger Drucker und geschickter Verbreiter von Neuigkeitsberichten} (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), p. 4. A list of banned books initially contained twenty-five titles by prominent gnesio-Lutherans such as Matthias Flacius and Johannes Wigand who were critical of the Wittenberg theologians and especially Melanchthon. The list was eventually reduced to just seven titles. To have the least negative impact on the market, sermons, catechisms and biblical interpretations were removed from the list; Hans-Peter Hasse, \textit{Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter}, p. 72–73.

discussed in this chapter Selnecker reworked his *Psalterbuch* mainly by adding and subtracting material, reshaping the meaning of his text rather than replacing it with a new one. These revisions add to the composite character of the *Psalterbuch*. 
4. 1571: The *Psalterbuch* as an Instrument of Devotion

The 1571 edition stages the *Psalterbuch* as an instrument of devotional practice.\(^{239}\) If the first editions were primarily collections of homilies with some prayers and hymns, the new edition is more akin to a prayerbook with appended homilies. Printed at a time when Selnecker was facing severe critique from multiple confessional parties, the new *Psalterbuch* is presented as an argument for Lutheran unity. In a rhetorical register that mimics the Psalms, Selnecker addresses the confessional struggles unfolding around him and guides his reader in Christian practice, emphasizing Bible study and prayer. Where the key genre of the previous editions was the sermon, the new edition spotlights the interpretations as part of a liturgical sequence, touching on all the elements of a church service: Bible reading, preaching, praying, and singing. The previous editions of the *Psalterbuch* had placed more importance on instruction as the means to consolation, the 1571 edition emphasizes the affective pleas for and reactions to divine consolation. The following pages focus on these two interwoven threads: the *Psalterbuch* as a guide in devotional practice and as an effort to shape the perception of Selnecker’s role and position in confessional dispute.

---

\(^{239}\) Nikolaus Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Davids ausgelegt/ vnd in dieser elenden zeit frommen Christen zu Trost vnd Unterricht geprediget/ vnd in Druck gegeben. Jetzt aber auffs newe zum letzten mal vbersehen/ gebessert/ vnd gemehret/ vnd mit sonderlichen schönen Gebetelein auff ein jeden Psalm fleissig zugerrichtet/ Durch Nicolaum Selneccerum D.* (Leipzig: Jacob Bärwald, 1571); *DEr Ander Teil des Psalters/ vom fünffzigsten Psalm an/ bis zu dem hundert vnd ersten: Ausgelegt durch Nicolaum Selneccerum D.* (Leipzig: Jacob Bärwald, 1571); *DEr dritte Teil des Psalters/ Davids/ vom 101. Psalm bis zu dem letzten/ Ausgelegt durch Nicolaum Selneccerum D.* (Leipzig: Jacob Bärwald, 1571). In the following, I abbreviate the three volumes as *Der gantze Psalter Davids* (1571), I–III. Wolfgang Sommer has characterized the *Psalterbuch* as ‘eine katechismusartige Zusammenfassung der Hauptinhalte des christlichen Glaubens’, and this edition gives weight to his interpretation; Wolfgang Sommer, *Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft*, p. 90.
Selnecker Between Dresden and Wolfenbüttel

When the new edition was printed Selnecker had recently moved to Wolfenbüttel in Lower Saxony, and we find him there trying to balance his loyalty to the Saxon Electorate and his alma mater on the one hand, and the Duchy and his new colleagues on the other.\textsuperscript{240} He was attacked from both sides for being unreliable and indecisive in dogmatic questions.\textsuperscript{241} Theologians in Wittenberg regarded him an apostate to what they perceived as the ‘Flacianism’ of Jakob Andreae (1528–1590) and Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586), and his new colleagues in Wolfenbüttel suspected Selnecker of being a Wittenberg ‘Crypto-Calvinist’.

Soon after he became Duke in 1568, Julius of Brunswick-Lüneburg (1528–1589) invited Selnecker, Chemnitz, and Andreae to devise and implement a Lutheran reform of the duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg. Over the following year Chemnitz, superintendent in Brunswick, and Andreae, professor at Tübingen, compiled a church ordinance and conducted visitations.\textsuperscript{242} But Selnecker did not initially accept the call, staying in Leipzig and taking part in what turned out to be a controversial disputation in Wittenberg. After the death of the moderate Melanchthon student Paul Eber in 1569, Caspar Peucer (1525–1602) and Christoph Pezel (1539–1604) re-shaped the theological profile of the university to bring it closer to Calvinism.\textsuperscript{243} On 5 May 1570, Selnecker and four newly appointed members of the Wittenberg faculty disputed a set of theses prepared by the new dean of the faculty, Georg Major (1502–74),\textsuperscript{244} and on 11 May Selnecker and his co-disputants were celebrated in Wittenberg as they were awarded doctoral degrees by August of Saxony. The Elector August then granted him leave from his position, and Selnecker was set to take up the offices of General superintendent and court preacher in Wolfenbüttel. Andreae and Chemnitz met the news that Selnecker would join them with suspicion.\textsuperscript{245}

\textsuperscript{240} Hund, \textit{Das Wort ward Fleisch}, p. 162.
\textsuperscript{241} Hund, \textit{Das Wort ward Fleisch}, p. 138.
\textsuperscript{242} Inge Mager, \textit{Konkordienformel}, p. 33
\textsuperscript{244} Hund, \textit{Das Wort ward Fleisch}, pp. 147–148.
\textsuperscript{245} Mager, \textit{Die Konkordienformel im Fürstentum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel}, pp. 143–144.
The day before the celebration of the new theological doctors, a potential breakthrough in the process towards concord was reached at Zerbst in Anhalt. Encouraged by Duke Christof of Württemberg (1515–1568), Andreae began travelling the Lutheran territories in 1568 in search of a confessional common ground. He eventually succeeded in gathering theologians from fifteen territories and cities at Zerbst in Anhalt, and on 10 May they agreed upon a body of texts to serve as the confessional basis for concord: the three ecumenical creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Small Catechism. This apparent unity, however, was quickly shattered. The theologians from Wittenberg withdrew their support as they refused to give up the *Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum*, which had served as the sole confessional document in Electoral Saxony since 1566. In their view, the collection of texts from Zerbst was incomplete because new divergences in faith had arisen after they were written. They argued that the inclusion of Melanchthon’s writings would strike a guaranteed blow against those new factions, especially Flacianism.

When rumours of the disputation in Wittenberg reached the theologians convened in Zerbst, they immediately sent a delegation to Saxony to enquire about the academic event’s orthodoxy. Selnecker was interrogated by Andreae and the Schleswig superintendent Paul von Eitzen (1521–98), and although there were initially satisfied with his response, he was still obliged to explain himself in writing to Duke Julius. Accordingly, Selnecker wrote a *Responsio* in which he advances a position on the controversial issue of the *comunicaio idiomatum* that allows for the communication of divine attributes to Christ’s human nature according to the promises given in Scripture. In this view, Christ’s humanity is truly present

---

246 As a starting point for a renewed discussion, Andreae penned the Five Articles of Union that addressed the themes about which there was disagreement; Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, pp. 139–140.

247 Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, p. 143. In the final year of his life, Melanchthon put together his *Corpus* which was printed by Vögelin in Leipzig in 1560; *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae. Quae est summa orthodoxi et catholici dogmatis; complectens doctrinam puram & veram Evangelii Iesu Christi [...]* (Leipzig: Ernst Vögelin, 1560), VD16 M 2883. It included the three ecumenical creeds, the Confessio Augustana and the Apology, along with several writings by Melanchthon such as his *Loci communes* (1556) and his *Examen ordinandorum* (1554); Irene Dingel, ‘Das Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum und seine Nachwirkung’, *Journal of Early Modern Christianity*, 8 no. 1 (2021), 119–134 (pp. 123–124).

248 Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, pp. 144–145.

249 Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, p. 162.
in the Lord’s Supper, but it is not omnipresent. According to Johannes Hund this line of argumentation is similar to that of Martin Chemnitz, and it offers a middle ground between a purely verbal understanding of the *communicatio* and one that asserts the communication of all divine attributes to Christ’s human nature. In geographical terms Selnecker adopts a position between, with a rough simplification, the Christologies of Wittenberg (verbal understanding) and Württemberg (real communication of all attributes).

After defending his orthodoxy to Julius, Selnecker was instructed by the Duke to meet with his former colleagues in Wittenberg, assess the orthodoxy of their views on the Lord’s Supper, and, hopefully, get the process towards concord back on track. He made the trip to Electoral Saxony, and after discussions with the faculty Selnecker wrote a report confirming doctrinal unity between North Germany, Lower Saxony and Electoral Saxony. The apparent newly established harmony was celebrated in Braunschweig on 20 August 1570; however, the Wittenberg faculty did not actually agree with Selnecker’s account of their position. They wrote to Elector August explaining their stance, and claimed that Selnecker had not only misrepresented their position but also introduced new doctrine to please Andreae.

To further complicate matters, Julius tasked Selnecker with providing copies of the *Corpus*

---

250 Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, p. 167.
251 Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, pp 170–171.
254 Johannes Hund explains how their *Censura De Exegemate D. Selnecceri* promulgates a fundamentally different position than the one Selnecker had reported; Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch* p. 193.
Doctrinae Philippicum to all parishes in the duchy. After the publication of the church ordinance by Chemnitz and Andrea, Julius felt a need to counter suspicions that he was endorsing a stringently Lutheran (that is, ‘Flacian’) position; moreover, the introduction of Melanchthon’s Corpus in the Wolfenbüttel church would help bridge the confessional gap between the duchy and Electoral Saxony. Elector August praised the decision. Martin Chemnitz, however, was not happy. He saw bringing in the Corpus as a direct challenge to his own confessional course, which centred exclusively on Luther’s legacy, and he feared that in Selnecker’s hands Wolfenbüttel would adopt the same misguided theological positions as had Wittenberg. Selnecker in turn defended his stance, explaining that what was happening in Wittenberg was very different from what Melanchthon had promoted.

These events – the disputation in Wittenberg, the conference in Zerbst, and the conflict over the Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum in Wolfenbüttel – all took place in 1570. Selnecker signed his new dedication in the Psalterbuch on 1 December of that year, and against the foil of the circumstances outlined above the new edition reads as an attempt to shift the conversation by an author caught between intersecting theological differences and political interests. Instead of offering dogmatic dispute, the Psalterbuch turns to themes of consolation.

Selnecker’s Partnership with Jacob Bärwald

Many of Selnecker’s Leipzig publications were printed by Jacob Bärwald. A search in VD16 reveals sixty-six such works, mostly vernacular devotional literature, which seems to

256 Mager, Die Konkordienformel im Fürstentum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, p. 142.
258 Mager, Die Konkordienformel im Fürstentum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, p. 143.
align with the Bärwald printing house’s overall profile.²⁶¹ Their cooperation began early in Selnecker’s career and Bärwald issued many editions of his important works.²⁶² In the Psalterbuch Selnecker presents their relationship as grounded in common spiritual goals that reach beyond commercial interests. In 1567 Selnecker dedicated his interpretation of the seven penitential Psalms to Bärwald, and in the 1571 Psalterbuch he includes an epitaph for the printer as the conclusion to the first volume.²⁶³ It celebrates Bärwald, who had died during the production of the book, for having served the church by printing devotional literature in various forms: ‘In Druck gut Bücher hat er gebn/ Gebet/ Geseng/ und viel darneben’.²⁶⁴ The Psalterbuch is implicitly counted among these ‘good books’, replete with prayers and songs, and the epitaph further reinforces Selnecker’s presentation of the Psalterbuch as devotional literature.

The Psälterlein from 1571 is a good example of the fruitful partnership between Selnecker and Bärwald and it sheds new light on the profile of the Psalterbuch.²⁶⁵ This collection of summaries and prayers for each of the Psalms was to become Selnecker’s most successful and Bärwald and it sheds new light on the profile of the Psalterbuch.²⁶⁵ This collection of summaries and prayers for each of the Psalms was to become Selnecker’s most successful publication, with editions printed into the eighteenth century, and its consistent devotional

²⁶¹ Reske explains that devotional literature from the pint shop was particularly popular; Reske, Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet, p. 562.

²⁶² Already in 1565, Bärwald was responsible for Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 91; Christlicher bericht/ Wie sich ein jeder Christ inn Sterbensleuffen trösten vnd halten soll. Der XCl. Psalm ausgelegt [...] (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1565), VD16 S 5508. In 1569, he printed the German edition of the Paedagogia Christiana; in 1575, Selnecker’s Luther-biography; and in 1577 his edition of Luther’s Tischreden. Nikolaus Selnecker, Paedagogiae christianae, pars prima. Vnterweisung in den Heubtstücken der gantzen Christlichen Lehre/ nach ordnung des heiligen Catechismi [...] (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1569), VD16 S 5627; pars secunda (1569), VD16 ZV 22875; pars terita (1569), VD16 S 5628; Nicolai Selnecceri D. Historica narratio et oratio de D. D. Martino Luthero, postremae aetatis Elia, et initij, causis, et progressu Confessionis Augustanae [...] (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1575), VD16 S 5553; Colloquia Oder Christliche Nützliche Tischreden Doctoris Martini Lutheri [...] (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1577), VD16 L 6763.

²⁶³ Nikolaus Selnecker, Die Propheten/ Jonas/ Nasum vnd Abacuc, unpag. [O. iij—O. iij”].


²⁶⁵ In Selnecker’s own words: ‘diß mein Pselterlein’; Nikolaus Selnecker, Der Psalter mit kurzen Summaren/ vnd Gebetlein für die Hausueter vnd ihre Kinder [...] (Leipzig: Bärwald, Jakob Erben, 1571), VD16 ZV 20832, unpaginated [qεr ij’].
profile highlights the hybrid character of the new *Psalterbuch.*²⁶⁶ The two books share a family resemblance: their dedications are signed in the Wolfenbüttel castle, they were printed in the same year and using the same introductory woodcut, they are related in visual terms.²⁶⁷ Both also contain Selnecker’s appeal to the consolatory effects of the Psalms, but they seem to target different audiences and settings; the *Psälerlein* makes explicit on the title page that it is ‘für die Hausueter vnd ihre Kinder’.

In the *Psälerlein*’s dedication to Adrian von Steinberg (1516–1582), privy counsellor to Duke Julius and responsible for bringing Selnecker to Wolfenbüttel, Selnecker states that the book will allow King David to stop in at Steinberg’s house and let his music console the hearts of the household’s members, even in times of burden and tribulation.²⁶⁸ These effects of engaging with the book are explicitly tied to the domestic setting.

Where the *Psalterbuch* testifies to Selnecker’s piety in his offices as preacher, the *Psälerlein* strengthens his profile as a man who practices what he preaches in his own home. Selnecker states that the book stems from the daily life in his own household where it began as a text for his children. He hopes the *Psälerlein* will now transcend this small domestic setting to

²⁶⁶ Fuchs, Psalmdeutung im Lied, p.76.
²⁶⁷ ‘Datum in der Fürstlichen Braunschweigischen Vestung Wolfferbytel bey der Heinrichstad/ den 12. Julii. 1571’; Selnecker, *Der Psalter mit kurzen Summarien,* unpaginated ‘Vorrede’. In the *Psälerlein* the woodcut is printed after the dedication; Selnecker, *Der Psalter mit kurzen Summarien,* unpaginated. In the *Psalterbuch* it is featured next to beginning of Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 1; Selnecker, *Der ganzer Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, fol. 1r.
provide a Christian structure for daily life at court.\textsuperscript{269} For example, he writes, a Psalm and its summary should be read aloud before and after every meal:


Without the word of God, courtiers eat like pigs: ‘Alten vnd Jungen/ Reutter/ Knecht/ Hoffgesind/ vnd Stalbuben’ go to and from the table like swine to the trough (‘wie die Schwein zum Trog’).\textsuperscript{271} Like in the Psalterbuch, Selnecker positions himself as an outsider with access to life at court – close enough to know what is going on, but at enough of a distance to avoid being tainted by it.

**A Redesigned Psalterbuch**

This new edition was printed in Leipzig in 1571 by the heirs of Jakob Bärwald. It was prepared by Selnecker during 1570 and constitutes three folio volumes, which in total have sixty folios more than the 1569 edition.\textsuperscript{272} It does not appear in the catalogues from the Frankfurt book fair, though we do find, from 1570 to 1572, various treatments of Christology and the Lord’s Supper as well as a new edition of the Paedagogia Christiana (1570) and the Psälterlein (1572).\textsuperscript{273} The 1571 Psalterbuch had been thoroughly redesigned. In the opening material, additions include a new title page, a dedication to the young princes of Electoral Saxony and Brunswick-Lüneburg, two poems, and a thematic register.\textsuperscript{274} In the treatments

\textsuperscript{269} From 1592 to 1600, Johannes Kirchring the Elder from Riga prepared a calligraphic masterpiece of the Psälterlein for Duke Johann VII of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst (1540–1603); Washington, Museum of the Bible, MS 000339.

\textsuperscript{270} Der Psalter mit kurzen Summarien, unpaginated [\textsuperscript{282} iij']

\textsuperscript{271} Der Psalter mit kurzen Summarien, unpaginated [\textsuperscript{282} iij'–\textsuperscript{282} iij''].

\textsuperscript{272} Selnecker signs a prayer after Psalm 50 ‘Scriptum in Gandersheim den 14. Nouembris. 1570’, the new register 9 April 1571, and the new dedication 1 December 1570; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1571), I, fols 245', unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [\textsuperscript{282} iij'], unpaginated ‘Register’.


\textsuperscript{274} The full sequence of introductory paratexts now stretches across twenty-eight pages and goes: new title page; new dedication; a printing privilege that specifies a fine of five hundred florins for illegally printing
of the Psalms, each interpretation now opens with the biblical Psalm and closes with a prayer. Moreover, Selnecker has further expanded his treatment of Psalm 91, adding the content of another devotional work. Other changes include an German adaption of a Latin poem in Psalm 1, the addition of a children’s song by Veit Dietrich in Psalm 79, and an expansion of his interpretation of Psalm 85 where he has added a few pages of homiletic interpretation and a short sermon by Bernard of Clairvaux.

Together with a page layout that emphasizes the biblical text, prayers, and hymns, the new edition amplifies the devotional and catechetical texts that invite the reader to partake in the practice modelled on its pages, a shift we began to see in the previous edition with the inclusion of Selnecker’s guide to the plague, the Christlicher bericht. The homiletic commentaries recede into the background as David’s Psalms and Selnecker’s own prayers take centre stage. At a time when the confessional tensions between ducal Wolfenbüttel and Electoral Saxony were high, the Psalterbuch emerges as a testament to Selnecker’s loyalty to both of his princely patrons and to the constancy of his own views. Pleading for unity among the conflicting parties, the edition’s tone is consolatory and devotional rather than polemical.

**Title page**

Compared to earlier editions, the title page of the 1571 Psalterbuch is less text-heavy and

---

275 For the poem in Psalm 1, compare Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, fol. 8r and Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter* (1569), I, fol. 9r. For the additions in Psalm 79, see Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), II, fols 157r–157v. For the additions to Psalm 85, see Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), II, fols 181r–184r, 184v–187v.
cluttered; Bärwald has trimmed elements and reorganized the information (see figure 4).276 Naming the current times as ‘elenden’ and the implied readers as ‘frommen Christen’ has been moved to the top of the page. The Psalterbuch is no longer described as three distinct volumes, each containing interpretations of fifty Psalms, and so the sense is more of a single publication made for a specific audience and context. This impression is reinforced by the fact that only the first volume has introductory material beyond a title page, and the various dedications from the previous editions are nowhere to be found.

Figure 4: Nikolaus Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids ausgelegt (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1571), I, title page. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: Th 4 61

276 If we assume that Bärwald was responsible for the design, as was most likely the case; Bertram, Büttner, and Zittel, ‘Early Modern Frontispieces – Introduction’, p. 31.
This effectively removes Selnecker’s relationship to the electoral court as a component of the book, which is unsurprising, but it is worth noting that Selnecker has not replaced that material with an indication that he is now serving Duke Julius in Wolfenbüttel. Perhaps this information was deemed unnecessary, or unappealing to Bärwald’s local market in and around Leipzig given the strained confessional relationship between the two territories. In any case, the only explicit information about the author’s background and status is a ‘D.’ for doctor on the title page.

A subtitle advertises that this edition has been improved and enlarged, and that prayers have been added to each interpretation. Below this is an illustration depicting King David that diverges strikingly from the earlier prints. Instead of playing his harp in a lavish indoor setting, we now see David at prayer in the open air on the outskirts of a city, and where before he was in the company of other people the biblical king is now alone with God. He kneels inside a round frame, clad in an embellished, regal robe with a large fur collar. His crown, sword, and sceptre lie behind him, and his harp is placed on the ground in front of him. His hands are held open and apart in front of his chest, and he tilts his head back to look to the sky where God appears in the clouds. God gazes at David, and with his arms outstretched he seems to bless the kneeling king. The city behind David is marked by a church with two tall towers and a large castle; David’s figure is positioned between these two buildings, facing the church with his side and back to the viewer.

This visual configuration is largely conventional. David appears alone outside a city with God in the clouds on many contemporary prints, for instance in several editions of Luther’s Der Psalter mit den Summarien, which was a bestseller published in countless editions in the sixteenth century, and in a number of prayer and hymn books. After appearing in

277 ‘Jetzt aber auffs newe zum letzten mal vbersehen/ gebessert/ vnd gemehret/ vnd mit sonderlichen schönen Gebetlein auff ein jeden Psalm fleissig zugerichtet’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1571), I, title page.

278 With slight variation on the title pages of for instance Martin Luther, Der Psalter mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luth. [...] (Leipzig: Rambaw, 1561), VD16 ZV 18623; Martin Luther, Der Psalter Deudsch Mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luther. [...] (Wittenberg: Lorenz Schwenck, 1574), VD16 B 3336; Martin Luther, Der Psalter mit den Summarien [...] (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1558), VD16 ZV 1599; Ambrosius Blarer, Psalmen und Geystliche Gesang (Zürich: Froschauer, 1570), VD16 P 5194; Georg Henninges, Der
Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch*, a variation of the same illustration, only smaller, mirrored, and less detailed, was used for Bärwald’s editions of Luther’s *Summarien*. While the city behind David has an air of naturalism, it is first and foremost symbolic: David as an emblematic devotional model. A king turning away from his earthly power towards faith and God, and whose expressions of faith can be voiced outside of church worship. We get the sense that we are seeing a private spiritual encounter between David and God, as if the former has left his palace to seek solitude and that only moments ago, in the middle of his performance of a Psalm, the sky opened and David dropped his harp in awe.

**Dedication**

The introductory material opens with a new dedication to the two crown princes of Electoral Saxony and Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel: the eleven-year-old Christian (1560–1591) and the seven-year-old Heinrich Julius (1564–1613). Selnecker explains that it has been eight years since the first edition of the *Psalterbuch*, which has now been printed for the fourth time. He is dedicating this new edition to the young princes, he writes, because he wants the *Psalterbuch* to establish ‘a bond of Christian union and heartfelt unity in faith’ between them. According to Selnecker, the *Psalterbuch* will remain at its first refuge while simultaneously following him to Wolfenbüttel – he even anthropomorphizes the book, according to it a kind

*Psalter des heiligen Königes vnd Propheten Dauids: Jn kurtze einfeltige Deudsche Reimen verfasset [...]* (Magdeburg: Wilhelm Roß, 1574), VD16 B 3335.


280 Vries argues that the title page portrays Selnecker and his contemporary Saxony, but taking the conventionality and the fact that the illustration was later used on a book by Luther into account, this seems somewhat unlikely; Vries, ‘Nikolaus Selnecker and Visual Portrayal of the Psalmist’, pp. 41–42.

of agency when he states that it ‘fled to’ the Dresden court. This agency allows the book to function as a bridge, temporally in Selnecker’s own history and spatially between the two territories.\textsuperscript{282} Selnecker’s dedicatory gesture thus accords continuity to both the trajectory of his career and his theological stances, and it presents the book as a physical token of hope for the future: Christian and Heinrich Julius have started on the same path, and now they need to stay on track and follow in the footsteps of their parents. The physical copies of the \textit{Psalterbuch} that Selnecker has sent will aid them along the way, and this transfer of objects symbolically represents the connections between Dresden and Wolfenbüttel and Selnecker’s past and present.\textsuperscript{283}

To further emphasize the continuity between 1563 and 1571 Selnecker refers explicitly to his dedication from 1563.\textsuperscript{284} He stands by his words there, he states, but he does in fact make subtle revisions. In the 1571 dedication Selnecker has made a significant update to what he considers the canon of teaching that forms the foundation for the \textit{Psalterbuch}. In previous editions he had listed the Bible, the Augsburg Confession, and his teachers in Wittenberg and other places; now he has added the \textit{Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum} alongside these

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{282} The original dedication from 1563 follows immediately after the new dedication and adds weight to this argument.
  \item \textsuperscript{283} ‘Weil sie aber jetzt zum vierdten mal auffgelegt und gedruckt worden/ vnd ich alle Psalmen von newen ubersehen/ vnd newlich zu Gandersheim auff ein jeden Psalm ein kortzes Gebetlein gestellet/ lasse ichs wol vnd billich bleiben bey meiner vorigen Dedication und unterthenigstem Zuschreiben/ wie dasselbige jetzt so bald folgen sol/ zweiffels on/ es werden Ewrer F. G. Herr Vater/ vnd Fraw Mutter ob diesem newen wol vnd billich bleiben bey meiner vorigen Dedication und newlich zu Gandersheim auff ein jeden Psalm ein kurtzes Gebetlein gestellet/ lasse ichs.
  \item \textsuperscript{284} ‘Weil sie aber jetzt zum vierdten mal auffgelegt und gedruckt worden/ vnd ich alle Psalmen von newen ubersehen/ vnd newlich zu Gandersheim auff ein jeden Psalm ein kortzes Gebetlein gestellet/ lasse ichs wol vnd billich bleiben bey meiner vorigen Dedication und unterthenigstem Zuschreiben/ wie dasselbige jetzt so bald folgen sol’; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids} (1571), I, unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [ )\textsuperscript{i}][ ij]-\textsuperscript{i}j].
\end{itemize}

85
authors, giving it equal importance.\footnote{Was in Gottes Wort/ oder in Prophetischen/ vnd Apostolischen Schrifften/ ausdrücklich verfasset/ vnd Gottes Wort selbs ist/ was in den Sechsschen vnd Meinsischen Schulen vnd kirchen nach der Augspurgischen Confession/ oder nach dem ersten vnd rechten/ richtigen Copore doctrine Philippi gehreht wird/ was wir auch von vnsern alten Praeceptoribus in Theologia zu Wittenberg/ vnd von andern trewen Lehrern anderstwo gehöret haben/ was die schlechte/ rechte/ einfeltige Lehr ist/ was den Glauben stercket/ das Gewissen tröste/ vnd das leben informirt/ vnd zur besserung hilfft/ daran halte ich mich’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauid (1571), I, unpaginated ‘Vorrede’. He has also replaced ‘in locis communibus Philippi’ with ‘in dem herrlichen Corpore Doctrine Philippi’ in his interpretation of Psalm 1; compare Der gantze Psalter Dauid (1569), I, fol. 4’ and Der gantze Psalter Dauid (1571), I, fol. 4’.}

As described above, Selnecker’s support for the Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum in Wolfenbüttel indicates his ambition to chart a common confessional course for Electoral and Lower Saxony.

In addition to stressing continuity and concord, Selnecker provides two new generic characterizations of the Psalterbuch in the dedication. First, he simply calls it ‘diesem newen Psalter’.\footnote{D. Nicolai Selnecceri paraphrasis Psalterij: Sive carminum Davidicorum [...] (Wolfenbüttel: Konrad Horn, 1573), VD16 B 3228.} Unlike the previous editions, where he maintained a distance between the Psalter and his Psalterbuch, the two are conflated here. This moniker connects the Psalterbuch to the Latin psalter, which Selnecker mentions at the end of the dedication published in Wolfenbüttel in 1573:\footnote{Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauid (1571), I, unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [ ) ( ij’].}

Selnecker’s Latin psalter is a small duodecimo volume that contains short poetic summaries of each of the Psalms.\footnote{See Inka Bach and Helmut Galle, Deutsche Psalmendichtung vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), pp. 135–37.} In format, genre, and size it is very different from the Psalterbuch, but Selnecker emphasizes what they have in common: the ability to provide the consolation

of the Psalms, no matter the tribulation. When Selnecker presents the Psalterbuch as a Psalter, he stages it not a book about true devotion but rather an instrument of such devotion.290

Second, Selnecker terms the Psalterbuch a hortulum animae, a garden of the soul, which refers to a particular genre of devotional literature that emerged in the late fifteenth century.291 This appeals simultaneously to the generic expectations of late medieval form, with its basis in the Psalms, and to a Lutheran form of catechetical devotion.292 Selnecker thus reshapes his reader’s expectations to the book in this new edition; instead of a collection of sermons they will find here a devotional tool. Moreover, Selnecker’s new dedication is a plea for unity between the two ruling houses of Lower Saxony and Electoral Saxony, testifying to his allegiance to both and asserting his own orthodoxy.


291 In 1498, Wilhelm Schaffner printed a Hortulum animae in Straßburg and by 1523 over a hundred versions of this new genre had appeared. These books all contained the basic elements from books of hours: a liturgical calendar, the Hours of the Virgin, the Seven Penitential Psalms, the Litany of Saints, the Office of the Dead, and the Suffrages of the Saints; Sabina Foidl, ‘Hortulus animae’, in Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon Online (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), <https://www.degruyter.com/database/DLLO/entry/dllo.ma.4560/html> [accessed 23 March 2023]. In 1547 Georg Rhau compiled a Lutheran Hortulus animae. Rhau’s hortulum contains interpretations of the Ten Commandments, sermons over the Passion, interpretations of the Our Father and the creeds. It does not contain any Psalms. It is dedicated to his daughters, and he emphasizes his hope that the book will aid them in their Christian education, as a supplement to the catechism; Georg Rhau, Hortulus animae. Lustgertlin der Seelen. Mit schönen lieblichen Figuren [...] (Wittenberg: Rhau, 1548), VD16 ZV 13181, unpaginated ‘Epistel’ [A iij, A iiij–A iiiij].

292 Moreover, he references the traditional understanding of the Book of Psalms as a garden. We find this as early as in Athanasius of Alexandria’s (c. 295–373) Letter to Marcellinus from the fourth century; Paul R. Kolbet, ‘Athanasius, the Psalms, and the Reformation of the Self’, in The Harp of Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms, ed. by Brian E. Daley and Paul R. Kolbet (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), pp. 75–96 (p. 82). Luther repeats it in his introduction to the Psalms from 1528: ‘Wo findet man feiner wort von freuden, denn die lob Psalmen oder danck Psalmen haben? Da siestu allen heiligen yrs hertz, wie ynn schoene lustigete garten, ia wie ynn den hymel, wie feine hertzliche lustigete blumen darynnen auffgehen von allerley schoenen froelichen gedancken gegen Gott vnd seine woltuht’; WA Bibel 10/1, p. 102. Finally, only a few pages later in the opening paragraph of his interpretation of Psalm 1, Selnecker alludes to this understanding of the Psalms when he writes: ‘Daser Psalm ist ein rechter Eingang zu dem gantzen Psalter/ denn er hat den rechten Scopum der gantzen heiligen Schrift/ das er nemlich predigt von dem wort Gottes/ vnd vermanet vns/ das wir lust vnd liebe darzu haben sollen/ dasselbige gerne hören vnd lernen/ sintermal das wort Gottes allein ist der schöne Lustgart vnd Paradeis/ darin wir in diesem leben all vnser frewde/ hertzenslust vnd erquickung haben können/ vnd vnsere früchte bringen/ vnd leben sollen’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), 1, fol. 1v.
Register
Selnecker has included a register in the edition. Its title, ‘Register der fürnembsten lehre/ so in diesem gantzen Psalterbuch erkerlet werden’, suggests that it provides an overview of the teaching expounded upon in the Psalterbuch. The index as a textual genre has its roots in the thirteenth century. Along with features such as running heads, marked paragraphs, and names of cited authors, the index was developed to meet the demands of new reading practices. The newly established universities and preaching orders spurred a shift from the meditative monastic mode of reading: teachers and preachers needed to access information efficiently and swiftly. Early forms of the index include the first Bible concordances from the middle of the thirteenth century; these standalone books were organised either alphabetically or thematically, and they were made possible by the division of the Bible into chapters around the start of the century. There were also indexes compiled by readers and added to the leaves of manuscripts, sometimes centuries after they were written. With the advent of print and the (at least relative) stability of page numbers across a particular edition indexes became widespread. They were often advertised as selling points on title pages, and they were so popular that scholars began warning against ‘index learning’ – reading excerpts instead of a whole text.


Duncan, ‘Indexes’, pp. 266–270. Most often the early forms were not called an index but appeared under a range of different names such as tabulae, registra, repertoria or inventaria; Kyle Conrau-Lewis, ‘The Index in the Premodern and Modern World’, Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1224> [accessed 23 October 2022] (‘Indexes: Definition and History’).


Blair, Too Much to Know, p. 53.

Conrau-Lewis, ‘The Index in the Premodern and Modern World’ (‘Index Learning’).
Selnecker’s register offers a new way for his readers to engage with the *Psalterbuch*. The previous editions of the *Psalterbuch* had offered readers two basic approaches to the text: one based on its relationship to the Bible and one constructed narratively. One could easily find Selnecker’s interpretation of a particular Psalm because the Psalms were divided into three books, and running heads name each Psalm being treated. A reader well versed in the hermeneutical tradition might also read Selnecker’s interpretation of a particular subset of Psalms, such as the Penitential Psalms or the Psalms of Ascent. In narrative terms, Selnecker dates the beginning of his preaching on the Psalms and invites the reader to follow him through the Psalms in order from the first to the 150th. Selnecker now also superimposes a structure onto the text that allows the information in the book to be accessed thematically.

Selnecker’s eight-page register is organized around thirty-three topical headlines. It begins with the word of God, and emblematic for the edition’s combination of homiletic instruction and engagement in practice, the two opening themes under this headline to which the reader is guided are the benefits of studying the word of God and of going to church. After the first headline, Selnecker lists each of the persons of the Trinity, and from there moves freely between concepts such as sin, free will, and faith, and the institution of the church, marriage, secular authorities, and practices such as prayer and penitence. The themes resemble those found in various editions of Selnecker’s *Paedagogia Christiana*; the register in the Latin edition of 1565 begins with the persons of the Trinity, while the German edition from 1570 opens with ‘Von Gottes Wort’. The entries under the headlines in the *Psalterbuch* are diverse. The entries under ‘Prayer’ offer a good example of how some are purely descriptive (‘Vom Gebet’), while others are normative and in themselves offer a short version of Selnecker’s theology (‘Mündlich Gebet nötig’). Still others indicate where specific prayers can be found (‘Teglich Gebet der Obrigkeit’):

---


Besides its function as an aid to the reader, the register also outlines Selnecker’s own reading of his Psalterbuch. It shows what he has found important to include, but with this added transparency comes an element of concealment. Strikingly, his interpretation of Psalm 112, which had aroused criticism around the time of his departure from Dresden, is not listed under the topic ‘Von der Obrigkeit’. On the controversial issue of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper Selnecker refers directly to his interpretation of Psalm 110, ‘Christus zur rechten Gottes. Psalm. 110. fol. 83. 92. vnd Psalm. 21. fol. 123.’, signifying that he stands by his view on this subject as expressed in the 1564 edition.302

At the end of the register Selnecker writes a short note about his revision of the Psalterbuch. Somewhat undercutting the sales pitch on the title page, which promised a thorough makeover, he explains that he only had a single day to create the register:

ICH wil nu auffhören mehr anzuzeigen/ was im Psalter ausgelegt wird/ weil ich weder zeit noch weil habe/ vnd/ zu dieser gantzen vbersehung vnd notation nur ein einigen tag gewunnen. Andere könnens mit der zeit vnd guter masse fleissiger vnd besser machen.303

He ends with a prayer underscoring the majesty of Christ and expresses his own hope for a return to the simple theology of the catechism:

Stewre vnd wehre allen Gottslesterern/ Arrianern/ Widersachern/ Sacramentirern/ vnd vnnützen disputieriern/ die dem HERRN Christo seine Maiestet verkleinern/ vnd jme seine Allmacht vnd Warheit entziehen wollen/ vnd reden wider sein wesen/ willen/ wort/ vnd einsetzung/ vnd bringen newe/ vnd in der Christenheit zuvor vnerhörete fragen vnd rede an

301 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, unpaginated ‘Register’.
302 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, unpaginated ‘Register’ [v–v'].
303 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, unpaginated ‘Register’.
tag/ von welchen weder Gottes wort/ noch irgend die rechte antiquitas, etwas wissen/ wie solches ein jeder/ der nur seinen kindercatechismum gelernet hat/ bezeugen kan.304

This emphasis on Christ’s omnipotence fosters a reading of the Psalterbuch that aligns with Selnecker’s affinity for the Christology of Chemnitz, as seen for instance in his Kurtze/Wahre vnd Einfeltige Bekantnus.305 Simultaneously, the reference to the catechism and the similarity of the register to Selnecker’s Paedagogia Christiana anchors the edition in Selnecker’s time in Dresden, creating continuity in his narrative.

**Concluding Poem**

Concluding the introductory material is a small poem. It is physically centred on its own page across from the opening interpretation of Psalm 1, and is adorned with a large decorative initial as well as a printer’s strapwork ornament. The poem reads like an interpretative guide or epigram.306 In a rhetorical register that matches that of the Psalms, the poem addresses God and laments the division within the church.307 Its speaker prays that Christ will punish those who try to ‘tie down his right hand’, i.e. suppress the right understanding of the Lord’s Supper as held, for example, by Selnecker’s former colleagues in Wittenberg:

ACH GOD es geht gar vbel zu/
Auff dieser Erd ist keine rhu/
Viel Secten vnd gros Schwermerey/
Auff einen hauffen kömt herbey.
HERR JHesu Christe/ dein ist die ehr/
Erhalt dein Wort vnd heilsam Lehr/
Erweis dein Maiestet vnd Thron/
O Gottes vnd Marien Son/

---

304 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, unpaginated ‘Register’.

305 As displayed in his *Kurtze/ Wahre vnd Einfeltige Bekantnus D. Nic. Selnecceri. Von der Maiestet/ Auffarth/ Sitzen zur Rechten Gottes/ vnd vom Abendmal vnser HERRN Jhesu Christi. [...]* (Heinrichstadt, Richzenhan, 1571), VD16 S 5593.

306 ‘Though that might be an anachronistic term, as the epigraph as we know it today did not start to appear at least until the seventeenth century; Rachel Sagner Buurma, ‘Epigraps’ in *Book Parts*, ed. by Duncan and Smyth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 167–75 (pp. 167–168). It is however positioned ‘at the edge of the work’, as Genette describes the epigraph; *Paratexts*, p. 144.

307 The poem later figures in Selnecker’s hymn collection from 1587 as an addition a version of ‘Erhalt vns HErr bey deinem Wort’. Later versions of Selnecker’s hymn incorporates parts of the poem as the fifth stanza; Selnecker, *Christliche Psalmen/ Lieder/ vnd KJrchengesenge/ In welchen die Christliche Lehre zusam gefasset vnd erkerlet wird [...]* (Leipzig: Johan Beyer, 1587), VD16 S 5494, p. 111.
Und straff der losen Schwetzer tand/
Die binden wolln dein rechte Hand.
Das alle Welt erkenne dich/
Und ehr dein Namen ewiglich/
AMEN.
Hilff/ HERR JHesu/ hilff. 308

As the final paratext before the interpretations of the Psalms begin, the poem personalises the confessional struggle for unity within Lutheranism which in turn underscores the consolatory dimension of the new edition. It further concludes Selnecker’s efforts at shaping the expectations of his readers: the last thing they see before delving into the interpretations is a reinforcement of Selnecker’s profile as a fierce defender of Christ’s omnipotence.

Additions to Psalm 91

In this edition Selnecker has expanded his interpretation of Psalm 91. After the material from the previous editions that was lifted from the Christlicher bericht of 1565, Selnecker has added a series of excerpts from the Bible that console one faced with the fear of death under the headline Etliche schöne Sprüche/ mit welchen wir vns/ wider das schrecken des Tods auffhalten/ vnd schützen sollen. 309 These citations form a coherent section and had been printed by Bärwald as an independent work in 1566. 310 In the dedication of the Etliche schöne Sprüche to the magistrate Caspar von Minckwitz (1511–1563), Selnecker explains that he has prepared the collection of Biblical sayings as an epitaph for Caspar’s brother Erasmus (1509–1563), and that they can ward off death. 311 In the Psalterbuch, the anthology of citations is placed immediately after the hymn that performs the hour of death, and in combination with the epitaph for Selnecker’s printer Jacob Bärwald, it augments the topic of death and dying.

308 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1571), I, unpaginated.
309 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1571), II fols 246v–251v.
310 Selnecker, Tröstliche sprüche/ vnd Grabschrifft/ aus Heiliger Schrifti zusammen gefasset/ vnd kürzlich erklert/ damit wir vns zum Tod gefast machen sollen […] (Leipzig: Berwaldt, 1566), VD16 S 5673.
The page layout in Bärwald’s 1571 edition of the *Psalterbuch* emphasizes the devotional material. The newly added elements, the Psalm texts and the prayers that frame each interpretation, are printed in a larger typeface than is the homiletic commentaries. The previous editions mainly used two different font sizes, one for the verses from the Psalms and one for everything else, relying on the arrangement of the texts across the pages to
distinguish between the genres. The new edition keeps this spatial distribution but uses the larger typeface for poems, some of the hymns, and Psalm verses. Simply put, these changes push the homilies into the background as Scripture, hymns, verse, and prayers take centre stage (see figure 5).

A striking typographical addition is the modern-looking quotation marks in the margins of several interpretations. Since antiquity, the arrowhead shape known as the diple (from Greek, ‘double’ from its two lines) had been used to mark significant lines in manuscripts. In the Middle Ages a range of marginal shapes developed from the diple, and they were used primarily to make particular citations from Scripture and the Church Fathers easy to identify. With printing, these medieval forms were replaced by the use of double commas (,,) in the margin to highlight different types of material including testimony from Scripture and citations from other authors, and for commonplaces, for instance sententiae and aphorisms, that could be memorised or copied into a personal commonplace book. Only in 1574 did English printers began using inverted double commas (‘’) for direct speech.

In the Psalterbuch Bärwald uses double commas in the margin primarily to signal passages that address God in the first person. They were used a few times already in the previous

---

312 Compare for instance Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1565), III, fol. 12” to Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), III, fol. 12”.

313 Some hymns have large headlines, but are printed in the same font as the homiletic commentaries, e.g. in Psalm 1 and Psalm 61; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, fols 10v–11’; II, fols 55’–55v. Others are printed in a larger font, e.g. in Psalm 110 and Psalm 128; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), III, fol. 109r; III, fol. 179v. For good examples of the new layout see for example Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, fols 15v–16r; II, fols 135r–135v; III, fol 12r.


315 Finnegan, Why Do We Quote?, p. 89.


317 The earliest example often cited is a mirror for magistrates edited by John Higgins in 1574; M.B. Parkes, Pause and Effect, p. 59.
editions: in Psalm 73 to mark the citation: ‘wie Petrus vom Loth sagt/ das es fast vnmöglicher ist/ das ein frommer lang leben könne. Je frommer Mensch/ je ehe gestorben’, and in Psalm 85 to cite Psalm 85:4–12 and Ephesians 2:4–6 (these passages from the Bible are no longer marked in the new edition). Bärwald seems to have been experimenting with possible applications for these signs in the new edition, and they are not used consistently throughout the Psalterbuch. They only appear sporadically in Psalms 9, 22, 27, 30–31, 47, 67, 71, and 73. Furthermore, the cited lines vary in their content. Some of them contain prayers while others combine passages from Scripture without making the citations explicit and letting the reader know where the content originates. In Psalm 9, Selnecker quickly shifts from speaking about the word of God to praying to Christ in the first person plural (see figure 6). This is the opening of the twenty-three lines marked:

Die weil wir aber/ wie zuvor gesagt/ allein auff das ausdrückliche wort Gottes achtung geben sollen/ so bitten wir dich/ HERR Jhesu Christe/ der du das ewige wort vnd ebenbild deines Vaters/ vnd der Weg/ die Warheit vnd das Leben bist/ du wolst vns bey deinem wort gnediglich erhalten/ vnd dir eine kirche samlen/ die dich durch dein wort recht erkenne/ ehre vnd preise/ vnd wöllest vnd heilig/h durch deinen heiligen Geist/ in deiner Warheit.

The transition between the two rhetorical registers is longer in the two passages marked in Psalm 31. Here, Selnecker first explains what his readers ought to do, and then he performs it himself with the words of Psalm 27:14 and Psalm 31:15–16:


---

318 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Daviuds* (1571), II, fol. 118r. Compare Selnecker, *Das Ander Buch* (1564), fols 167r, 248r–249r.

319 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Daviuds* (1571), I, fols 38r, 139r–139v, 41r, 164r–164v, 171r, 175v–176v, 236v; II, fols 79r, 100r, 118r.

320 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Daviuds* (1571), I, fol. 38r.

321 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Daviuds* (1571), I, fol. 175r.
The use of double commas takes the Psalterbuch further in the direction of active, performed Christian practice. They make it easy to identify memorable and poignant passages that stand out in the homilies in their direct address to God. Some of these passages offer citations from Scripture, but there is no explicit mention of what is cited. As a reader, the important thing seems to be the easy identification of a particular mode of speaking, not where the content comes from.
**Prayers**

In the new edition, each interpretation ends with a prayer. On the title page, they are advertised as ‘Gebetlein’, and most of them are indeed quite short, between ten and twenty lines. Some are longer, between thirty and fifty lines.²²² Sometimes, two prayers are included after an interpretation,²²³ and a few of the prayers are rhymed or take the form of hymns.²²⁴ The majority of the prayers are directed to God the Father, while a large minority appeal to Christ.²²⁵ For the most part, the prayers are expressed in the first person plural, but around forty prayers are in the first person singular.²²⁶ Selnecker does not specify the petitioners beyond fundamental characteristics of their status as a sinner or a sinful group of people living a Christian life under the cross, full of temptation, enemies, and hardship. As he writes in the opening of the prayer in Psalm 9: ‘wir sind ja zumal arme sündige Menschen’.²²⁷ The closest we get to an specification of a speaker is in Psalm 128, where the prayer – in line with the third verse of the Psalm – is delivered by a house father who prays for his marriage, his children and other members of his household:


²²² See for instance the prayers after Psalms 8, 45, 51, 74, and 90; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, fol. 34r–35r, 232r; II, fols 20r–20v, 132r–133r, 213r–214r.

²²³ Two prayers at Psalms 6, 52, 63, 65, and 94; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, fols 25r–26r; II, fols 24r–24v; 66v–67r, 75v–75r, 263r. After Psalm 35, Selnecker includes three prayers; ibid., III, fols 197r–198r.

²²⁴ The prayer after Psalm 10 for instance rhymes and opens with the lines from Luther: ‘ERhalt vns HERR bey deinem Wort/ Vnd wehr des Bapstvnd Türecken mord’; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, fol. 44r. A small poem, ‘Christ fuhr gen Himmel’, follows Psalm 68; ibid., II, fol. 91r. Sometimes the prayers are marked as ‘Gesangweise’ and come with designated melodies, see for instance Psalms 142 and 143; ibid., III, fols 221r–222r, 223r. See also the rhymed prayers at Psalms 69 and 92; ibid., II, fols 95r, 254r.

²²⁵ The prayers after Psalms 10 and 139 address all three persons of the Trinity; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, fol. 44r; III, fol. 215r.

²²⁶ For first person singular prayers see for instance Psalms 1, 25, 31, 35, 42, 55, 77, 87, 94, 102, 104, 108, 111, 118, 121, 130, 139; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, fols 8r–9r, 159r, 178r, 197r–198r, 220r; II, fols 36r, 145r, 192r, 263r; III, fols 30r, 44r, 72r, 122r, 141r, 164r; 183r–184r, 215r.

²²⁷ Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), I, fol. 39v. Similarly in Psalms 13, 14, and 16; ibid., fols 55r, 59r, 87r.
The fact that the only specified speaker in the prayers is a male head of house, is in line with the two prayers listed in the register of the edition, a daily prayer for authorities and a prayer for the father of the house. The lack of other voices contrasts with the specificity of the prayers we saw in the prayers from the *Christlicher bericht* that were added to Psalm 91 in 1565.

The setting of the prayers is equally undetailed. The prayer after Psalm 111, however, does give the impression that it belongs to a context outside of communal worship. In the prayer, an individual speaker outlines a devotional programme in which God is not only given thanks when the speaker is alone, but also in the community of the church:


The ‘nicht allein wenn ich allein bin’ reads as a reminder that private prayer should not deter from attending church.

In the prayers, the sinful collective or individual thank God for his support and petition for him continue his support. Often these invocations come from the heart: ‘So bitten wir dich von grund vnserer Hertzen’, as he writes in Psalm 71. They are full of exclamations: ‘Ah lieber GOTT’ and ‘Wir deine Kinder ruffen zu dir’; and sometimes this is combined with

---


330 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), III, fol. 122v.

331 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), II, fol. 104v. Other examples include Psalms 1, 5, 9, 54, 62, 63, 67, 74, 81, 93, 117; ibid., I, fols 8v, 22v, 39v; II, 27v, 59v, 67v, 81v, 132v, 170v, 255v; III, fol. 141v.

332 In Psalms 79 and 142; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1571), II, fol. 156v; III, fol. 221v. See also Psalms 80, 86, 90, 118, 119, 126; ibid., II, fols 168v, 189v, 214v; III, fols 144v, 162v, 171v.
dramatic bodily movement: ‘Wir bitten dich aber/ vnd fallen dir zu fuss/ O himlischer Vater/ O du hohe Maiestet/ O du trewer Gott’.\textsuperscript{333}

Selnecker’s prayer after Psalm 143 contains in nucleus the elements elaborated or singled out in other prayers. Here, the petitioner prays for three things. First, for forgiveness of all his sins and to be adopted as a child of God; second, that God will keep him by the right doctrine; and third, that he will protect his church against all enemies.\textsuperscript{334} These key themes are detailed, elaborated, and refined in other prayers that give thanks for the Gospel,\textsuperscript{335} for Christ’s act of redemption,\textsuperscript{336} for good teachers,\textsuperscript{337} the authorities,\textsuperscript{338} that petition for the continual upholding of a well-ordered society and its estates,\textsuperscript{339} for the church,\textsuperscript{340} the catechism,\textsuperscript{341} and

\textsuperscript{333} Psalm 79; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1571), II, fol. 157\textsuperscript{v}. See also Psalm 90; ibid., II, fol. 214\textsuperscript{v}.


\textsuperscript{335} See for example Psalms 19, 60, 65, 122, 129, 138; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1571), I, fol. 119\textsuperscript{v}; II, fols 54\textsuperscript{v}, 75\textsuperscript{v}; III, fols 166\textsuperscript{v}, 182\textsuperscript{v}, 208\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{336} For example in Psalms 98, 99, and 100; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1571), II, fols 271\textsuperscript{v}, 272\textsuperscript{v}, 273\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{337} For example in Psalm 134; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1571), III, fol. 193\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{338} For instance in Psalm 20: ‘Wir dancken dir/ fur dein gnedige Ordnung vnd fur das weltliche Regiment/ vnd fur vnsere liebe Obrigkeit’, Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1571), I, fol. 122\textsuperscript{v}. Similarly in Psalms 61, 65, 82, 101, 118, 127, 144; ibid., II, fols 55\textsuperscript{v}, 75\textsuperscript{v}, 175\textsuperscript{v}; III, fols 25\textsuperscript{v}, 144\textsuperscript{v}, 175\textsuperscript{v}, 225\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{339} For example in Psalm 149; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1571), III, fol. 235\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{340} See Psalms 87, 105, and 124; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1571), II, fol. 192\textsuperscript{v}; III, fols 58\textsuperscript{v}, 168\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{341} The prayer after Psalm 5: ‘du woltest vns gnedigl bey deinem seligmachendem Wort vnd vnsern lieben Kinder Catechismo erhalten/ vnd vns vre falscher lehre/ vnd gleissenden heuchlerischen werken behüten/ vnd allen Rottengeistern vnd ketzern wehren/ die mit Teuffels lügen/ bösem geschwetz vnd vergiffen Büchern/ einfeltige vnd sichere leut leichtlich verführen’, Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1571), I, fol. 22\textsuperscript{v}. See also Psalm 11; ibid., I, fol. 48\textsuperscript{v}.
the daily bread,\footnote{See for example Psalm 37; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids} (1571), I, fol. 205v.} and for protection against false teachers\footnote{See for example Psalms 36 and 120; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids} (1571), I, fol. 200v; III, fols. 163v.} and enemies such as the Jews, Muslims, and the pope.\footnote{See for example Psalm 59: ‘Den[n] wir wissen/ das du alle mistrawende allzeit straffest/ wir wir an deinem Volck/ den elenden Jüden/ sehen’; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids} (1571), II, fol. 155v. The Turks and the pope are singled out in Psalm 74; ibid., II, fols 132v–133v.}

The prayers repeat the main points of the homilies but in the expressive language of thanksgiving and petition. Accordingly, they offer powerful shifts in the language of the \textit{Psalterbuch}. For example at the end of Psalm 2, where Selnecker opens the final paragraph of his interpretation with a customary ‘Aus diesem Psalm haben wir nu das zu lernen: […]’.

In contrast, the prayer that follows begins with a dramatic: ‘HJIlfe/ lieber HERR GOTT’.\footnote{Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids} (1571), I, fol. 13v.} Paradigmatically, we may speak of a transition from instruction to petition, from the intellect to the heart, though such classifications are not without limitations. The prayers mirror the language of the biblical text and combines it with the main arguments from Selnecker’s interpretation. A good example is Selnecker’s prayer after Psalm 3. Here, the first person singular speaker is caught in danger and misery, but nonetheless convinced that God will listen and come to his or her rescue:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

The prayer summarises the key point in Selnecker’s interpretation of the Psalm, but recasts it in an intensified affective language. In the homily, Selnecker speaks to the intellect rather than the emotions when he explains how the Christian who stays by Christ is safe and sound, despite appearing the contrary in the eyes of the world: ‘Wer CHristo dienet/ vnd jhn küsset/

\begin{flushright}
...\end{flushright}
auff jhn trawet/ der ist fein/ vnd sol fein bleiben/ ob gleich die Welt vberal jhn verfolget’. Selnecker concludes his interpretation, immediately before the prayer, with an amen, a cue to how the Psalm should be sung, or as a prompt to be still and meditate on the meaning of the preceding text. He proceeds to describe it as an addition to a verse that completes it, and he details how it is used seventy-one times at the end of verse in the Psalms and four times in the middle of a verse. The passage can hardly be described as appealing

The prayer in Psalm 3 mirrors the opening citation of the biblical text, and picks up certain phrases. For instance, verse four goes: ‘Jch ruffe an mit meiner stimm den HERRN/ So erhöret er mich/ von seinem heiligen Berge/ Sela’, and Selnecker responds in the prayer: ‘Jch bin aber des gewis/ das du mich erhörest/ wenn ich nur zu dir ruffe’. Likewise, the Psalm opens with a cry over the quantity of enemies, ‘AH HERR/ wie ist meiner FEinde so viel’, and towards the end of the Psalm, in verse seven, it calls for divine intervention: ‘Auff HERR vnd hilff mir mein GOTT/ Denn du schlegst alle meine Feinde auff den Backen’. In his prayer, Selnecker begins from his trust in deliverance, and adds his interpretation of the enemies as spiritual and corporeal in accordance with his interpretation of the Psalm: ‘Bitte dich derhalben […] du wollest […] mich von allen meinen feiden/ geistlichen vnd leiblichen erretten’. The prayer operates in a rhetorical register that echoes the Psalm, but it is shaded by Selnecker’s interpretative agenda.

It is important to stress that the difference between the rhetorical registers of the homilies and the prayers is not a robust binary, but rather a question of emphasis. In the example from Psalm 3, Selnecker concludes his interpretation, immediately before the prayer, with an explanation of Hebrew the word ‘Sela’. It has, he writes, been wrongly interpreted as an amen, a cue to how the Psalm should be sung, or as a prompt to be still and meditate on the meaning of the preceding text. He proceeds to describe it as an addition to a verse that completes it, and he details how it is used seventy-one times at the end of verse in the Psalms and four times in the middle of a verse. The passage can hardly be described as appealing

---

347 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, fol. 14v.
348 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, fols 14r, 16v.
349 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, fols 14r, 16v. In the homily, Selnecker explains about the enemies: ‘sie wollen nicht allein den Leib tödten/ vnd hinweg richten/ sondern auch die Seele verdammen’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), I, fol. 15v.
350 ‘Aber dieweil viel Sprüche in den Psalmen hin vnd wider stehen/ in welchen diese deutung oder auslegung nicht können stat haben/ so ist das der Gelerten meinung/ das dis wörtlein (Sela) in Hebreischer
to the emotions, and the contrast between this homiletic conclusion and ensuing prayer is pronounced. Preceding the passage on the ‘Sela’, however, is a conclusion to the Psalm where Selnecker moves seamlessly from instruction to petition:


In the face of all the enemies and their threat to the life of the speaker, they only move the Christian to prayer – and Selnecker enacts that prayer in the text. Accordingly, the different genres privilege specific modes of articulation, some more expressive and intimate than others. The prayers that conclude each interpretation form a bridge back to the biblical text that open the interpretations, and together they erect a practical framework, explicitly in the first person perspective, around the back and forth between reflection and performance characteristic of the homilies. The prayers model ideal responses to the homilies, from the position of the Christian life under the cross. The transitions from homily to prayer, come with an amplification of practice as well as an increased affective intensity. They offer thanks and petitions in a language modelled on the Psalms and they summarise main ideas from Selnecker’s homilies. They further amplify the participatory and performative dimension of the Psalterbuch.


Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1571), I, fol. 15v.
Conclusion

Selnecker’s release of the new edition of the *Psalterbuch* in 1571 was embedded in confessional dispute as Selnecker tried to balance his loyalty to the Saxon Electorate and his new colleagues in Wolfenbüttel. The edition is a thorough redesign and expansion of the *Psalterbuch*. New paratextual elements offer a plea for concord between the two territories that Selnecker served and remind his readers of the continuity in his career against a backdrop of accusations of having shifted his position. Other elements include a register that superimposes a thematic structure onto the *Psalterbuch* and offers new ways for his readers to engage with the text. Moreover, Selnecker takes the *Psalterbuch* in a practical direction by adding and visually emphasizing prayers, hymns, and citations from Scripture. In a rhetorical register that mimics the Psalms, the edition is replete with affective expressions of faith. Prayers after each interpretation summarise key points in Selnecker’s treatment, but recast them in an intensified affective language. Compared to other publications by Selnecker and Bärwald, for instance the *Psälterlein* that presented its primary audience, the patriarch, on the title page and offered a uniform devotional programme consisting of Scripture, summary, and prayer, the hybrid character of the *Psalterbuch* is striking. The edition from 1571 comes across as a somewhat oddly sized instrument of devotion.
5. 1581: THE PSALTERBUCH POST-CONCORD

In the new edition of the Psalterbuch issued in 1581 Selnecker puts a fascinating spin on his past. He mobilizes the Psalterbuch as a weighty testament to his non-polemical preaching as well as his early identification of Calvinism as a threat to the societal stability of Electoral Saxony. Published as a single large volume in which the various texts bleed into each another, this Psalterbuch assumes a stronger representational character, standing as an important work by an influential theologian. This shift is rooted in the events of the years leading up to this edition’s publication, as Selnecker’s position changed from one of a self-proclaimed outsider at the University of Leipzig to that of a key player in the process that led to the drafting of the Formula of Concord in 1577.

From his new position at the centre of the Lutheran universe, Selnecker strengthenens Martin Luther’s position in public discourse. A component in this rallying around the reformer is Selnecker’s publication of Luther’s late anti-Jewish writings. This publication sheds light on the Psalterbuch where he mobilizes Psalm 59 to express his agreement with Luther’s position. Finally, the new edition does not come with new material. Rather, we begin to see how Selnecker uses material from the Psalterbuch in other publications. Rather than an expanding work, it will from here and until its final publication function more as a repository for other publications.

---

Selnecker and the Formula of Concord

Soon after the publication of the 1571 *Psalterbuch* Selnecker broke definitively with the Wittenberg theologians. The *Wittenberg Catechism* had appeared in January 1571 as the joint effort of the theologians at Leucorea, with whom Selnecker had engaged in disputations the previous year. That catechism had been immediately met with accusations of Calvinism and read as a rejection of the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. Selnecker risked guilt by association, and he was compelled by Duke Julius to distance himself from his former colleagues. In May 1571 he published a text that criticised the position of the Wittenberg theologians, and in a short treatise he articulated a view similar to Chemnitz’s on the question of Christ’s ubiquity. The Wittenberg theologians responded with multiple denunciations of Selnecker and his position.

---

353 The catechism has been described as the ‘most powerful expression’ of the Wittenberg position on Christology and the Lord’s Supper in the years leading up the Electoral Saxony’s break with Philippism in 1574; Johannes Hund and Henning P. Jürgens, ‘Pamphlets in the Theological Debates of the Later Sixteenth Century: The Mainz Editorial Project “Controversia et Confessio”’, in *The Book Triumphant: Print in Transition in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. by Malcom Walsby and Graeme Kemp (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 158–177, p. 170. The crux of the controversy was the fact that the catechism adopts a passive translation of Acts 3:21 also advanced by the leading Calvinist theologian Theodore Beza (1519–1605): ‘it is fitting that Christ be held by heaven until the time of the restitution of all things’ (Opportet Christum coelo capi vsque ad tempora restitutionis omnium); cited in Molly Buffington Lackey and Kirk Summers, ‘Beza Among the Lutherans. Acts 3:21 in the Wittenberg Catechism (1571) and Formula of Concord (1580)’, in *Theodore Beza at 500: New Perspectives on an Old Reformer*, ed. by Kirk Summers and Scott M. Manetsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 177–201, p. 180. See also Dingel, ‘The Culture of Conflict in the Controversies Leading To the Formula of Concord (1548–1580)’, pp. 59–60.


356 Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, pp. 248–255.
These theological disagreements had political implications. An alliance of theologians from other territories claimed that Electoral Saxony was no longer protected by the Peace of Augsburg because of its (perceived) Calvinism. In response to these claims, August commissioned a Lutheran confession from his theologians to assert the electorate’s adherence to the Augsburg Confession. But the resulting Dresden Consensus of October 1571 severely backfired. Surprisingly, Calvinist theologians in Heidelberg and Frankfurt declared that they could subscribe to it unconditionally, and so the consensus had the opposite effect of that intended: Electoral Saxony’s status as a Lutheran territory was questioned across the empire. Selnecker, again caught between August and Julius, backed the Consensus publicly and showed that it was possible to interpret the document in a manner that allowed for Lutheran tenets including the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper.

While Selnecker’s support of the Dresden Consensus appeased August, it caused him trouble in Wolfenbüttel. Duke Julius moved to replace Selnecker as superintendent and brought in Timotheus Kirchner (1533–1587) from Jena, though Julius ended up splitting the office between the two on the condition that they both signed a statement of their theological accord. In the spring of 1573, after Selnecker had relocated to Gandersheim, he wrote to August in Dresden to refute the rumour that his agreement with Kirchner meant he was now a ‘Flacian’. As these controversies swirlled, in August 1573 Selnecker asked August for permission to return to the Electorate to take up a professorship in Leipzig.

Selnecker was not welcomed with open arms at the University of Leipzig. In fact, the faculty urged August to prevent Selnecker’s nomination as professor because they perceived him to be ‘Flacian’ and feared he would bring conflict to the university. August dismissed the effort to keep him out of office, and Selnecker was also backed by Anna, to whom he wrote...
detailing the hatred he experienced upon arriving in Leipzig. Instead of trying to appease his new colleagues, Selnecker immediately embraced a polemic opposition to what he considered the ‘Sacramentarialism’ of Calvin and Theodore Beza (1519–1605), asserting the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. He also began his first lectures at Leipzig on the ecumenical creeds, using these to assert his own orthodoxy.

The downfall of the Wittenberg Philippism coincided with Selnecker’s return to the electorate. A series of events may have motivated the drastic shift in confessional course. First, after the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre perpetrated against the French Huguenots in August 1572 August’s fear of Calvinism as a subversive force increased, and he also needed to clearly distinguish his territory from the Calvinist Palatinate to mollify Emperor Maximilian II. Second, in March 1573 Duke Johann Wilhelm von Sachsen died, and since his son was underage responsibility for the Ernestine territories fell to August. He expelled the Gnesio-Lutherans, and as a result the Wittenbergers lost their role as key opponents of the Ernestine theologians in August’s eyes. Third, the elector learned of the *Exegesis perspicua* in January 1574. Written by the Silesian doctor of medicine Joachim Cureus (1532–1573), the tract had been published in 1573 anonymously by Ernst Vögelin (1529–1589) in Leipzig on French paper and with a Genevan printer’s mark, and it was the first thoroughly Calvinist position on the Lord’s Supper to be printed in the electorate. August, believing it to be a foreign import, quickly banned the sale of foreign books on the Lord’s Supper and began an investigation into the spread of Calvinist publications. Fourth, on March 25 court preacher Christian Schütz (1526–1594) delivered a polemical sermon against Christ’s ubiquity in the court chapel. Schütz’s opponents deemed this Calvinist theology, but the preacher must have acted under the impression that August was on his side. On the same day August acquired two letters that his confessor Johann Stössel (1524–1578) had sent to

---

363 Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, p 561 n. 89; Sommer, *Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft*, p. 82.
366 Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, pp. 565–566.
Schütz in which he criticised the electress’ ‘tyrannical’ influence at court.\footnote{Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, pp. 601–604.} Now August believed there was a conspiracy to secretly adopt Calvinism in the electorate, one organized by the very people closest to him, and he began moving quickly. An investigation was launched that incriminated Caspar Peucer (1525–1602) and the advisor Georg Cracow (1525–1575), who were imprisoned along with Stössel and Schütz.\footnote{Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter, p. 216; Hund, *Das Wort ward Fleisch*, pp. 605–613.}

Selnecker responded to the controversies by harshly criticizing Cureus’ *Exegesis perspicua* and by strengthening his Lutheran position in public discourse.\footnote{Hasse, ‘Die Lutherbiographie von Nikolaus Selnecker’, p. 97.} On 22 November 1574 he gave a speech on the life of Martin Luther and the history of the Confession of Augsburg, which was printed in 1575.\footnote{Connecting the two so that ‘Die Beschreibung von Luthers Leben als Vor- und Wirkungsgeschichte der ‘Augsburgischen Konfession’’; Hasse, ‘Die Lutherbiographie von Nikolaus Selnecker’, p. 99.} In 1577 he also edited and published Luther’s *Table Talks*. Publicly Selnecker still defended both Luther’s and Melanchthon’s theological stances, but privately he began to express reservations about the latter, and whereas he had previously given the two equal prominence he sets Luther above Melanchthon from at least 1574 onward.\footnote{Hasse, ‘Die Lutherbiographie von Nikolaus Selnecker’, pp. 112, 115. The shift can be seen in book design: The 1570 vernacular edition of *Paedagogia Christiana* has Luther on the frontispiece and Melanchthon on the final leaf. The theology of the catechism which, according to Selnecker, offers everything anyone needs to know about Christianity, is physically placed between his two main authorities; Selnecker, *Paedagogiae christianæ* (1570), VD16 S 5629.} In 1576 Selnecker was appointed superintendent in Leipzig and began preaching in the Thomaskirche.

The suppression of Philippism gave August the impetus to take charge of securing Lutheran concord.\footnote{In a text presented to the *Geheimer Rat* and his court preacher Georg Listhenius; Hasse, *Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, p. 234 n. 101.} Previous attempts had taught him that the theologians were unable to come to an agreement on their own, and now he had to step in as a Christian ruler.\footnote{Hasse, *Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, pp. 235.} He first convened a *Landstag* in Torgau, and the resulting Articles of Torgau became a starting point for inter-
August then joined forces with Jakob Andreae, and in 1576 they assembled a team that included Selnecker to revise a set of previously drafted confessional statements from Maulbronn and Swabia. They assembled in Torgau the same year and drafted the Torgau Book. In May of 1577 Selnecker met with a smaller group that included Andreae and Chemnitz in Bergen, and together they reworked the Torgau Book, incorporating different lines of critique. Andreae composed an Epitome that summarised the Torgau Book, and together the two documents comprised the Formula of Concord. In June Selnecker began travelling Saxony to gather signatures for the Formula, and on 22 July of 1577 it was printed in Leipzig. The Book of Concord was eventually accepted in about two-thirds of the evangelical churches in Germany.

**Mobilizing the Psalms Against the Jews**

A component in Selnecker’s quest for concord and his efforts to strengthen the position of Martin Luther in public discourse was his publication of Luther’s anti-Jewish writings. Published in 1577 with Bärwald in Leipzig, Selnecker’s edition contains three of Luther’s writings against the Jews: *Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen* (1543), *Vom Schem Hamphoras* (1543), and *Wider die Sabbather* (1538). It is well-known that Selnecker was the first to re-publish these late writings. According to Johannes Wallmann, there was little reception

---


375 Dingel, ‘The Culture of Conflict In the Controversies Leading To the Formula of Concord (1548–1580)’, p. 62.

376 Dingel, ‘The Culture of Conflict In the Controversies Leading To the Formula of Concord (1548–1580)’, p. 63.


of Luther’s late writings on the Jews in the decades after the reformer’s death. This, however, changes in the 1570s with Georg Nigrinus’ *Jüden Feind* (1570) and Selnecker’s anthology of Luther’s anti-Jewish writings.  

Selnecker dedicates his edition to the Leipzig book trader Andreas Heil (1519-1582). He motivates the publication by asserting that Luther’s writings have been suppressed which is unfortunate, because tradespeople are doing business and interacting with the Jews unaware of the danger of treating them as if they were Christian. The Jews, however, are dangerous trade partners, he asserts, because they are in an secret alliance with the Turks. Selnecker would likely have had only very limited interaction with Jews. They were expelled from Dresden as early as 1430, and in 1441 the last Jews left Leipzig. Accordingly, Selnecker’s

---


380 Who later reappears in one of Selnecker’s funeral sermons; Selnecker, *Christliche Leÿchpredigten So vom Jar 1576. bis fast an das 1590* (Magdeburg: Kirchner, 1590), fol. 207v.


383 Meinhardt, *Dresden im Wandel*, p. 559. In his interpretation of Psalm 59, Selnecker does refer to a conversation he had with a Rabbi whom he answered with arguments from Paulus Weidner (1525–1585), a recent Jewish convert to Christianity in Vienna; Selnecker, *Der gantzte Psalter* (1593), cols 265—266.”
attitude seems more related to intra-confessional agendas and the strengthening of a rigidly Lutheran society. Indeed, Wallmann characterizes Selnecker’s edition of Luther’s writings on the Jews as a ‘private supplement’ to the Formula of Concord, and he notes how Selnecker’s preface adds the Jews to the enemies of the Lutheran faith anathematised in the Formula of Concord. In the dedication to his edition of *Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen*, Selnecker writes:


Moreover, Wallmann traces Selnecker’s influence on the Latin translation of the Formula of Concord, explaining how its expanded description of the Jews as stubborn and utterly lost probably came from him. The passage in question explains how the situation of the Jews exemplify God’s punishment against those who show contempt for his word. In the Latin version: ‘[…] ut est videre in obstinatis et perditissimis hominibus, Iudaeis’.

A striking feature of Selnecker’s edition of *Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen* is how he mobilizes the Psalms to voice his attitude towards the Jews. In fact, he constructs an entire framework around Luther’s anti-Jewish writings from the Psalms. At the beginning of the volume, Luther’s summary of Psalm 59 from his *Summarien vber die Psalmen* along with the Psalm itself text is prominently featured as part of the introductory material, nestled between Selnecker’s dedication and the opening of *Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen*. At the end of the more than 800-page volume, Selnecker prints Psalm 109.

---

384 Wallmann, ‘The Reception of Luther’s Writings on the Jews’, p. 77. He counts three further editions of Luther’s writings on the Jews before the Thirty Years’ War and describes these as the final popular editions until the twentieth century; Wallmann, ‘The Reception of Luther’s Writings on the Jews’, p. 78.

385 Luther, *Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen*, unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.


388 Luther, *Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen*, unpaginated [Cc v′].
Selnecker’s edition of Luther’s anti-Jewish writings casts new light on the *Psalterbuch*. Combining the language of the Psalms with Luther’s late writings on the Jews, Selnecker articulates his anti-Jewish views already in the *Psalterbuch*. Here, Selnecker concludes his interpretation of Psalm 59 with a prayer in which he gives the Jews the title of ‘a mirror’ in which Christians see what it means to be abandoned by God. The Jews have brought their misfortune upon themselves, and it has a pedagogical function in urging Christians to stay by Christ:

\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}

Whether Selnecker deliberately re-purposed this prayer from the *Psalterbuch* in his contributions to the Formula of Concord is hard to tell, but the overlap in idea and the similarity in phrasing is striking. In both texts, the Jews portray the consequences of God’s anger in their stubbornness (‘Halsstarrigkeit’ and ‘obstinatis’) and great misery (‘grossem elend’ and ‘perditissimis’). Reading what Selnecker wrote in the prayer from 1571, appears to support Wallmann’s interpretation of his influence on the Formula of Concord.

Before the concluding prayer, Selnecker has cited several passages that appear in his edition of Luther’s writings against the Jews. Luther’s summary of Psalm 59 seems to be a favorite

---


390 Nikolaus Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Davids/ zu tröst vnd vnterricht frommen Christen außgelegt/ Durch D. NICOLAYM SELNECCERVM. Jetzt auffs new vom Autore, kurz vor seinem seligen enden/ selnst vbersehen/ gebessert vnd gemehret/ vnd mit sonderlichen schönen Gebetlein auff ein jeden Psalm fleissig zugerichtet/ vnd mit einer Vorrede M. Georgij Selnecceri, Pfarrers vnd Superattendentens zu Delitzsch/ neben der Leichpredigt des Autoris in Druck verfertigt* (Leipzig: Michael Lantzenberger, 1593/1594), fol. 266. In the following, I cite from the 1593 edition, because I did not have the possibility to consult the interpretation of the Psalm in the edition from 1581. The edition from 1593 is essentially a replica of the 1581 edition.
of his. In the opening of his interpretation, Selnecker briefly outlines the historical context of the Psalm and describes the situation in 1 Samuel 19 where Saul unsuccessfully tries to kill David. In response to the events, David turns to God and expresses his need for salvation in prayer. With the historical setting established, Selnecker moves to the Christological level and identifies the speaker as Christ. To make this point, Selnecker cites Luther’s summary of the Psalm in a slightly revised version:

The chilling description of the Jews as hungry dogs that roam the streets in search for something to eat, always persecuted and never finding rest until they are cast into hell on Judgment Day builds on verses 6 and 14–15. An expressive language similar to Luther’s permeates Selnecker’s application of the Psalm to the situation he addresses. The first verse of the Psalm, ‘Errette mich mein Gott von meinen Feinden’, should be prayed by ‘vns Christen wider den Türcken/ vnd wider andere Feinde der Christlichen Lehre/ fleissig jmmerdar gebetet werden […]’; he explains. He continues by picking up on the second verse to detail how these enemies are hungry for blood:

Wir sehen ja/ wie des HErren Christi Feinde toben vnd wütten/ vnd nach vnserm Blut durstig sind/ kommen zusammen/ rathsclagen/ congregatur in vnum locum, in Conciliijs/ Reichßtagen/ vnd anderswo/ lauren auff vns/ öffentlich vnd heimlich/ ziehen auff vns mit Heeres macht/ vnd suchen vrsach zu vns/ wo sie können vnd mögen. Da heists traun: Hilff

391 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauïds (1593/1594), fol. 264v.
393 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauïds (1593/1594), fol. 264v.
lieber HErre Gott/ Wo du nicht hilfst/ so bleibt dem Tūcken wol vngewehret. Vnsere Fürsten tägen wenig darzu. Es ist aus mit Menschen hülffē. Wo du dem Bapst nicht wehrest/ so ist es aus.\textsuperscript{394}

In the beginning of his treatment, the bloodthirsty enemies are identified with the Turks and the Catholic Church. From his treatment of verse six and onwards, Selnecker includes the Jews among the enemies. He does not explicitly mention a secret alliance between the Jews and the Turks, but he does compare the Jews to the other enemies and explains what they have in common. Like other enemies of the truth, they do not listen to the Gospel but condemn what is in fact true doctrine:

\begin{quote}
Sie lesen vnd hören/ vnd verstehens nichts/ ja/ wie anderßwo stehet/ es wir jnen alles zum Strick/ da sie sich selbst ein verwickeln/ vnd jrr machen/ vnd trozten noch darzu/ lauffen zu rück/ vnd verdammen rechte Lehre als Ketzerey/ wie die Exemplum heughteg tages mit den Jüden/ Papisten/ vnd andern/ vns allen für augen stehen. 265r 1593.
\end{quote}

The Jews, however, warrant further discussion, and Selnecker quickly leaves the other enemies behind. He explains how verse eleven, ‘Erwürge sie nicht/ das es mein Volck nicht vergesse. Zerstrewie sie aber mit deiner Macht/ HERR vnser Schild/ vnd stoß sie hinunter’, is a prophecy regarding the Jews and how they shall live scattered across the earth.\textsuperscript{395} In his treatment of the verse, Selnecker asserts how it is a foolish question whether the Jews can be tolerated among Christians: ‘Das aber etliche allhie fragen/ Ob man die Jüden bey den Christen möge wohnen lassen/ vnd sie geduldet können erden mit gutem Gewissen/ ist nerrisch zu hören’, and he continues to compare the Jews to vermin that infect society with sinful blasphemy, usury, and doctrine:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

The laity, domestic servants, and children are misled by the Jews, and it is essential to keep

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{394} Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids} (1593/1594), fol. 264°.
\textsuperscript{395} Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids} (1593/1594), fol. 265°.
\textsuperscript{396} Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids} (1593/1594), fol. 265°–266°.
\end{flushright}
a distance to the Jews; the further, the better. Selnecker concludes: ‘Wol dem ort/ da kein Jüde/ Jäger/ vnd nicht viel Auffetzige sind’. Selnecker’s concerns for the vulnerable members of society have severe consequences for the Jews. Selnecker quotes Luther’s infamous passage from Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen recommending that the authorities burn the synagoges. Public blasphemy against Christ cannot be tolerated:

```
Der grosse Man/ Doctor Lutherus/ im Buch von Jüden/ wie sich ein Obrigkeit gegen die Lesterer die Jüden halten sol/ spricht also: Man sol der Jüden Synagogen oder Schulen mit fewer anstecken/ vnd was nicht verbrennen wil/ mit Erden verheuffen vnd vberschütten/ das kein Mensch ein Stein oder Schlacken daruon sehe ewiglich. Vnd solches sol man thun vnserm HERRN/ vnd der Christenheit zu ehren/ damit Gott sehe/ das wir Christen sind/ vnd solch öffentlich liegen/ fluchen vnd lestern seines Sons/ vnd seiner Christenheit wissentlich nicht geduldet noch gelitten haben/ etc. Summa/ lieben Fürsten vnd Herren/ so Jüden vnter sich haben/ ist euch solcher mein rath nicht eben/ so trefft ein bessern/ das jhr vnd wir alle/ der vnledlichen/ teufflichen last der Jüden entladen werden/ vnd nicht für Gott schülüg/ vnd theilhaftig werden/ aller lügen des lesterns/ speiens/ fluchens/ so die rasenden Jüden wider die Person vnsern HErrn Jesu Christi/ seine liebe Mutter/ aller Christlichen Obrigkeit/ vnd vns selbs/ so frey vnd mutwillig treiben. Exodi 23. Laß die Vngleubigen nicht wohnen in deinem Lande/ das sie dich nicht verfüren wider mich.
```

From 1564 onwards, Selnecker mobilizes the vivid language of the Psalms to articulate his views on the Jews, and the *Psalterbuch* contains several features repeated in the anti-Jewish writings.

**The *Psalterbuch* in the Electoral Library**

The abolishment of Philippism in 1573–1574 motivated August to sharpen the profile and perception of Electoral Saxony as genuinely Lutheran, and this is reflected in an inventory of the electoral library from 1574. As early as 1524 Luther had argued that secular rulers had an obligation to establish libraries to support the evangelical reform, and in 1557 Georg

---

397 Selnecker, *Der gantzte Psalter Dauid* (1593/1594), fol. 266f.
399 As Hasse explains: ‘Polemische Schriften waren in der Kurfürstenbibliothek nur in geringer Zahl vertreten. Calvinistische Bücher oder theologische Schriften Züricher Provenienz fehlten fast völlig’; Hasse, *Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, p. 244. In contrast, an inventory for the cabinet of curiosities was only taken after August’s death in 1586; *Court Culture in Dresden*, pp. 84–85.
Lauterbeck (d. 1578) asserted in his influential *Regentenbuch* that rulers needed libraries to increase their prestige and rule well.\(^{400}\) From 1556 onwards August began to systematically buy books to establish an official library, and it would be one collection among others that included the cabinet of curiosities (*Kunstkammer*), the numismatic cabinet (*Münzkabinett*), and the armoury (*Rüstkammer*).\(^{401}\) August and Anna also each also had a personal ‘hand library’ as well (a register from 1588 counts 533 volumes in August’s ‘Arbeitszimmer’).\(^{402}\)

As the official court library took form Anna and August visited the book fair in Leipzig to keep track of what was being printed, and August even established a press in the Dresden castle and printed his own collection of prayers in 1568. But most of their books were bought by its first librarian, Paul Vogel (d. 1589), with recommendations from the faculties of Leipzig and Wittenberg.\(^{403}\) The library’s distinctly Lutheran profile was shaped by Vogel, who repeatedly appears in relation to the suppression of Philippism and was among those Caspar Peucer named as responsible for his downfall.\(^{404}\) The famous bookbinder Jakob Krause was brought to the electoral court in 1568 to produce exquisite bindings for some of the acquired books,\(^{405}\) and when the inventory was made in 1574 the library consisted of 1721 volumes with 2427 titles.

One third of the volumes, around 600, are classified as theological and this is the largest

---


\(^{401}\) Hasse, *Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, p. 242. Collecting was in vogue, and knowledge was compiled, organised, and put on display at courts across Europe. The electoral library was part of a larger system of dynastic collections that comprised coins, treasures, silver, and the cabinet of curiosities; O’Kelly, *Court Culture in Dresden*, pp. 72–73.

\(^{402}\) It served as a reading room as well as a workshop for binding books. Inventories for both personal libraries were made when Christian I appointed Sebastian Leonhart as new librarian in 1588; Hasse, *Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, pp. 245–46.


\(^{404}\) When Christian I took charge of the Electorate in 1586 Vogel was dismissed; Hasse, *Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, p 249.

\(^{405}\) Hasse, *Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, p. 243. In contrast, O’Kelly argues that since the library was in Annaburg near Torgau (and not in the Dresden castle), it was for personal use rather than for show; *Court Culture in Dresden*, p. 85.
category, but the breadth of the library’s titles shows its overall humanist character. The Book of Psalms is the only biblical book that is listed in its own separate category, with thirty-seven volumes listed. It is a substantial amount of books dedicated to the Psalms. In comparison the register lists thirty-eight volumes that interpret all the remaining biblical books, twenty-three postils, and twenty-nine interpretations of the life and death of Jesus. The volumes dedicated to the Psalms can roughly be separated in four German/Latin Psalters, thirteen interpretations of single Psalms, three rhymed Psalters, seven Psalters with ‘Summarien’, five interpretations of multiple Psalms, a single concordance over the Psalms, and, finally, two interpretations of all 150 Psalms. This document allows us to step back and assess the Psalterbuch in relation to a diachronically curated collection of works in the same overall genre.

The only two works that interpret all the Psalms in German are by Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558) and by Selnecker. These two publications differ quite a bit from each other: Bugenhagen’s interpretation was originally in Latin and delivered as lectures in Wittenberg before later being translated by the Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer. It is full folio, around 700 pages long, and it sticks to summaries and homiletic commentaries on each Psalm. Selnecker’s interpretation is much longer, was written in German from the start, and comprises a variety of different literary genres. Even compared to the separate entry in the inventory with Luther’s works the Psalterbuch stands out. The inventory lists the first Wittenberg edition of Luther’s works, which was published from 1539 to 1559 and whose third volume is dedicated to Psalm interpretations from across much of Luther’s career.

406 Hasse, Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter, p. 244.
407 Dresden, DrSLUB, Bibl.Arch.I.Ba,Vol.20, ‘Registratur der bucher in des Churfursten zu Saxen liberey zur Annaburg 1574’, fol. 4v–5r, 5v–6r, 7r–8r, 10v–[unpaginated].
409 Johannes Bugenhagen, P Salter wol verteutcht auß der heyligen sprach. [...] (Basel: Adam Petri, 1526), VD16 B 3292.
With 318 folios, this volume is short compared to the *Psalterbuch* and only covers around forty of the Psalms. Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch* was in fact the largest vernacular treatment of the Psalms listed in the inventory of the electoral library, and it would have also stood out for its composite character.

The 1581 Edition

The new 1581 edition of the *Psalterbuch* sees major changes in material and typography. We now have a single volume of about 1400 pages in full folio, making it a large and imposing book. The introductory elements that tied the previous edition to the events unfolding around Selnecker in the early 1570s are gone. A new dedication to the electoral couple has replaced the dedication to the young princes in 1571, and the note about the rush to complete the revision, the register, and short poem asserting Christ’s majesty that concluded the introductory material, and the epitaph for Jacob Berwald are gone. Moreover, the addition of the *Corpus Doctrina Philippicum* to Selnecker’s ‘teachers’ in the dedication from 1563 has been removed and replaced by the original ‘was wir auch von vnsern alten *Preceptoribus in Theologia* zu Wittenberg […] gehöret haben’.

This edition is also more compact than the previous. For instance, in 1571 each dedication began on a recto leaf and was decorated with large foliated initials, while in the 1581 edition the transition from the new dedication to the old is visually harder to distinguish: between the two dedications is an empty line, and the first line of the new dedication is printed in a larger font. The poems by Paul Heusler and Georg Fabricius are likewise grouped together on one page instead of each having its own. When the interpretations begin, the individual texts tend to blend into each other, and the intricate hierarchies formerly created through typographical differences between prayers, commentaries, poems, and hymns have faded.

---


412 The interpretation of Psalm 150 ends on Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1581), fol. 687°.

413 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1581), unpaginated ’Vorrede’.
printed in the same font size. The biblical Psalm text is printed in two columns in the same large font used in the homiletical commentaries when verses are repeated there. The plague book is still included, but where each of its prayers had its own page in the 1571 edition,\footnote{Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1571), II, fols 244r–246v.} they follow right after each other in the new one.\footnote{Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1581), fols 444v–445v.} The hymns, rhymes, and verses that were printed in a single column layout in the previous editions, are printed in a two column layout taking up far less space on the pages.
The 1581 edition also has more citation marks, which signifies a further shift in the book’s relationship to readers. In the previous edition these marks were primarily used to indicate speech in the first person, but now they mark explicit citations of Veit Dietrich, Polycarp and Luther, and the author himself (in Psalm 101 he points to his texts on Psalm 60 and 61). Each Psalm is also treated under two headlines, which underscore the fundamental structure: ‘Der erste Psalm Davids’ and ‘Außlegung des ersten Psalm Davids’, ‘Der ander Psalm Davids’ and ‘Außlegung des anders Psalm Davids’, and so on. Instead of a graduated visual distinction, the volume is structured around a binary difference between text from the Bible and everything else. The edition does not exactly encourage everyday use. Now less of a book for everyday use in which different types of material are easily recognisable, the Psalterbuch comes across as a kind of monument to its content and its author.

**Title page**

The title of the 1581 edition is the same as that of 1571. It restates the promise that Selnecker has revised the text ‘zum letzten mal’, but this now comes across as a marketing strategy. The title page features a new illustration (see figure 8). Its basic visual programme is very similar to that of Berwald’s 1571 edition; the composition is repeated, and all the central components reappear but in modified versions that slightly alter the overall messages of the artwork and its relationship to the rest of the Psalterbuch. David, still wearing regal robes, has aged with Selnecker: his face is weathered and the beard is longer. He is no longer kneeling outside an idealised German city, but in a celestial landscape with soft rolling hills that mirror the clouds in the sky. The woodcut presents a vision of ideal Psalter-practice: the Psalmist is engaged in prayer, and before his eyes the way to his divine homeland – the path of the righteous described in the first Psalm (Ps 1:6) – materializes. Unlike the title page of the first edition, where Selnecker’s name is written next to the figure seated at the organ, this woodcut does not spell out any individual identity, but Fuchs and De Vries assert that the illustration portrays Selnecker. This would seem to fit the current situation: Selnecker is

---

416 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1581), fols 335v, 412v, 471v.

417 Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 53.

no longer on shaky ground on the battlefield of confessional politics, but has secured a position at the centre of the Lutheran universe with his involvement in the Formula of Concord.\textsuperscript{419}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8.jpg}
\caption{Nikolaus Selnecker, Der gantzte Psalter Davids außgelegt (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1581), title page. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: 363 Theol. (2)}
\end{figure}

**Dedication**

While the elements that made the edition from 1571 stand out have been removed, the past is still acutely present here in Selnecker’s new, brief dedication to Anna and August. Typographically the new dedication flows directly into the original dedication from the first edition from 1563 making the transition to the past as smooth as possible. The new dedication frames the old one, and prepares a reading focused on Selnecker’s early identification of the threat of evil books.

In the new dedication Selnecker plots his past on a narrative arc with two high points: his first period in Electoral Saxony and the period after the recent completion of the Formula of Concord. In a characteristic passage Selnecker recounts how he lived through the dangers of confessional instability in the intervening years, and he now speaks from experience when he laments the continued division in the church and encourages concord:

Ach/ des elenden jammers/ vnd der jämmerlichen zeit/ die wir erlebet haben. Warlich/ warlich/ es ist für kurtzer zeit noch nicht also gewest. Der Teuffel hat vns einen gewrilchen riß gemacht durch die heillosen Sacramentirer. Dieser riß verursachet andere nachfolgende. O wie were es nu nöten/ recht vnd von herten zusammen zusetzen/ vnd nicht nach zeitlicher Ehr/ Gelt/ Gut/ ruhm oder rach zu trachten/ sondern auff Gottes Ehr/ vnd rechte Lehr bedacht zu sein […]\(^{420}\)

This is the core of the dedication: Selnecker casting himself as someone who overcame conflict and therefore has the ability to speak authentically about the need for others to change their ways.

At beginning of the dedication Selnecker describes how he was cast out like a puppy among wild dogs after his first period in Dresden. When he initially preached the Psalms at court he could not have imagined the hardship he would have to endure:


---

\(^{420}\) Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1581), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [7(12)].
vnder die grossen Rüden vnd Schäfferhunde bin geworffen/ vnd viel Jar her jämmerlich zerraufft vnd zerbissen worden/ Gott lob vnd danck.\textsuperscript{421}

The passage introduces a mature Selnecker looking back at himself as the innocent preacher of the Psalms he once was. From his current position he has the perspective to see that the attacks against him were part of a systematic, but in the end unsuccessful, attempt at suppressing Christ and his servants:

Ey/ lieber Gott/ wie gros elend habe ich in dieser zeit erlebet vnd gesehen? Wie sind so viel grosse Rüden/ die des HErn Christi Wort/ Lehr/ Ehr/ vnd seine arme Diener/ haben zu boden stossen wollen/ dahin gegangen vnd vergangen.\textsuperscript{422}

Despite the ongoing challenges, Selnecker recounts, he continued to simply preach the word of God without engaging in unnecessary strife. Considering the accusations levelled against Selnecker in the 1570s from persons across the confessional spectrum, as well as his own engagement in polemics after returning to Leipzig, this is a bold statement. It nonetheless fits the role he assigns himself in the dedication as a temperate purveyor of Christian concord. The genuine theological disagreements about the Lord’s Supper and Christology are largely reduced here to self-serving quarrelling.

Ich tröste mich des/ das ich armer Sünden/ Gottes Wort rein vnd lauter zu jeder zeit geprediget habe/ ohne falsch/ ohne hinderlist/ ohne disputation vnd ohn gewirr/ schlecht/ recht/ einfeltig/ auffrichtig/ deutsch/ nach meinem lieben Kinder Catechismo/ zu dem ich geschworen/ vnd durch Gottes gnad bey erkandter vnd bekandter Warheit/ wider die Papisten/ Sacramentirer/ Rottengeister vnd Schwermer/ geblieben bin/ wie Gott lob/ nu mehr dieselbige/ was die fürnemmbsten/ streitigen Artikel anlanget/ in der Christlichen \textit{Forma concordiæ} ferner verfasset/ vnd aus Gottes Wort erlerter worden ist/ dafür wir Gott/ vnd nechst Gott allein Ewren C.F.G. demütigst zu dancken haben

Selnecker’s approach was fruitful in the end. With the help of God and the electoral couple, the Formula of Concord now bolsters the simple faith of the ‘Kinder Catechismo’.\textsuperscript{423} In this

\textsuperscript{421} Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1581), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [ ](ij).

\textsuperscript{422} Selnecker, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Dauids} (1581), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [ ](ij).

\textsuperscript{423} Robert Kolb has argued that the Formula of Concord replaces Martin Luther as Selnecker’s main source for authority; Robert Kolb, ‘Die Umgestaltung und theologische Bedeutung des Lutherbildes im späten 16. Jahrhundert’, in \textit{Die lutherische Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland}, ed. by Hans-Christoph Rublack (Gütersloh, 1992), 202–231, p. 213. Hasse disagrees; ‘Hasse, ‘Die Lutherbiographie von Nikolaus Selnecker’, p. 113–14. The dedication in the \textit{Psalterbuch} supports Hasse’s view in the sense that the Formula of Concord does not replace the authority of Luther’s Catechism, but rather secures its theological profile against heresies.
narrative, the *Psalterbuch* becomes a testimony to Selnecker’s simple, catechetical, and non-
polemic preaching. It literally adds weight, like a large appendix, to his argument in the
dedication, which itself imbues the *Psalterbuch* with a prophetic capacity:

> Wir weren warlich sonst in vielen Schulen vnd Kirchen vmb die rechte reine Lehre/ von der
Person Christi/ vnd vom heiligen Abendmal gebralt/ vnd in Sacramentirische jrrthumb vnd
lesterung gefüer/ vnd zu lauter Caluinisten worden. Gott vergelte solche Christliche hohe
sorge/ trew/ mühe/ kost vnd arbeit/ Ewren C.F.G. vnd jrem Samen/ tausentfeltig/ hie vnd in
ewigkeit/ vnd erhalte vnd bey rechter reiner Lehre/ wider alle Papisten/ Esauiten/ Rottengeister/ Sacramentirer/ vnd dergleichen heimliche vnd öffentliche Schwmer.

The way Selnecker recounts how churches and schools were led away from Christ and
towards Calvinism will be repeated almost verbatim a few pages later, in his dedication from
1563 where Selnecker warns about the damage of evil books.424 The new dedication thus
primes a reading of the original dedication that focuses on the danger posed by the
‘Sacramenterians’. It highlights this specific thematic thread, which is then accentuated in
other statements that feature Selnecker lamenting a wider range of heresies: ‘Daher kömpt
auch der gantze Schwarm aller Sechten vnd Rotterey/ Sacramentirer/ Antinomer/
Widerteuffer/ vnd vieler andere’.425 The focus on the specific controversy in Saxony is
further underscored by a single note in the margin, added to the old dedication next to a
passage in which Selnecker laments that Germany craves what is new instead of the word of
God: ‘Solches ist leider nu mehr allzu sehr war worden an den Sacramentirern’.426

In the present of the 1581 edition, Selnecker is just as concerned with amity as he had been
in the past. He activates the past to show that concord is not only a possibility, but an
obligation. Since Electoral Saxony has been delivered from Calvinism, and the Formula of
Concord promulgated, there is no excuse for failing to fall in line with Selnecker’s
electorially-backed theological position. As a good Christian, he explains, he has left all

---

424 ‘Zum letzten/ weil alle Flader vnd Rottengeister (Schwermer oder Sacramentirer) jetzt kecklich vnd
durstiglich schreiben/ vnd mit heimlichen listen vnd Practiken/ vnd öffentlichen Büchern vielen Kirchen
vnd Schulen grossen schaden thun’; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1581), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’
[rar].

425 ‘Daher kömpt auch der gantze Schwarm aller Sechten vnd Rotterey/ Sacramentirer/ Antinomer/
Widerteuffer/ vnd vieler andere’; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1581), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’
[(iiij)].

426 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1581), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [(iiij)].
personal conflict behind in order to serve the church.\textsuperscript{427} He warns those who continue to hold grudges that they will be held accountable on Judgment Day for setting themselves above the people they ought to serve and setting bad examples of Christian life.\textsuperscript{428} He expresses great concern that most preachers are still dedicated to conflict and strife.\textsuperscript{429} With this dedication, the \textit{Psalterbuch} is thus transformed from a guide through a time of instability and conflict to a witness viewing such a time at a distance. It displays Selnecker’s simple preaching, his – as time has shown – well-founded fear of Calvinism, and his continued alliance to the electoral couple. Together these elements form an argument that others should follow Selnecker’s example.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The edition from 1581 was published in the aftermath of Selnecker’s participation in the drafting of the Formula of Concord. This \textit{Psalterbuch} assumes a strong representational character as it portrays how Selnecker has occupied a position at the centre of the Lutheran universe. Where the previous editions featured new material, for example inclusions of devotional books, biblical texts, and prayers, the edition from 1581 mainly refrares the

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{427} ‘Ferner trüste ich mich auch dessen/ das ich mit willen/ vnd aus bösem vorsatz/ niemand bin zu wider oder entgegen gewest/ sonern hette gern/ wie auch noch/ ein jeden nach seinen Gaben/ geehret/ vnd allen gern guts erzeige/ auch meinen Feinden/ so viel an mir/ ehr/ liebs/ guts vnd dienst bewiesen/ zur erbawung der armen kirchen/ vnd ergernis zuuerhütten. Vnd was alle händel sein/ habe ich dieselben stets beyseits gelegt/ vnd vergessen/ wie wir als Christen zu thun schuldig sind’; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantzte Psalter Davids} (1581), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [\textit{ij}]

\textsuperscript{428} ‘Ach/ du getreuer Gott/ was werden wir Lehrer am Jüngsten Gericht für ein harten stand müssen außstehen/ die wir aneinander so Gottesjämmerlich zerzauen/ vnd einer vber den andern her wil/ aus Ehrgeitz/ Geltgeitz/ neid/ haß/ rächgeir/ mißgunst vnd vntrew/ vnd felt einer dem andern in sein Ampt/ betrübet den heiligen Geist/ hat mit niemand gedult/ wil alles allein sein/ wil jederman reformiren/ ist niemand gut/ wil alle andere vnter sich haben/ beweiset niemand kein liebe noch trew/ gibt gute wort vnters Angesicht/ vnd redet das ergste im rücken/ wil niemand nichts lassen gut sein/ wo es nicht von jme herkömpt? Daher denn zanck/ zerrüttung [sic] vnd ergernis entstheht/ vnd innerhalb die Laster vnter den Zuhören/ die da solche vnart an den Lehren sehen/ je lenger je größer/ gemeiner/ vnd schrecklicher werden’; Selnecker, \textit{Der gantzte Psalter Davids} (1581), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [\textit{ij}]

content of the work. In his dedication, Selnecker casts the *Psalterbuch* as a testament to his non-polemical preaching and his early identification of Calvinism as a threat to the societal stability of Electoral Saxony. The edition from 1581 was published as a single large volume and its various texts bleed into each other. As part of his effort to strengthen Martin Luther’s position in public discourse, Selnecker published the reformer’s anti-Jewish writings. This publication sheds new light on how Selnecker articulates his anti-Jewish views already in the *Psalterbuch*. 
Even before opening the Psalterbuch of 1584–1585 we can see how different it is from the previous editions.\textsuperscript{430} Printed by Andreas Morgenrodt in Dresden, the work now constitutes six quarto volumes bound in gold-tooled white vellum (see figure 9); the front cover bears the initials and coat of arms of August, and the back the coat of arms of Anna’s father, Christian III of Denmark-Norway (1503–1559). Sandwiched between the insignia of his two most important patrons we find Selnecker’s text, his interpretations of the Psalms here printed in abbreviated form. This edition is simultaneously expanded and downscaled: it is smaller in size but more luxurious than the earlier printings, signalling exclusivity and presenting Selnecker’s Psalterbuch as the devotional literature of choice at the electoral court.

Selnecker Shapes His Legacy

In 1584 Selnecker was in Leipzig, and his career was at a high point.\textsuperscript{431} The books he published around this time show him beginning to consciously shape his legacy while engaging in ongoing debates about the Formula of Concord. He published a defence for the Formula of Concord, co-authored with Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) and Timotheus Kirchner (1533–1587), which appeared in 1583.\textsuperscript{432} He would still turn to Anna when he was accused of theological error, but he also activated his relationship with the electoral court as

\textsuperscript{430} Nikolaus Selnecker, Der sechste theil des Psalters Dauids, aussgelegt, vnd auffs neue vbersehen, durch Nicolaum Selneccerum (Dresden: Andreas Morgenrodt, 1585), British Library, C.108.d.29. The first two volumes were printed in 1584, the rest in 1585. Volumes two, three, and six are available in Dresden; Die Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, K.A.786, K.A.787, K.A.790.


\textsuperscript{432} Timotheus Kircher, Martin Chemnitz, and Nikolaus Selnecker, Apologia, Oder Verantwortung deß Christlichen ConcordienBuchs/ Jn welcher die wahre Christliche Lehre/ so im ConcordiBuch verfasset [...] (Heidelberg: Spies, 1583), VD16 K 1028.
an important component of his self-fashioning. For example, in 1584 he began to publish his complete Latin works, the Opera Latina, though only the two first volumes made it to press. He dedicated them to August, and they were printed in Leipzig with electoral privilege.

---


Anna died in 1585, and August followed in 1586. In Selnecker’s funeral sermons for both he casts himself as an eyewitness to their heartfelt (and unwaveringly Lutheran) piety. In his rendering, Anna became furious whenever she heard about ‘new’ doctrines being introduced or divisions in the church. In a particularly telling passage Selnecker attests to her faith while at the same time reminding the reader that he was once a trusted court preacher in Dresden:

Denn was die from[m]e Churfürstin für ein Gottselig Hertz gehabt/ dß wissen viel fromme Leut. Ich vor meine Person kans bezeugen/ as sie Gottes wort von hertzen lieb gehabt/ vnd ist jhr ein rechter ernst mit demselben gewesen. Wenn sie gehört von jrrthumb vnd newen Practiken/ so in diesen Landen vnd anderstwo einreissen wollen/ hat sie manchen heissen zehen darüber fallen lassen: Jst oft auff jren knien gelegen ein lange zeit/ vnd[d] hat Gott angeruffen mit jnnigem Gebet. Vnd was sie vor schmertzen gehabt/ wenn sie gehört von Spaltungen in der Lehre/ das wissen sonderlich die/ so vmb jhre C.F.G. gewesen.435

In his sermon for August, which was printed in Leipzig, Erfurt, Jena, and Magdeburg, Selnecker established a similar combination of self-promotion and praise for his patron.436 He characterizes Anna and August as ‘Landeßmutter’ and ‘Landeßvater’ and recounts various pious things that he had heard August say.437 For example, Selnecker narrates how he had listened as August articulated a solid Lutheran understanding of the Lord’s Supper in conversation with another prince, while also demonstrating to the reader the patron’s close relationship with the author and the latter’s secure and trusted position at court:


436 I cite from the Jena edition; Nikolaus Selnecker, *Eine Christliche Leichpredigt/ Bey dem trawrigen öffentlichem Begegnis des Christlichen seligen Abgangs/ des Durchleuchtigsten/ Hochgebornen/ Fürsten vnd Herrn/ Herr AVGSTTI [...]* (Jena: 1586), VD16 ZV 17115. For further editions, see VD16 S 5486, VD16 S 5484, VD16 S 5486, VD16 S 5488;

437 Nikolaus Selnecker, *Eine Christliche Leichpredigt*, unpaginated [A ij]
vnd Bluts Christi im Heiligen Abendmal/ hat seine Churf. Gn. diese wort gesagt: Bruder/ wenn mein HErr Christus ein solch wort gesetzt hette/ Siehe in diesem Stock/ diesem Stein oder Holtz hastu meien Leib vnd mein Blut/ so hette ichs doch gegleubt/ vnd solte mich meine Vernufft dauon nicht im wenigsten abwendig machen [...].

The passage can further be read as a plea to August’s successor, Christian I, to follow in his father’s footsteps by promoting Lutheran concord.

In the sermon Selnecker also touches upon August’s affinity for key Protestant genres. August attended sermons, supported the printing of Bibles, read Luther, and was particularly fond of the Psalms and prayerbooks:

Denn es offenbar/ wie er Gottes wort fleissig gehôret/ vnd in aller Gottseligkeit sich geûbet/ die Bibel Hebraisch/ Lateinisch/ vnd oftmals Deutsch selbs drucken lassen/ die Tomos Lutheri mit allem fleiss durchlesen/ vnd nicht auffgehoëret/ biss er sie zum ende gebracht/ auch andere nützliche Bücher (sonderlich den heiligen lieben Psalter vnd Christliche Gebet) lieb vnd in ehren gehalten/ und reiner lehrer Schriften fleissig zusammen gebracht/ vnd durchlesen.

In this textual portrait, August appears as a firm supporter of the Formula of Concord, that is, a supporter of Selnecker’s most important achievement, and also as having a great affection for reading the types of books that Selnecker published in great numbers.

**An Abbreviated Psalterbuch**

Selnecker’s Psalterbuch of 1584–1585 stands out in terms of its materiality, printer, and content. Produced in quarto, it was smaller than the previous versions of the Psalterbuch, and unlike the large single-volume edition from 1581 which requires a stand to be read, the new edition can be held in one’s hand, facilitating a more intimate and physical relationship for its readers. The exquisite binding for this edition was prepared by Caspar Meuser (d. 1593), a pupil of the famous Jakob Krause (c. 1531–1586), who brought Italian and French renaissance-style bookbinding to Dresden. While not much is known about the printer,

---

438 Selnecker, Eine Christliche Leichpredigt [...], unpaginated [page before C'].

439 Selnecker, Eine Christliche Leichpredigt [...], unpaginated [page before C'].

Andreas Morgenrodt, library catalogues show that he was active at least between 1583 and 1587.\textsuperscript{441} In 1583 he printed a multiplication table, in 1585 a funeral sermon, and in 1585–1587 Christoph Vischer’s (1519–1598) interpretations of the Psalms, which shares several features of this edition of the Psalterbuch.\textsuperscript{442}


\textsuperscript{442} Christoph Vischer, Christliche/ Einfältige Auflösung des Gulteden kleinsods/ des Psalters Davids/ was man daraus in diesem letzten elenden betrüben leuften für Lehr/ Trost vnd ermahnung nehmen solle [...] (Dresden: Morgenrodt, 1585–1587), VD16 B 3346. Volumes 1–2 were printed in 1585, 3–4 in 1586, and 5–6 in 1587.
Morgenrodt printed the first volumes of Vischer’s interpretation of the Psalms the same year he finished this *Psalterbuch* edition, and it takes the same format, with an almost identical page layout and divided into six quarto volumes – though it would be published as a single volume in 1590. After studying in Wittenberg under Luther and Melanchthon, Vischer had served as Generalsuperintendent in Braunschweig and court preacher in Celle, and as Hans-Peter Hasse has shown the author was heavily featured in Anna’s library, of which Wittenberg was the spiritual centre – a large portion of its books were written by Lutheran theologians and court preachers. Vischer dedicated several works to Anna and August, and his postils, devotional works, and no less than twenty-five copies of his interpretation of the Seven Penitential Psalms are listed on the register of Anna’s library. Unfortunately, no copy of the first volume of his Psalm interpretation is available, so we do not know how that edition was framed in dedications and illustrations.

In Selnecker and Morgenrodt’s edition of the *Psalterbuch* each interpretation consists of the Psalm text, an abbreviated version of Selnecker’s interpretation, and the concluding prayer. Only a few paragraphs are included from each original interpretation, so the focus is instead on the Psalms themselves and the prayers. In the interpretation of Psalm 126 that opens the sixth volume, Morgenrodt leaves out an entire paragraph on verse 1, and in the following paragraph he cuts out a citation in Latin from a play by Lucian of Samosata (c. 120–c. 200), printing only the German translation. He leaves out a four-line *Sprichwort* before the concluding prayer. In the first verse of Psalm 127, ‘Wo der HERr nicht das Haus bawet/ so arbeiten vmb sonst/ die daran bawen’, Morgenrodt’s edition skips two paragraphs of Selnecker’s homiletic interpretation to get to a part in which Selnecker lets the pious father of the house speak. In the edition from 1593, this transition is framed like this (see figure 10):

---


446 I have not been able to establish whether Selnecker took part in arranging Morgenrodt’s edition of the *Psalterbuch*. He was in Leipzig when the edition was printed and in the excerpts, I have consulted, he does not contribute new material. In the following I have, hesitantly, attributed the agency in creating the edition to Morgenrodt.
In 1585 (see figure 11), the passage is rendered like this, without the indication of a shift in voice:


Morgenrodt’s edition privileges passages with direct speech. Accordingly, later in the interpretation of Psalm 127, Morgenrodt prints in full Selnecker’s example of how secular authorities ought to pray:


But in the interpretation of Psalm 127:3, ‘Sihe Kinder sind Gabe des HERRN/ Vnd Leibesfrucht ist ein Geschenck’, Morgenrodt only includes the first paragraph of Selnecker’s interpretation and omits six whole paragraphs that include elaborations of the gift of children and a prayer in Latin with German translation. These examples give the impression that Morgenrodt’s abbreviations are at least to some extent curated: Latin quotations, vernacular poetry, and long expositions are cut out, while first-person devotional material is kept. The page layout underscores this focus on the Psalm text and the prayer; the former is printed in

---

447 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), fol. 630v. I cite from the 1593-edition because I did not have access to a digital copy of the edition from 1581. The two editions share content down to foliation.

448 Selnecker, Der sechste theil des Psalters Dauids, fol. 6v.

449 Selnecker, Der sechste theil des Psalters Dauids, fol. 8v. Compare Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), fol. 631v.

450 Selnecker, Der sechste theil des Psalters Dauids, fols 12r–12v. Compare Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), fols 632r–632v.
a large font and often takes up as much space as the interpretation. For instance, in Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 149 the Psalm itself takes up two full pages, the interpretation a little less than two pages, and the prayer about one and a half pages.\textsuperscript{451}

\textsuperscript{451} Selnecker, \textit{Der sechste theil des Psalters Dauidis}, fol. 110-v–113-r.
Conclusion

Morgenrodt’s edition offers a striking example of the *Psalterbuch*’s ability to shift shape. In this version, an essentially new work of devotional literature is carved out of the *Psalterbuch*. Even more than did the 1571 edition, Morgenrodt’s *Psalterbuch* emphasizes the Psalm texts, direct speech to God, and prayers; the elements on which the reader can model his or her devotional practice. In a format small enough to be held in hand, the edition invites a more intimate relationship between reader and book.

Who was this edition of the *Psalterbuch* intended to reach? The *Psalterbuch* in this version is now a Psalm and prayer book, which according to Selnecker, was a favourite genre of the elector. As a special edition for August and Anna this version establishes even tighter links between the Psalms, Selnecker, and the electoral court than had the editions of 1563–1569 and 1581. Hans-Peter Hasse mentions that, according to an inventory of the electoral library from 1588, August had four copies of Morgenrodt’s edition in his personal library and workshop in Annaburg, which indicates that it was intended to serve as a gift.452 The edition thus underscores Selnecker’s position after his participation on behalf of Electoral Saxony in the formulation of the Formula of Concord, communicating that he is now among the select few theologians in the electoral inner circle. Indeed, Selnecker is now so much a key figure that his *Psalterbuch* has become a physical token of August’s orthodoxy, a gift that encapsulates the confessional profile of Electoral Saxony. While its small size made it better suited for private devotion, the edition seems to simultaneously have the public function of representing the Lutheranism of the electorate.

7. 1593: NEGOTIATING SELNECKER’S LEGACY

New voices speak in the Psalterbuch of 1593. Published after Nicolaus Selnecker’s death on 24 May 1592, this edition opens with a dedication by his son Georg Selnecker (1561–1598) and closes with a funeral sermon by Georg Mylius (1548–1607). Up to this point we have seen Selnecker use the Psalterbuch to strategically impact his environment. We have met him at different stages of his life and career, and the various editions of the Psalterbuch issued over time have given the impression that Selnecker was continually revising it. Now the Psalterbuch is out of his hands, and it materializes as a testimony to his life and legacy, a site where other actors negotiate the meaning of his work and project their own agendas onto its pages. Before his death, Selnecker mobilized his Psalm interpretations in other venues, piecing together excerpts from the Psalterbuch to address the domestic devotion and the ethics of the Christian household.

Selnecker’s Final Years

In the final years of his life Selnecker experienced another period of instability. During his brief stint as elector from 1586 to 1591 Christian I carried out a series of reforms that reshaped the Saxon church along Calvinist lines. Older research referred to this process as a ‘second Reformation’; Thomas Klein, Der Kampf um die Zweite Reformation in Kursachsen 1586–1591 (Köln, Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1962). This has been criticised by historians as confessionally biased. Instead, Schilling speaks of a Reformed confessionalization in parallel to Lutheran and Catholic confessionalization; Heinz Schilling, ‘Vorvort’, in Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland – Das Problem der ‘Zweiten Reformation’, ed. by Heinz Schilling (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1986), pp. 7–9. See also Karlheinz Blaschke, ‘Religion und Politik

---


454 Older research referred to this process as a ‘second Reformation’; Thomas Klein, Der Kampf um die Zweite Reformation in Kursachsen 1586–1591 (Köln, Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1962). This has been criticised by historians as confessionally biased. Instead, Schilling speaks of a Reformed confessionalization in parallel to Lutheran and Catholic confessionalization; Heinz Schilling, ‘Vorvort’, in Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland – Das Problem der ‘Zweiten Reformation’, ed. by Heinz Schilling (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1986), pp. 7–9. See also Karlheinz Blaschke, ‘Religion und Politik
chancellor, was a driving force in a sweeping transition of the Lutheran heartland. Divergence from the Formula of Concord was tolerated; censorship of the book market intensified; schools, universities, courts, and consistories were reorganized; theological polemics in preaching were banned; and finally a new catechism, prayerbooks, and a commentated Bible were published. Christian and Krell framed their efforts as a continuation of the reformation of church, school, and society, that is, as a fulfilment of what Luther had started.\footnote{Klein, Der Kampf um die Zweite Reformation in Kursachsen 1586–1591, p. 185.}

Selnecker’s adamant support for Luther quickly became a liability. He collided with the new policies by preaching against both Calvinism and Nikolaus Krell’s church policies. On 17 May 1589, he was officially removed from the offices of superintendent and professor.\footnote{Hasse, ‘Die Lutherbiographie von Nikolaus Selnecker’, p. 116.} It is an ironic twist to the story, as Selnecker had dedicated the second edition of the \textit{Psalterbuch} from 1571 to Christian, expressing his hope that the young ruler would become as fierce a defender of true Lutheranism as his father had been. On being exiled Selnecker travelled to Magdeburg and eventually found refuge in Hildesheim, where he served as superintendent starting in December of 1590. Luther’s polemical writings had been banned in Saxony in 1588,\footnote{Hasse, ‘Die Lutherbiographie von Nikolaus Selnecker’, p. 119.} and Selnecker responded by doubling down on his support for Luther and lamenting the situation of the church.\footnote{For instance in a collection of funeral sermons printed in 1590 and dedicated to Hedwig von Brandenburg (1540–1602), signed October 17 1589; Selnecker, \textit{Christliche Leîchpredigten So vom Jar 1576. bis fast an das 1590. Jar zu Leipzig/ Durch D. Nicolaum Selneccerum der zeit Superintendenten vnd Professorem alda/ geschehen vnd auffgezeichnet worden sind [...] } (Magdeburg: 1590), VD16 ZV 20275. Here, Selnecker laments how false teachings, especially Calvinist ideas about the Lord’s Supper, spread throughout Germany: ‘[…] wie heutig tags bezeuget die leidige Sündflut des vngehewren Sacramentsschwarm […]’; Selnecker, \textit{Christliche Leîchpredigten} unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [(:: iij)]. He explains how Luther had foreseen that this would happen, and he cites the reformer to argue that preachers only tell people what they want to hear; Selnecker, \textit{Christliche Leîchpredigten} unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [(:: iij)]. The problem, according to Selnecker, stems from the fact that no one wants the full Luther: ‘Den[n] was thun vnsere Geistliche vnd Weltliche newe schwermer vnd gifftige Geister jetzt anders/ die gern Lutherum vnd seine Geitreiche heilsame schrifften/ sonderlich aber seine streitschriffen wider die Zwinglische Gottslesterung wolten vnter die banck stossen’; Selnecker, \textit{Christliche Leîchpredigten} unpaginated [(:: v)].}
Chapter 7

takes centre stage.\textsuperscript{459} In Hildesheim Selnecker lectured on the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s life, and in 1591 he published a new and expanded edition of his biography of Luther.

Christian I died in 1591 at 31 years of age. His son Christian II was only eight years old at the time, so Duke Friedrich Wilhelm (1562–1602), the grandson of Luther’s patron Johann Friedrich I (1532–47), was called upon to administrate the electorate under the regency of Christian I’s widow Sophie of Brandenburg (1568–1622). Sophie and Friedrich Wilhelm reversed Christian’s reforms and Krell’s policies. Krell was imprisoned and later sentenced to death, high-standing theologians were removed from their offices and imprisoned, and many of the theologians who had been driven away starting in 1586 returned to Saxony and were reinstated to their former positions.\textsuperscript{460} Selnecker was among them. He was to assist with a forthcoming church visitation\textsuperscript{461} and he left Hildesheim for Leipzig on 9 May 1592. He arrived on the nineteenth but died a few days later, on May 24. Selnecker was buried two days later in the Thomaskirche in Leipzig across from the pulpit. He left behind his wife, two sons, and two daughters.

**Psalms, Death, and the Lutheran Household**

Selnecker’s publications from his last years arose from and communicate the double precarity of life in exile and bodily weakness as death draws near, expressing a deep-seated pessimism about the condition of German Christianity while describing his own declining health. Three publications from the 1587 to 1590 show how Selnecker mobilized the Psalms and passages from his Psalterbuch to lament the status of Germany and arm the domestic church with books to uphold true doctrine despite the neglect of the authorities and the strife among clergy: *Christliche Psalmen* (1587), *Ehe Spiegel* (1590), and *Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten* (1590).

\textsuperscript{459} Hasse, ‘Die Lutherbiographie von Nikolaus Selnecker’, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{460} Sommer, *Gottesfürcht und Fürstenherrschaft*, pp. 107–108.

\textsuperscript{461} Sommer, *Gottesfürcht und Fürstenherrschaft*, p. 108.
The *Christliche Psalmen*

We find a first configuration of the relationship between Psalms, the evil times, and the domestic sphere in Selnecker’s *Christliche Psalmen, Lieder und Kirchengesenge* from 1587. Selnecker dedicates this work to Catharina of Brandenburg (1549–1602), the wife of Joachim Frederick (1546–1608), and writes in the dedication that in a world coming to its end, where Christ’s ministers are fighting each other instead of serving him, there are luckily still friends and supporters of Christ, such as Catharina and her husband.

This work contains psalms composed from the Psalms and the Catechism, songs for the feast days, and collections of Latin hymns as well as German prayers includes much material from the *Psalterbuch*. In the first section with hymns from the Psalms, the *Christliche Lieder* includes several of the hymns from the *Psalterbuch*: Psalms 1, 3, 6, 18, 23, 51, 56, 87, 91, and 142. The section with catechetical hymns also feature a revised version of a poem from Psalm 42. In the collection of prayers, the prayers from Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 91 are included.

Finally, the *Christliche Psalmen* has incorporated an excerpt from Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 73 that argues for all the benefits of Christian singing. In this passage, Selnecker specifically emphasizes how singing bridges the gap between the household and public church. With fourth century theologian Basil of Caesarea (330–379) to support him, he explains how singing refreshes and rejuvenates body and soul, and how it is used as an instrument of the Holy Spirit to console and instruct the young and the simple. It even

---


463 Selnecker, *Christliche Psalmen*, unpaginated [i] (ii)–(ii)”.


466 Selnecker, *Christliche Psalmen*, pp. 54–60.

467 Selnecker, *Christliche Psalmen*, unpaginated [begins on A°]. The passage can be found in Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Davids* (1593/1594), fols 328°–328°.
provides those who sing or listen to the melodies with a foretaste of the eternal life. Further he explains, with reference this time to Augustine (354–430), that while most people cannot easily learn or understand the apostles or the teachings of the prophets, the Psalms are different:

ES ist ja am tage/ das man durch feine Christliche Lieder die rechte Lehre weit bringen vnd ausbreiten kan/ vnd die Hertzen damit frölich gemacht werden/ wie im Deutschland billher GÖtt seine gnade darzu hat geben/ das durch feine Christliche Geseng in der Kirchen viel ist erbauet worden/ vnd offt mehr damit/ denn mit predigen ausgerichtet ist/ wie auch derwegen Augustinus sagt; Viel Leute/ die in der Kirchen zusammen komen/ können weder der Apostel Schrifften/ noch der Propheten hohe Lehr leicht lernen vnd verstehen/ oder/ wenn sie es ja lernen/ so können sie es nicht behalten vnd gedencken. Aber die Psalm vnd Lieder können sie in ihren Heusern singen/ vnd öffentlich in der Gemeine/ vnd sich damit selbs vnterweisen/ erfrewen vnd lustig machen.

The Christliche Psalmen features a distillation of the hymns and Selnecker’s view of singing from the Psalterbuch. It brings to the fore the ability of psalm-singing to bring the church to the household.

**The Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten**

Nowhere is the combination of Psalm interpretation, confessional polemics, and the ideology of the good death better articulated than in his *Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten* of 1590, a collection of funeral sermons for two kings, two electors, an electress, and a Holy Roman emperor. The collection deserves to be studied in detail, but here I have space only to

---


469 Selnecker, Christliche Psalmen, unpaginated [Aii’–Aii”]; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1593/1594), fol. 328v.


471 King Christian III of Denmark (1503–1559), Elector Joachim II Hector of Brandenburg (1505–1571), King of Poland Sigismund II Augustus (1520–1572), Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II (1527–1576),
highlight how Selnecker speaks through the Psalms to model himself upon David, and how he combines this self-fashioning with confessional polemics in his portrayal of a not-so-distant past when Lutheran rulers lived up to their name.

The book opens with a dedication in which Selnecker contrasts worldly and Christian joy. In his explanation of the latter he speaks almost exclusively through the Psalms. Across eleven pages replete with intense imagery, Selnecker pastes excerpts from the Psalms that he deems thematically related to portray eight aspects of Christian joy, for example joy in God, faith, tribulations, the temporal authorities, and the hour of death. The thematic approach allows Selnecker to rewrite and reorganize Scripture according to his own needs. In the passage on how to revel in suffering he contrasts promises of divine consolation with vivid fantasies of violent retribution, and in the next passage he describes how the faithful heart will join David and find joy ‘under the cross’, in the face of all kinds of persecution. Tying the passage together is a chorus that Selnecker picks up from five of the eleven Psalms he cites: He has no fear.


Anna and August of Saxony. Also descriptions of the end of the lives of King Friedrich II of Denmark and Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Lüneburg.


473 ‘Denn die Gott förchten/ die frewen sich (wie wir aus den Psalmen Dauids ein Christlichen bericht nemen vnd erzellen wollen)‘; Selnecker Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten, unpaginated dedication [ )( iiij].
höffet vnuerzagt auff den Herrn/ sein hertz ist getrost/ vn[d] fürchtet sich nicht/ Psa. 112. Der gerechte wird sich noch frewen/ wenn er die Raache sihet/ vnd wird seine Füsse baden in der Gottlosen Blut/ Psal. 58. etc.⁴⁷⁴

Here Selnecker follows David as he moves from trust in God’s steadfastness (Psalm 23) to witnessing mountains falling into the sea (Psalm 46), and then to lusting for his enemies’ blood (Psalm 58). He thus begins inside the faithful heart that fears no evil, lets the cosmos fall apart around him, and ends with divine retribution as David dips his feet in the blood of his opponents.

At the end of the dedication, printed in a smaller font to signal that we are leaving the biblical past and stepping into the contemporary world, Selnecker stresses that he currently lives a narrative arc similar to that of David. This implies that the Christian heart that speaks along with David is Selnecker’s own, and that his body has suffered the pain voiced by the biblical king. The Psalms lend authenticity to Selnecker’s experience as he explains how they comforted him through a miserable winter when he was weak and sick:


The designation of the Psalms as vade mecum and viaticum casts Selnecker as a traveller and the Book of Psalms as his travel companion, small enough to always be carried on his person and containing provision for his journey.⁴⁷⁶ If we move from the general to the specific, Selnecker forms a sense of this journey by building first on the fundamental topos of the Christian as a stranger to terrestrial life, which is rooted in the New Testament and had been

---

⁴⁷⁴ Selnecker Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten, unpaginated dedication [(o)‘–(·) ij’]
⁴⁷⁵ Selnecker Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten, unpaginated dedication [() ij’–(·) ij’].
elaborated upon by theologians like Augustine of Hippo and Bernard of Clairvaux. In this framework his journey began at birth and the Psalms were his provision throughout life.

On a more specific level, in Catholic tradition, the viaticum is the Eucharist administered as part of the Last Rites to a dying person. In the context of a collection of funeral sermons that includes a description of himself as deathly ill (‘todkrack’), the journey becomes his death and the Psalms a deathbed consolation. Finally, and more specific still, the journey metaphor can be read as an allusion to Selnecker’s life in exile. The dedication was signed in Selnecker’s first refuge after leaving Leipzig:

'Magdeburg/ den 25. Martij Anno. 1590'

we could thus infer that the Psalms provided him with solace during this time and with a language that enabled him to express his condition. In this last reading a powerful contrast emerges between Selnecker’s current ailments and the image of his past that he conjures throughout the volume.

In the passage cited above Selnecker details the many places where he served on orders from on high (Dresden, Wolfenbüttel, Schöningen, and Leipzig), and the title page lists the names and titles of the prominent people for whom he delivered the sermons in the collection. According to Selnecker all of those sermons supported Lutheran doctrine, and most are accompanied by texts that, in Selnecker’s eyes, prove their confessional orthodoxy.


Selnecker, Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten, unpaginated dedication [(i) i]?

It requires some creativity to set up the Danish King Frederik II as a supporter of the same Lutheran faith as Selnecker. Famously, Frederik received the Book of Concord as a gift from his sister Anna of Saxony and threw it in the fire; Bjørn Kornerup, ‘Filippismens magterperiode’, in Den danske kirkes historie, ed. by Hal Koch and Bjørn Kornerup, vol 4 (København: Gyldendal, 1959), pp. 135–220 (p. 159). In Selnecker’s account of the events, Frederik burned the Book of Concord because he was so agitated by reading about all the heresies that are detailed in the book; Selnecker, Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten, unpaginated [yii].

In his sermon for Christian III from 1599, he adds an account of the Danish king’s strong opposition to
Several sermons are prefaced by short texts that inform us just how close Selnecker was to the events when news of death broke. And finally, as we saw in the previous chapter, the funeral sermons for Anna and August place him in close proximity to power. The subtext is clear: while Selnecker may be exiled now, he was once at home in the well-connected circles at the centre of a genuinely Lutheran universe governed by orthodox rulers. The composition of the Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten emphasizes this contrast between past and present, casting Selnecker as an unjustly persecuted true believer whose heart, like King David’s, expresses true faith in an authentic and intensely vivid language.

The Ehe Spiegel

A pessimistic view of the present also pervades Selnecker’s text on marriage, the Ehe Spiegel published the same year. Where the Psalms provided the basis for household devotion in Calvinism: ‘Historia/ Wie sich der thewre König Christianus in Denmmarck etc. gegen die Zwinglianer vnd Caluinisten/ so aus Engelland in Denmmarck kommen/ Chrstlich erzeiget hat’; Selnecker, Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten, unpaginated [Dij’]. Likewise, after his sermon for Joachim II of Brandenburg, he adds the elector’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper: ‘Erklerung des Churfürsten zu Brandenburg Joachimi II. Christlicher gedechnis/ vom Heiligen Abendmal’; ibid., unpaginated [Gijz’]. In his sermon for Maximilian, he emphasizes how the emperor supported the Augsburg Confession and expressed that no one should be allowed to use it as a pretense to hide their Calvinism: ‘Es haben seine Keyserliche Maiestat sich vielmahls gegen hohen vnd andern Personen erkläret/ vnd allergnedigst vernemen lassen/ das er mit der Augspurgischen Confession wohl zu friedien/ vnd niemand daun abzutreiben gesinnet sey/ [...] allein wollen gleichwol seine Keyserliche Maiestet/ darneben auch dieses haben/ das man nicht vntr dem schein vnd Titel der Auspurgischen Confession/ allerley verdeckte Schwermereyen/ als (die seine Keyserliche Mayestet mit Nahmen genennet haben) Sacramentirererey/ oder Caluinische Jrrthumb/ Schwencfkeldische Geuckeley/ vnd desgleichen/ dadurch jetziger zeit/ viel Land vnd Leute heimisch vergiffet worden sind [...]’; ibid., unpaginated [Lijz’]. Finally, after his sermon for August of Saxony, he details his support for the Book of Concord: ‘Warhafftrige/ kurtze/ runde erzeling/ Wie der thewre Churfürstliche Augustus etc. Gottseliger gedechniss/ durch antrieb des H. Geistes/ zu diesen letzten zeiten/ die rechte reine Evangelische Lehre fortgesetzet/ vnd durch das Christliche Concordien Buch wider allelery Rotten vnd Secten verwaren lassen’; ibid., unpaginated [R’].

The sermon for Christian III has the following introduction: ‘Gehalten zu Dresden in der Schloß Capell/ 1559. Den ersten tag Februarij/ da den Tag zuvor die Trawrige Post ankommen von des frommen tehwren Königs Christiani vnd Nordwegen/ ect. seligen Abschied’; Selnecker, Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten, unpaginated [A’]. Similarly, the second sermon was delivered in the Wolfenbüttel castle, ibid., [E v].

See above, pp. 129–130.

the Christliche Psalmen and the language for Selnecker to express the pain of exile and disease in the Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten, the Ehe Spiegel offers a different configuration of the relationship between Selnecker, the evil times, and the Psalms. Here we see Selnecker repurposing material from the Psalterbuch for another genre; as he explains in the dedication, he has assembled excerpts from it was well as the Paedagogia Christiana to create an Ehebüchlein, a small book on marriage.486

In his dedication to the countess of Oldenburg, Elisabeth of Schwarzburg-Blankenburg (1541–1612), Selnecker prays that the book will help her understand what marriage is and to keep it holy. In the 1570s, having lost the Saxon Elector’s backing Selnecker had looked elsewhere for support, and in 1573 he had authored the Oldenburg Church Ordinance on commission from Elisabeth’s husband, Johann VII of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst (1540–1603). The dedication of the Ehe Spiegel posits a gendered division of labour: the countess is responsible for marriage and household, and the count for fostering true religion in his land. The tone of the text is starkly negative. Selnecker laments how the German pulpits are no longer used to preach the true word of God.487 Since public worship has deteriorated, Selnecker turns his attention to the domestic sphere as a possible site for upholding orthodox devotion in a world that is in its last days. The core unit of the domestic sphere, according to Selnecker, is the married couple:

Vnd bitten Gott von hertzen/ er wolle ihm ja die liebe heilige Haufskirche lassen Vaterlich befohlen sein/ Sonderlich/ Weil es sich in so manchen wunderlichen/ seltzamen gefahrlichen leufften der Welt/ vnd in diesen recht truben Hefen/ vnd letztem Alter/ Wahrhaftig lest

486 Selnecker, Ehe vnd Regenten Spiegel, unpaginated dedication [ij]. As an mirror for marriage, Selnecker’s text is related to the tradition of writings such as Justus Menius, Oeconomia Christiana (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1529), VD16 M 4541 and Johannes Mathesius, Oeconomia Oder Bericht Vom Christlichen Hauswesen (Wittenberg: Hans Krafft, 1564), VD16 M 1421. Compared to these works, Selnecker’s Ehe vnd Regenten Spiegel is significantly longer and with prayers and hymns its content is far more diverse.

487 ‘So man das gantze Deutschland/ durch vnd durch ginge/ das man keinen rechten Predigstuel wird finden komen/ da das Wort GOTTES rei/ Wie zuuor/ geprediget werde’; Selnecker, Ehe vnd Regenten Spiegel, unpaginated dedication [ij’].
Selnecker bases his argument on the authority of the Martin Luther.489

The household is continually addressed in the Psalterbuch, but it is scattered across the 150 interpretations of the Psalterbuch. The Ehe Spiegel extracts short sections from Selnecker’s treatment of Psalms 17, 19, 65, 112, 127, and 128 in the Psalterbuch, and he makes a condensed version that places the focus squarely on the ethics of the household.490 As a result of this cut-and-paste method the Ehe Spiegel feels hastily compiled, with little editing of the content from the older publications. Selnecker does not even bother to remove references to parts of the Psalterbuch that are not printed in the Ehe Spiegel. The reader is continually pointed to passages in other Psalms that speak to the subject under discussion: ‘ist oben im 18. Psalm angezeiget’; ‘Wie der vorige Psalm geleret hat’.491 Towards the end of the tract Selnecker also includes some of the prayers from his book on the plague, the Christlicher bericht of 1565, that were included in the second edition of the Psalterbuch in 1565: these had been slotted into the latter and are now repurposed and printed outside of it again in a work dedicated to the Christian domestic sphere.492

The Christliche Psalmen, Sechs Sonderbare Leichenpredigten and the Ehe Spiegel enact related but different configurations of the relationship between Selnecker, the Psalms, and his precarious situation. In the Ehe Spiegel he speaks through Martin Luther and repurposes old material, utilising the Psalterbuch as a form of archive from which thematic units can be extracted. In the Sechs Sonderbare Leichenpredigten, on the other hand, he speaks through the Psalms and constructs a sharp contrast between a dignified past and a miserable present.

488 Selnecker, Ehe vnd Regenten Spiegel, unpaginated dedication [(iij)].
490 Selnecker, Ehe vnd Regenten Spiegel, fols 21r–39r. The excerpts can be found in Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter David (1593/1594), fols 84v–85r, 107v–107r, 286v–286r, 587v, 591v–592r, 632v–633r, 634v–637r.
491 Selnecker, Ehe vnd Regenten Spiegel, fols 24r, 30r.
492 Under the headline ‘Etliche Christlice Gebetlein aus dem Psalter D. N. Selnecceri’; Selnecker, Ehe vnd Regenten Spiegel, fols 204v–212r.
In the *Christliche Psalmen*, he mobilises his interpretation of Psalm 73 to underscore how the psalm singing can bridge domestic and communal worship.

**The Haußkirche in the Psalterbuch**

The three publications mobilize texts and themes and texts from the *Psalterbuch*, and in so doing, they bring the topic of the household to our attention. The idea that the world is coming to an end and that domestic devotion is a safe-heaven for Christianity is already expressed in Selnecker’s interpretation of Psalm 103. Here, Selnecker emphasizes the necessity of domestic devotion as a remedy against disunity among Lutherans and he suggests that the only hope for true Christianity lies in household religious practice, understood, specifically, as the Haußkirche, and, more generally, as the seedbed for religious mores.

Selnecker treats Psalm 25 in his interpretation of Psalm 103. First, he explains how the devil has taken control of Germany marring both the estates of church and society:


The strife and division among the clergy confuses their congregations and the enemies of the church are rejoicing its decline. Selnecker continues to lament the strife and conflict in the church and the authorities who do not seem to care:

> Die Gelehrten/ von denen jetzt gesagt ist/ faren fort in jrem glosieren/ deutungen/ vnd newen falschen fündlein. Die Oberkeit ist zumal nachlessig/ was Gott vnd seine Ehr anbelanget/ vnd lest es auch hangen vnd gehen/ wie mans machet. Das ander Volck ist jrr/ vnd schilt auff alle

493 Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Davids* (1593/1594), fol. 502v.
Lehrer/ vnd verachtet auch die Lehr vnd das Wort Gottes an jhm selbs/ Wie jener Kauffman hatte gesprochen/ er lernet aus den vielfältigen spaltungen vnd zwiracht der Lehrer nichts bessers/ denn das er nichts wolte gleuben.  

The ministers responsible for teaching the word set a bad example, and the tradesman learns only strife from them, not faith. The only hope in this dangerous situation, is the domestic church:

Jch weis nich/ wie es ist/ oder zugehét/ Aber doch die Warheit zu sagen/ so scheinet es gewißlich also/ als ob Gott vns alle/ Herrn vnd Knecht/ Lehrer vnd Zuhörer/ durch das gantze Deutschland heimsuchen/ vnd grewlich straffen wolle/ die wir so vndanckbar/ sicher vnd vnachtsam sind/ voll stoltz vnd freuels/ vnd nach Gottes Ehr/ Wort vnd warheit ja wenig/ oder gar nichts fragen. Es kan nicht wol sein/ est ist auch vnnmüglich/ es mus was grosses vnd schreckliches folgen/ es sey was es wolle/ vnd woher es komme. Gott erbarme sich seiner armen vnd zurstrewten Kirchen. Vnd lest sich ferner ansehen (Gott gebe das ich liege) das noch/ dieweil der fürwitz vnd die sicherheit nicht auffhöret/ die haußkirche werde die aller best Kirche sein/ das nemlich ein frommer Haßvater bey seinem Weibe/ Kindern vnd Gesinde/ seinen kleinen Kinder Catechismum neben seiner Bibel daheim allein treiben vnd lesen wird/ da sonst öffentlich in Kirchen vnd Schulen gross gezeenck/ Jrrthumb/ newe falsche Lehr/ vnd Disputationes, mit viel geschrey vnd poldern/ vnd sonst in gemeinlem leben durch vnd durch in alle Stenden vnd winckeln grosse schreckliche Laster vnd Sünden/ die bereit alle haben vorlangt angefangen/ im schwang gehen werden/ bis so lange der Son Gottes/ Christus Jesus vnser Heyland/ mit seinem Jüngsten tag/ den wir von hertzen begeren/ vns darzu auch sehnen vnd bereiten sollen/ komt/ vnd vns von allem vbel in Ewigkeit errettet. Gleich wie allein ein arme vnanschenliche Haußkirche war/ da Christus Gottes Son solte ins fleich kommen/ vnd Mensch werden/ / da sonst öffentliche/ krefftige Jrrthumb in Schulen vnd Kirchen getrieben wurden.

The Chritliche Psalmen provides everything needed to stay in the house. With the publication of the Christliche Psalmen and the Ehe Spiegel, Selnecker has repurposed material from his Psalterbuch to provide the essentials for a situation in which the publich church can no longer be trusted to guide its people in Christian life: social ethics and devotional practice.

---

494 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1593/1594), fol. 502².
495 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1593/1594), fol. 503².
496 Christopher Boyd Brown has noted how the Lutheran household, especially in the second half of the sixteenth century, could operate simultaneously in uniformity with and in opposition to the early modern state; Christopher Boyd Brown, ‘Devotional Life in Hymns, Liturgy, Music, and Prayer’, in Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675, ed. by Robert Kolb (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp 205–258 (pp. 254–258). Moreover, smaller and more focused publications such as the Christliche Psalmen and the Ehe Spiegel may have proven more popular than the bulky Psalterbuch. As Christopher Boyd Brown explains about household devotion, ‘the laity seem to have preferred the clearly structured books [...] to the looser encyclopedic agglomerations of prayers or hymns’; ibid., p. 254.
The 1593 Edition

In 1593 Selnecker’s commentary on the Psalms was published for the seventh time, and this is the first edition to appear in the catalogues of the Frankfurt book fair.497 There Selnecker’s work was sold alongside another folio interpretation of the Psalms, this one by Hieronymus Mencel (1517–1590), pastor and general superintendent in Luther’s Eisleben.498 It was printed in the same year and by the same publisher, Michael Lantzenberger in Leipzig, and the two books are remarkably similar in design.499 They even share the same illustration first used on the title page of Selnecker’s 1581 edition of the Psalterbuch; in Mencel’s Psalter the image is used to visually mark the transition from a dedication by Mencel’s successor in Eisleben, Georg Regebrand (1547–1613), to the author’s introduction to the Psalms.500 If, as Fuchs and De Vries assertion that the illustration portrays Selnecker, the inclusion of it in this context points to the flexibility. On the Psalterbuch it becomes a portrait of Selnecker, but in other contexts, it may just read as a portrait of King David. The overall structure of Mencel’s text is also the same as that of Selnecker. Each Psalm has three elements, each with its own headline: the Psalm text, an interpretation of the Psalm, and a prayer.501

The interpretations are different, though, at least in terms of structure and layout. Where the visual sense of structure in Selnecker’s work is primarily provided by the difference in font size between the biblical text and Selnecker’s interpretations, Mencel’s work employs numbers in the margins and headlines in the body of the text to subdivide the interpretations

497 In the catalogue from the Fall fair of 1594; Die Messkataloge Georg Willers, V (2001), pp. 147–148. The edition was printed in 1593–1594. The title page of the volume indicates that it was printed in 1593 while the printer’s mark at the end of the volume states that it was printed in 1594.


500 Under the headline: ‘Christliche vnd Nützliche Erklerung vnd Auflégung deß gantzen Psalters des Königlichen Propheten Davids’; Mencel, Psalterium Davids, fol. 1’. This challenges the extent to which we should view the illustration as a portrait of Selnecker.

into thematic units (‘Stück’ or ‘Theil’) (see figure 12). Each unit is then further broken down, often into lists or questions and answers, and most end with a clearly marked conclusion, often the metareflective question in a large typeface: ‘Was haben wir aus diesem ersten Theil zu lernen?’ Lists, questions, and thematic units – Selnecker employs these elements in the Psalterbuch, but without the consistent typographical underpinning in Mencel’s Psalterium Dauids. Compared to intense visual communication of this new interpretation of the Psalms, Selnecker’s Psalterbuch comes off as restrained and perhaps somewhat dated.

Lantzenberger’s edition makes two significant additions to the Psalterbuch: the dedication by Georg Selnecker and the funeral sermon by Georg Mylius. The latter was also printed in stand-alone editions in both Jena and Leipzig. On the title page of the Psalterbuch, which is almost identical to the one from 1581–1582, these additions are advertised along with the promise that Selnecker has overseen the production of this edition and made improvements just before he died: ‘Jetzt auffs new vom Autore, kurtz vor seinem seligen ende/ selbst vbersehen/ gebessert vnd gemehret’. But this does not seem to be the case. Rather we essentially have a replica of the 1581 edition, from the layout and hierarchy among the different textual elements all the way down to folio numbers and catch words.

---

502 Or loci, as he writes for instance in his interpretation of Psalm 125: ‘ES werden in diesem Psalm drey Loci communes gerüret’; Mencel, Psalterium Dauids, fol. 441.  
503 Mencel, Psalterium Dauids, fol. 9.  
504 See for instance the numbered lists in Selnecker’s interpretations of Psalms 37 and 94; Selnecker Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), fols 186r–187v; 456v–457r.  
506 Sometimes there is a line more per folio in the edition from 1581, but when a new interpretation begins, the two editions are back on the same folio. The final interpretation of Psalm 150 ends on folio 687v, just like it did in 1581. Page-by-page catchwords as we find them in the Psalterbuch became a standard feature in the middle of the sixteenth century; Daniel Sawyer, ‘Page Numbers, Signatures, and Catchwords’, in Book Parts, ed. by Dennis Duncan and Adam Smyth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 137–149 (p.143)
Georg Selnecker’s Dedication

Georg Selnecker’s dedication de-historicises his father’s Psalterbuch. Rather than lamenting evil times or engaging in confessional debate, Georg praises the Book of Psalms as the centre of the Bible and its author, the Holy Spirit, as superior to any human poet or orator. He refers to classical philosophers, rhetoricians, and poets such as Pericles, Socrates, Aristoteles, Pythagoras, Ovid, Cicero, Plutarch, and Antiphon, but states that the divine orator


Figure 12: Hieronymus Mencel, Psalterium Dauids: Aufflegung aller Psalmen/ deß Königlichen Propheten Dauids (Leipzig: Lantzenberger; Grosse, 1594), fols 9r–10r. Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt <urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:1-181289-p0034-1>
outmatches all of them. Since biblical times the Psalms have provided an ideal language for praise and petition, and his father was able to interpret them authentically in his Psalterbuch because he lived a life of suffering like David’s, a life under the cross. Nonetheless Georg’s dedication simultaneously embraces and distances itself from humanist erudition, and compared to the bleak outlook of Selnecker’s final publications it offers a striking shift in tone.

Georg’s approach to humanism is not polemical like the anti-Ciceronianism related to the growing hostility towards Latin as it became closely connected to Catholicism after the Council of Trent rejected the vernacular liturgy.508 Nor is it technical like the conflicts over the role of metaphysics in theology that would escalate in the late 1590s, especially at the University of Helmstedt.509 Georg’s text is also nearly devoid of confessional polemics. He does single out a wrong interpretation of Psalm 22 by Calvin,510 and when he describes the Psalter as a book of examples he frames this as a contrast to Catholic practices such as pilgrimage, fasting, and self-flagellation.511 But when he speaks of enemies of the church he stays in a poetic, cosmological,512 and ahistorical register modelled on the Psalms, much like


510 ‘Denn solcher xxij. Psal. ist eigentlich von Christo/ vnd nicht von jemand anders/ wie jm der Nasenweise Klügling Calinuis in seinem verrucken gebirn treumen lest’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [aiij’].

511 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.

512 Georg expands the scope and explains how the prayers and thanksgivings of the Psalms are to be expressed by all of creation; human beings, animals, and nature: ‘Vnd zu solcher lob vnd dancksgaug Gottes werden nicht allein alle Menschen/ sondern auch alle himliche Heerscharen vnd Engelein/ ja alle Creaturen/ Himmel vnd Erden/ Sonn vnd Monde/ wasser/ laub vnd grass/ alle Fisch im Meer/ alle Vogel vnter dem himmel/ alle Thier auffin felde/ vnd alle Beume in wälden/ in summa/ alle was vnter dem himmel vnd auff erden webet vnd lebet/ vermanet vnd angereizt/ das sie ihren HErrn vnd Schöpfer loben/ vnd demselbigen vor seine erzeigte woltathen danken sollen’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [page after a iij’].
we saw in Selnecker’s opening of *Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten*.\(^{513}\) He even cites the same passage from Psalm 46:2–3 about mountains falling into the sea, but true to his optimism he also includes Ps 46:4 focusing on the joy of the city of God: ‘dennoch sol die Stad Gottes fein lustig bleiben’.

\(^{514}\) The greater part of his argument, however, concerns the greatness of the Psalms compared to antique philosophy and rhetoric. Georg’s critique thus echoes statements by Luther on the superiority of Scripture.\(^{515}\)

Georg begins by describing Scripture as a treasure so great that no man can find words adequate to praise it. Among the books of the Bible, Psalms stands out because it speaks directly to everybody who is poor, sick, sad, or persecuted. Citing Basil of Caesarea, Georg states that the Psalms are like a pantry with food for every troubled soul.\(^{516}\) The Book of Psalms is the masterpiece of the Holy Spirit, and it is to the Bible like a jewel in a ring of gold.\(^{517}\) Indeed, just as God placed the trees of life and knowledge of good and evil in the middle of Paradise, the Holy Spirit placed the Book of Psalms in the centre of the Bible:

> Vnd gleich wie Gott der allmechtige im anfang der erschaffung/ den baum des Lebens vnd...
den baum des erkenntnis gutes vnd böses/ mitten in das Paradiss gesetzt hat/ also hat auch Gott
der heilige Geist dieses edle beumle/ das liebe Psälterlein/ fast in die mitten dieses schönen
Lustgartens heiliger Göttlicher Schrift/ wollen setzen lassen. 

Like the paradisical trees the Psalms give their reader knowledge and life, and here Georg
ties the instruction and consolation to creation. Georg refers to Luther’s notion of the Book
of Psalms as a small Bible to prove its all-encompassing nature, and he shows how other
parts of the Bible, for instance all of the Ten Commandments and the Catechism, can be
found in the Psalms.

Georg repeatedly turns to philosophers, poets, and rhetoricians to show the superiority of the
Psalms. The source of all human skill is the Holy Spirit, and while men inspired by the Spirit
wrote the books of philosophers, David’s Psalms were composed by the Spirit itself.
Therefore when philosophers get something right it is because the Spirit assists them; in fact
they are like thieves who steal from the Spirit:

Denn so jrgendt von anbegin der Welt biss auff gegenwertige zeit vnd stundt/ ein buch
gesehen worden/ vnd wenns auch gleich der aller weisesten gehalten worden/ selbst gemacht
hette/ das lobens werth gewest/ so ists fürvar diss edle vnd gantz herrliche bûchlein/ der
Psalter Dauids/ allermeist wegen des aller höchsten vnd aller fûrtrefflichsten Autoris, welcher
ist Gott der heilige Geist selbst/ gegen welchem alle andere Heydnische Schribenten vnd
Philosophi/ es sey gleich Plato/ Aristoteles/ Socrates/ oder Pythagoras/ oder wie sie namen
haben mögen/ mit aller ihrer kunst vnd geschicklichkeit/ weisheit vnd beredtsamkeit/ wie ein
A b c schüler gegen einem grossen Doctore zu achten vnd zu halten/ sintemal der Autor dieses
Bûchleins/ wie gesagt/ Gott der heilige Geist/ die aller höchste Weisheit selbsten/ ja der
vsprung vnd brunquell aller freyen Kûnste/ weisheit vnd geschicklichkeit ist/ von welchem
auch alle Philosophi vnd weltweise verstedtliche Leute jhr fickwerck vnd stûckwerck/ so sie
nach menschlicher weisheit vnd klugheit herfür gebracht/ vnd diebischer weise gleichsam
eraubet vn[d] gestolen haben [...].

518 Selnecker, Der gantz Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [ Ja( ij’].
519 Selnecker, Der gantz Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [aij’]
520 ‘So seind auch nicht allein die Virtutes vnd tugenden der Zehen Gebot/ beydes der ersten vnd andern
Tafel/ darin verfasset vnd begriffen/ sondern wir finden auch darinne den gantzen Catechismum/ nach alle
Heuptstücken/ wie er von vnsern letzten vnd Deutschen Propheten/ dem niemals gnugsam gelobten
Gottes manne/ Luthero/ seligster gedechnis/ aus der gantzen Bibel/ der lieben jugendt vnd einfeltigen zu
gute verfasset vnd begriffen ist’; Selnecker, Der gantz Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated
‘Vorrede’. ‘Ist also/ wie zu sehen/ nicht ein einiges pûntclein in vnserm Christlichen Catechismo/ das
nicht auch allhier in diesem Psalterbüchlein zu finden vnd anzutreffen’; Selnecker, Der gantz Psalter
Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.
521 Selnecker, Der gantz Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [aij’–aiij’].
The Psalms are also better than the books of the philosophers when it comes to rhetoric, consolation, and ethics. While Plutarch and Cicero recount stories about the power of rhetoricians such as Antiphon of Rhamnus,\(^\text{522}\) whose eloquence could make sad people happy, or Hegesias of Cyrene,\(^\text{523}\) who persuaded people to prefer death over life, they are no match for the rhetoric of the Holy Spirit, the ‘heavenly orator’. It justifies the damned and creates life out of death:

\[
\text{Dieses müssen zwar nicht vngeschickte/ sondern gelehrte vnd wolberedete Leute gewesen sein/}
\text{Aber doch seind sie gegen diesen vnserm Himlichen Rhetore vnd Oratore/ Gott dem heiligen}
\text{Geist/ im geringsten nicht zuuergleichen/ denn er allein ist der Eloquentissimus, vnd aller}
\text{beredtste/ der die rechte τέχνην ἀληθίας vnd tristitiae carentiam, die fröhlich vnd}
\text{frewdenmachende Kunst erfunden hat/ sinternal seine lippen so holdselig/ vnd die rede seines}
\text{Mundes so lieblich/ das er dadurch einen betrübten Šünder frölich/ einen verdampften selig/}
\text{vnd einen toden lebendig machen kan/ Wie solches der Königliche Prophet Dauid im cxix.}
\text{Psalm bezeugt/ da er spricht: Wo dein Wort nicht were mein trost gewesen/ so were ich}
\text{vergangen in meinem elende.}\(^\text{524}\)
\]

Moreover, for pedagogical reasons, the Holy Spirit adorned this powerful language with allegories and metaphors\(^\text{525}\) to create a poetic text that is easy to read, feel, and remember.\(^\text{526}\) Its rhetoric thus outshines most other books.\(^\text{527}\) In addition everything in the Psalms brings


\footnote{524} Selnecker, *Der ganze Psalter Dauids* (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.


\footnote{526} ‘Vnd hat sonderlich Gott der H. Geist/ auch in dem fall mit der art vnd form zu reden/ dis Psalterbüchlein Dauids illustrin wollen/ in dem er dasselbe nicht etwa nur soluta oratione, vnd schlecht hin geschrieben/ sondern nach Poetischer art vnd weise in schöne herrliche rythmos vnd Verslein verfasset/ die da nicht allein zu lesen vnd zu hören gantz lustig vnd lieblich/ sondern auch leichtlich vnd wol zu mercken vnd zu behalten’; Selnecker, *Der ganze Psalter Dauids* (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [jb(‘)].

\footnote{527} ‘Das also/ wie gehört/ auch hierin/ wegen der schönen/ kunstreichen vnd gantz lieblichen art zu reden/ so Gott der H. Geist allhie gefürt vnd gebraucht hat/ der Psalter Dauids/ vor vielen andern Būchern vnd Scriptis zu loben vnd zu rühmen ist’; Selnecker, *Der ganze Psalter Dauids* (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [jb(‘)].
consolation, as Georg explains with a small rhyme: ‘Jm Psalter Dauids man nichts list/ Das nicht voll reiches trostes ist’. The classics also bring consolation, but unlike the word of God they are powerless in the face of death. And finally, David is morally superior because he speaks to the whole man and the Psalms require agreement between body and soul, heart, and mind, whereas the philosophers focus on the actions of the outer man.

At the very end of the dedication Georg roots his father’s ability to interpret the Psalms in the character of his lived life. The Psalms require experience to grasp; no amount of philosophical knowledge can prepare for life ‘under the cross’:

Denn weil er/ ohne ruhm zu sagen/ mit Dauid auch in allerley creutz vnd elend gestecket hat/ vnd es sonst heist/ Dauidica intelligit, qui Dauidica patitur, Das ist/ Wer leidet was Dauid begegnet ist/ der verstehet was Dauid geredt hat [

In this insistence on his father’s lived experience as crucial, Georg re-affirms the narrative we encountered in Selnecker’s Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten. In short, Nikolaus Selnecker could understand David’s Psalms because he suffered as David did. In accordance with the portrait on the title page, Georg affirms the merged identity of his father and the prophet.

The Psalterbuch was never lacking in humanist erudition, but Georg’s focus on the rhetorical and poetic superiority of the Psalms brings this thread in Selnecker’s work to the fore. It is a thread that Selnecker senior downplays in his dedications. In the dedications from 1563 and 1564, he also centres on the necessity of the lived experience to unlock the meaning of the Psalms, but unlike Georg, he does not cite the unnecessary knowledge at length.

528 ‘Jm Psalter Dauids man nichts list/ Das nicht voll reiches trostes ist. Kein püntlein man so klein da findet/ Darinnen nicht viel trostes stündt. Nicht aber socchtes trostes/ wie die heydnischen Philosophi/ als Plato/ Aristoteles/ vnd Cicero in jen büchern füren/ welcher in todes nöten den stich nicht helt/ noch das hertz/ wie das Psalterlein Dauids thut/ zu friedn bringen kan’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [b’].

529 ‘vnd vbertrifft der liebe Dauid/ auch in dem fall/ was seine Moralia anlangt/ den Theognidem mit seinen Sentantijis, Ciceronem mit seinen Officijs, vnd den Pythagoram mit seinen aureis carminibus, sehr weit/ in dem er nicht allein/ wie sie/ nur schlecht den eusserlichen/ sondern auch zugleich den innrlichen gehorsam von vns erfordert/ vnd wil/ das zugleich Leib vnd See/ vnd alles was in vns ist/ hertz/ sinn/ muth vnd gedancken/ Gott fürchten/ denselben ehren vnd anbeten/ vnd ohn vnterlas rühmen/ loben vnd preisen/ vnd jhm vor seine erzeigte wolthaten dancken sollen’, Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [bij]’.

530 Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [bij]’.
**Georg Mylius’ Funeral Sermon**

Mylius’s funeral sermon for Selnecker brings us back into the contemporary world. Its point of departure is strikingly similar to the scene depicted on the title page of the *Psalterbuch*: like the Psalmist looking out on celestial scenery, Mylius interprets the final chapter of Deuteronomy (34:1–8), where Moses climbs Mount Nebo and God allows him to see the promised land before his death. The biblical passage is a lesson in death and parting, Mylius explains, and it was the first thing that came to his mind when he heard the news of Selnecker’s death. The story of the end of Moses’ life suits the occasion because Selnecker resembles the prophet and lawgiver, both in his service to the church and in his steadfast struggle for pure, orthodox doctrine. As Moses was a *Knecht Gottes* who led his people through the desert, Selnecker led the people of the church through a spiritual desert of idolatry and false teachings. The sermon’s figurative of Selnecker gazing into the promised land, however, is different from both the devotional model introduced on the title page and the bearer of lived knowledge we met in Georg Selnecker’s dedication. Mylius is instead chiefly concerned with Selnecker’s confessional reliability.

---

531 Included in the *Psalterbuch* is also an oration by the rector at the university of Leipzig. The funeral oration became popular in the Renaissance. By Melanchton’s definition, praise and blame were key components in the genre. According to his influential treatise on rhetoric from 1531, *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*, biographical speeches were part of the *genus demonstrativum*. In the funeral work the biographical speech would demonstrate, through praise or scorn, what had been preached before in the funeral sermon (the genre of instruction, the *genus didaskalikon*); Cornelia Niekus Moore, *Patterned Lives. The Lutheran Funeral Biography in Early Modern Germany* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), pp. 36–37. The funeral oration was modelled on examples from antiquity and from the end of the fifteenth century such orations were often delivered for academics at the universities and royalty at the courts; Moore, *Patterned Lives*, pp. 94–95; 130. See also Rainer Rudolf’s standard work *Ars moriendi: von der Kunst des heilsamen Lebens und Sterbens* (Cologne and Graz: Böhla Verlag, 1957).


533 *’Nun ist er zwar nicht Mosi gleich / viel weniger mehr / denn Moeses selb geswesen: Doch gleichwohl erstlichen Mosi im diesem Stück zuueergleichet / das wie Moses / also er auch ein Knecht Gottes im Hause des HERRN gewesen / und wie jener ein Führer und Hertzog des Volcks Gottes durch die Würsten gewesen: Also dieser liebe Doctor gemeiner Christenheit wie ein getrewer Leiter und Führer durch alle Wüsteney Abgöttischer / verfühlicher und verdamlicher Lehr vorgeleuchtet hat. Insonderheit aber wie Moses das Gezeugnis von GOTT gehabt / das er getrew gewesen seye im gantzen Hause Gottes: Also hat dieser selige Doctor bey allen rein und rethghleubigen Christen das hohe Lob / das er im gantzen Hause Gottes auch getrew gewesen / und bis an sein seliges Ende gebleiben seye‘; Selnecker, *Der gantze Psalter Dauids* (1593/1594), 691’. 
In order to cast Selnecker as an unwavering defender of Lutheran doctrine, Mylius has to counter an opposing and what seems to be well-established narrative. Defensive in tone, he quotes Selnecker’s detractors but firmly rejects their view of the deceased as an opportunistic turncoat (‘ein Wetterhan und Wendehals’). On the contrary, he writes, Selnecker had always recognised the true blessing of the evangelical faith first brought to light by Martin Luther, and he was constant in this through his various offices until he drew his last breath. In fact, according to Mylius, Selnecker stayed faithful to this simple truth in all of the six cities in which he served – Dresden, Wittenberg, Helmstedt, Jena, Hildesheim, and Leipzig – and thus any polemical conflicts around him, the unspoken assumption goes, belonged to the ungodly world Selnecker traversed.

Mylius portrays Selnecker first and foremost as a church leader and defender of Lutheran doctrine. Tellingly, when he describes Selnecker’s literary production he mentions only the author’s participation in the composition of the Book of Concord, briefly characterizing the rest of his oeuvre as beneficial and good writings. Selnecker’s devotional life and writings, including his Psalterbuch, are almost entirely absent from this narrative, at least until the

---

534 This was a characterization of Selnecker that gained traction already in the early 1570s when he was accused of having shifted position on the Lord’s Supper, see Hund, Das Wort ward Fleish, p. 138.

535 ‘Denn D. Selneccer ist nicht ein Vertumnus und Polypus, ein Wetterhan vnd Wendehals gewesen/ der heut diß/ bald morgen ein anders in der Lehr Christlicher Religion angenommen/ approbiert vnd vnterschrieben hette/ Nicht hat er sich als ein Rohr gehalten/ das der Wind hin und her wehet/ Auch nich als ein Mensch in weichen Kleidern/ der vmb Herrngunst/ zeitliches geniesses und weltlicher Ehren willen/ zu allem unbillichem furmennen und verernderungen in Religionssachen sich hette bewegen und vermögen lassen/ Sondern in einmal erkander vnd bekander reiner allein seligmachender Lehr der Evangelischen Warheit/ wie diese einmal durch den thwern Man Gottes vnd hohen Propheten Martinum Luthern aus Gottes gnaden an tages licht gebracht worden/ ist er de zeit seines Lebens allhier auff Erden/ vnd bey seiner geleisten Kirchen und Schueldiensten fest/ trew/ auffrecht und bestendig gebleiben/ vnd bis in seinen letzten Athem/ auch nun in die Gruben hinein verharret’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1593/1594), 691الية.

536 ‘Wie getrew aber er sonsten auch in leistung vnd verrichtung seiner diensten im Hause Gottes gewesen/ das bezeuget nu/ vnd wil biß zum Ende der Welt bezeugen die Kirche Gottes an unterschiedlichen Orten’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Davids (1593/1594), 691الة.

final section of the sermon.\textsuperscript{538} There Mylius allows a glimpse of another side of the story as he details how Selnecker died in accordance with one of his own poems:

> Sonderlich aber/ dieweil er in seligem vnd bestendigem erkentnis/ anruffung/ vnd bekentnis Jesu Christi abgescheiden/ vnd mit ime nach seinem eignen Verßlin geheissen hat: In vita & morte es tu mea Christe Salus. Im Tod und Leben HERR Jesu Christ / Allein Du mein Trost und Heil bist.\textsuperscript{539}

Towards the end of the sermon Mylius concurs with Selnecker’s pessimism. In a final rhetorical crescendo he laments Selnecker’s death and that no one has stepped up to follow in his footsteps:

> Denn wo nimmet vnd findet man hetu zu tag viel Selneccerus? Ja wo kriegen wir auch nun einen andern/ auch einigen Selneccerum mehr? Drumb billich zu trawren/ vnd mag zu förderst Leipzig nun wol trawren vmb jhren Selneccerum: Wer weis/ ob jhr seines gleichen jmmermehr bekommen werdet?\textsuperscript{540}

With this portrayal of Selnecker the Psalterbuch assumes the character of a threatened legacy. It is more than a book about present struggles, becoming a testimony to a time when theologians had the courage to stand up for the authentic Lutheran faith. We have seen Selnecker describe the state of Lutheranism in similar terms in his Ehe Spiegel, with Luther as the paradigmatic figure sorely missed, and now Mylius passes the baton on to the next generation.

\textsuperscript{538} This comes as no surprise, since he declared at the beginning of the sermon that he would refrain from any description of Selnecker’s private life: ‘Ich wil dißmals nicht reden von seinen Privat wandel vnd leben/ welches alles E.L. mehr vnd besser/ denn mir/ in allen Ehren vnd Ruhm bekand gewesen/ damit er doch ihm selbsten fünnemlich/ vnd den seinigen/ vnd auffis meiste denen/ so umb uhn gewonet haben/ als auch euch Leipsigern gewesen/ was er dieses fals gewesen ist. Ich wil allein erwehnen deren ding/ damit er nicht fünnemlich ihme selb/ oder wenigen Leuten/ Sondern gemeiner Kirchen Gottes/ ja gantzer allgemeiner Christenheit gefrommet vnd genützet hat’; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), 691\textsuperscript{v}–691\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{539} This ending of the sermon serves as a reminder that the contrast I have described is one of emphasis, not one of absolutes; Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), 692\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{540} Selnecker, Der gantze Psalter Dauids (1593/1594), p. 692\textsuperscript{v}.
Conclusion

The Psalterbuch edition of 1593 begins and ends with portrayals of Selnecker and renders him inseparable from his interpretations of the Psalms. In his final years, Selnecker had used the Psalms to connect his failing health to what he viewed as the decline of Lutheranism in Germany. The Psalms provided him with a language that easily lent itself to bridging the past and the present, as well as the personal and the political. In his Christliche Psalmen (1587), Ehe Spiegel (1590), and Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten (1590) Selnecker mobilized the Psalms and passages from his Psalterbuch to lament the status of Germany and arm the domestic church with books to uphold true doctrine. Now, in the first posthumous edition of the Psalterbuch, new actors take over the narrative and inscribe Selnecker into their own agendas. Georg Selnecker critically embraces humanist tradition and argues that classical philosophy and poetry are but a faint reflection of their original source, the Holy Spirit. He uses his father’s suffering as an example of a type of knowledge that can only be experienced, and he casts the Psalterbuch as the fruit of Selnecker’s Davidic life. Georg Mylius focuses not on Selnecker’s personal life but on his contribution to the establishment of Lutheran unity, and when he laments the lack of successors able to follow in Selnecker’s footsteps he creates the sense of the Psalterbuch as a testimony to a greater past. But Selnecker’s death and the edition from 1593 are not the final episodes of the Psalterbuch’s story: thirty years later another edition was printed, with more family members entering the negotiation of Selnecker’s legacy.
8. 1623: THE *PSALTERBUCH* IN THE NEW CENTURY

In 1623 Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch* entered a new era. The seventeenth century saw Europe haunted by plague, climate change, poverty, and war; winters were long and cold, food scarce and expensive, and war almost constant. Printed after the celebrations of the Reformation anniversary in 1617 and in the first phase of the Thirty Years’ War, this edition showcases Selnecker’s relatives navigating the devotional and confessional fluctuations by ascribing new meanings to the *Psalterbuch*. In the paratexts that open the volume, the *Psalterbuch* now emerges as not only a testimony to a better past but also a prophetic vision of the troubles of contemporary Germany, and one that places new emphasis on what a life in harmony with the Psalms would look like.

**War and Anti-Catholicism**

When the *Psalterbuch* left the press of Justus Jansonius in Leipzig, the Thirty Years’ War was essentially an intra-German conflict. As a complex series of struggles among ever-shifting alliances, the war would, at different later stages, come to involve most of Europe’s military

---


powers. It began in the summer of 1619 when the rebelling Protestant estates of Bohemia deposed Ferdinand II (1578–1637), their recently elected king. In place of the Habsburg, Catholic, and soon-to-be Holy Roman emperor, they crowned the Calvinist Frederick V (1596–1632), Elector of the Palatinate. While these religious differences deepened and escalated animosities, historians describe the core conflict as revolving around the structure of the Holy Roman Empire and the imbalances between imperial interests and those of the German territorial states. Against imperial efforts to centralise power by modernising the administration of the state and strengthening the emperor, the territorial states sought to maintain or even increase their autonomy.

Initially Electoral Saxony remained loyal to the emperor. Frederick V sought to bring together Lutheran and Calvinist princes in the Protestant Union (founded in 1608), but the traditional leader of the Lutherans, Electoral Saxony, did not join. Its elector, Johann Georg I, was a fierce opponent of Calvinism, and siding with the emperor would also help curb the growing influence of competing territories and secure his territorial expansion into the Bohemian lands of Lusatia and Silesia. Instead of supporting his fellow Protestants, Johann Georg thus opposed the revolt in Bohemia and voted in favour of Ferdinand as Holy Roman Emperor, thereby preventing what could have been a majority Protestant vote, as Frederick’s ascension to the Bohemian throne shifted the confessional balance of the electoral college. The Bohemian revolt was crushed in 1620, but the war continued, first in the Palatinate and later through the intervention of the Dutch Republic, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, and France.

Even before the war began religious tensions between Catholic and Protestant Europe were growing. In 1617 the anniversary of Luther’s posting of his ninety-five theses was celebrated

545 Saxony fought alongside the emperor from 1620–1629; with Sweden against the emperor from 1631–1634; then with the emperor again from 1635–1644; Johannes Burkhardt, ‘Der Dreißigjährige Krieg – Einfluß der sächsischen Politik auf die deutsche Geschichte’, Dresdner Hefte, 56 no. 4 (1998), 3–12 (p. 3).
across Protestant Germany. This was not just a commemoration of Luther’s achievements and theology, but also a reassertion of the Protestant cause against the Catholic Church. In the sermons preached at the celebrations Rome was routinely and forcefully cast as the Antichrist, that is, the common enemy across Protestant confessions.\textsuperscript{547} Whereas intra-Protestant polemics had been predominant in the late sixteenth century, focus shifted towards the threat of Rome in the early seventeenth.\textsuperscript{548} That it was the Calvinist Friedrich V who first took the initiative to celebrate Luther in the face of looming conflict with the empire signals the complexity of the intersections of opposing political interests and confessional differences. Praying for the Reformer, it was hoped, might establish a shared commitment within the Protestant Union.\textsuperscript{549}

**Typographical and Devotional Developments**

Existential anguish and fear of death permeate seventeenth-century literature. Funeral sermons were printed in record numbers, and edifying devotional literature that taught people to live with and prepare for death was prevalent.\textsuperscript{550} The sense of crisis inflamed the book market across Europe. When Saxony eventually sided with the Swedes against the emperor in 1631, Leipzig had been torn apart by sieges and plague and its cultural and economic life was completely disrupted.\textsuperscript{551} For a time German book production came to an almost complete stop, and the few books printed display a decline in quality.\textsuperscript{552}

\textsuperscript{547} Volker Leppin, “‘... das der Römische Antichrist offenbaret und das helle Liecht des Heiligen Evangelii wiederumb angezündet’. Memoria und Aggression im Reformationsjubiläum 1617’, in Konfessioneller Fundamentalismus. Religion als politischer Faktor im europäischen Mächtesystem um 1600, edited by Heinz Schilling (München: Oldenburg Verlag, 2007), pp. 115–131 (pp. 120, 129).

\textsuperscript{548} Leppin, ‘Memoria und Aggression im Reformationsjubiläum 1617’, p. 130: Though fundamentally devotional in character, Anna of Saxony’s library, did contain examples of polemics – and they were all directed at Calvinism; Hasse, Zensur theologischer Bücher in Kursachsen im konfessionellen Zeitalter, p. 269.

\textsuperscript{549} Leppin, ‘Memoria und Aggression im Reformationsjubiläum 1617’, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{550} Lehmann, ‘Saving One’s Soul in an Age of Crises’, pp. 211–213.


\textsuperscript{552} Fevbre and Martin explain how ‘The Thirty Years’ War [...] reduced German book production for a time to virtually nothing [...]. German publishers had produced 1,511 titles in the year 1610 and 1,780 in 1613. In 1626 they produced only 1,005 and a mere 307 in 1635’; The Coming of the Book, p. 232.
The final edition of Selnecker’s Psalterbuch was published Leipzig by the Dane Justus Jansonius, and it is listed in the fair catalogues for that city and Frankfurt from Easter 1623.\textsuperscript{553} A few years earlier, in 1617, Johann Arndt (1555–1621) had published his Auslegung des gantzen Psalters Davids with a preface by Johann Gerhard (1582–1637).\textsuperscript{554} Thus, two towering figures of seventeenth-century theology become contemporaries of Selnecker’s Psalterbuch.\textsuperscript{555} However, even a cursory glance at Arndt’s Auslegung reveals that, while sharing some basic traits with the Psalterbuch, it speaks with a different tone of voice.\textsuperscript{556} Similarly to the Psalterbuch the title page of Arndt’s Auslegung promises instruction and consolation (‘Lehr= vnd Trostpuncten’), but it also states that it aims to be useful for the renewal of the inner man (‘zu Erneuwrung des inwendigen Menschens’) and the practice of a Godly life (‘Vbung eines gottseligen Lebens’).\textsuperscript{557} As in the Psalterbuch each interpretation in Arndt’s text is prefaced by the biblical Psalm, but Arndt’s interpretations are structured thematically and end with a section headlined ‘Usus’. The focus on practice and interiority


\textsuperscript{555} Incidentally, the copy of Selnecker’s Psalterbuch, I consulted in Braunschweig is bound together with a series of sermons on the suffering and death of Christ by Johann Gerhard (1582–1637). This physical coupling of Selnecker and Gerhard is worth further research; Johann Gerhard, Erklerung der Historien des Leidens vnd Sterbens vnser HErrn Christi JEsu/ nach den vier Evangelisten [...] (Jena: Tobias Steinman,1622). The edition from 1611 is listed in VD17: 3:301459R.

\textsuperscript{556} Johannes Wallmann has described how the ‘piety of Pietism’ came from Arendt; Wallmann, ‘Johann Arndt (1555-1621)’, pp. 35–36.

also emerges in the dedication, where Arndt explains that he has tried to describe the spiritual exercises of the Psalms with as much diligence and reflection as possible, but must concede that no human language can adequately describe how David expresses the inward riches of God’s kingdom and the believing soul.558

Arendt’s Auslegung is part of a larger shift in the tone of devotional language towards practice and interiority. This is not the only area where Selnecker’s Psalterbuch begins to seem out of touch with contemporary trends; for example a Psalm interpretation from the 1623 fair catalogue illustrates typographical developments in the years since the Psalterbuch was last issued. Der gantze Psalter Davids by Heinrich Eckhart (1580–1624), who served as Generalsuperintendent in Altenburg, was printed in two massive folio volumes in Leipzig and published by Henning Grosses Erben, who also issued the new Psalterbuch (though it was produced by a different printer).559 Eckhart’s Psalter also includes a copper engraving on the title page that depicts an architectural structure much like that that adorns Selnecker’s Psalterbuch, and each Psalm is represented by the text from the Bible followed by an interpretation. Poems, versifications, and hymn excerpts are also interspersed throughout the text.560

The visual semantics of Eckhart’s printed page, however, are more complex than those of Selnecker’s Psalterbuch (see figure 13).561 Like we saw in Mencel’s Psalter of 1593, the


561 While developments in the organisation of the printed page was by no means linear, in general, seventeenth-century editions have more text on each page without sacrificing readability; Blair, Too Much to Know, pp. 152–160 (153).
principal structure, on the level of text and layout, is thematic. But in Eckhart’s work every page is divided with blank lines into three sections: running heads, margin, and body text. Eckhart uses the space for marginal notes extensively. At the top of each treatment, the margin is used to number the verses of the Psalm text, and in the following interpretation marginal notes state the themes (in Latin or German) that are discussed or signpost the type of content.\textsuperscript{562} When Eckhart treats a theme in consecutively numbered lists, the margins are used to duplicate the numbers explicated narratively.\textsuperscript{563} Together, the interpretations of the


\textsuperscript{563} Eckhart, \textit{Der gantze Psalter Davids/ des Mannes nach dem Hertzen Gottes}, I, p. 4.
Psalms by Selnecker, Mencel, and Eckhart outline a development with increasing use of typographic devices to subdivide the text into smaller thematic sections and clearly signpost what type of material their reader is looking at.

**The 1623 Edition**

Compared to the previous editions of the *Psalterbuch*, Jansonius’ is shorter and less singular. The Leipzig publisher continues the trend of trimming the volume, perhaps spurred by the looming economic crisis or a lack of wealthy new patrons. He has shaved off 159 folios compared to the 1593 edition, and he makes the most of the volume’s 533 numbered leaves, cramming up to fifty-six lines onto each page—six lines more than we see in 1593 and sixteen more than in 1563. The first interpretation of Psalm 1, for example, takes up only eleven and a half pages, where it was given fifteen in 1593 and no less than twenty in 1563. To counterbalance the amount of text on each page the book is printed in a double-column layout, and the short line length increases readability.  

Compared to, for example, Eckhart’s *Der gantze Psalter*, the page layout in Jansonious’ edition is dense but simple. Each Psalm is treated under two headlines that are centred on the page, giving the biblical text and Selnecker’s interpretation of it. The Psalm itself is printed in a larger font than the ensuing interpretation, and the same typeface is used when the biblical text is cited inside the interpretation. On occasion, the hymns, prayers, poems, and songs that appear throughout Selnecker’s interpretations are prefaced by headlines, but they are always inside the columns (see figure 14). These texts are printed in the same font as the homiletic commentary but are often centred in the column to provide some visual distinction from the rest of the text. Aside from this new layout and its dedicatory material, the 1623 edition appears to be a close reprint of that from 1593 including also the funeral sermon at the end of the volume.

---

564 Frymire explains how printers who wanted a close spacing between characters would often employ a double column layout. The short line length would ensure high readability which was important in postils meant to easily be read aloud; Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils*, p. 205.
Title Page

The illustrated title page is signed by Christof Vogel and dated 1610 (see figure 15). This Renaissance-style epitaph layout was not made for the Psalterbuch. Indeed, it is a curious
choice. The engraving had already been used, and with greater thematic coherence, for editions of a postil by Matthias Hoë von Hoënegg (1580–1645) that Abraham Lamberg published in Leipzig in 1608 and 1614. Whereas the title pages of the earlier editions of the *Psalterbuch* all portrayed David playing or praying the Psalms, here we see Christ and Moses on either side of the title, the four evangelists in the corners, and Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac at bottom centre. David is nowhere to be found, and under the title an unrolled scroll is left empty.

The *Psalterbuch*’s title appears on the slab of stone that takes up most of the illustration’s centre. It largely echoes the title from 1593, but this time the ties between Leipzig and the Selnecker family are highlighted with mentions of Nikolaus’ role as superintendent in the city and his son Nicolai’s office as preacher in its Thomaskirche. Visually the central word is Psalter; Jansonius has moved ‘Der Gantze’ to a small panel at the top of the page, allowing Psalter to occupy around a quarter of the space reserved for the title. The typographical presentation of the book as a Psalter is further underscored in the dedication, where Nicolai refers to his father’s book as ‘der grosse Psalter Selnecceri’.

Dedications

The volume opens with a dedication by Selnecker’s son Nicolai. After his unexpected death, Nicolai’s widow Maria Treube and their children added and signed its final paragraphs. Moving chronologically backwards, their dedication is followed by Selnecker’s dedication

---


568 Selnecker, *Der Gantze Psalter Davids* (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.

569 Or Nikolaus like his father, but to make it easier to distinguish between the two, I use Nicolai.
to Anna and August from 1581, and finally the first dedication to the electoral couple from 1563 is reprinted along with the poems from the same year and the register from 1571.

In his part of the dedication Nicolai Selnecker establishes a narrative about the Psalms that connects David, Luther, and his father: David’s faith is the ideal, Luther made it available to all Christians, and Nicolai’s father lived it. In keeping with this emphasis on Luther an
undercurrent of anti-papalism runs through the text. Where Selnecker emphasized the confessional differences between Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists, Nicolai adds to this a focus on Luther’s break with Rome. He retains the criticism of Calvinists and Zwinglians, but compared to the earlier dedications Nicolai’s critique of Catholicism stands out.570

Nicolai explains from the beginning of his dedication that the Book of Psalms presents Christian life as a school of instruction, faith, and prayer:

Wenn wir die Summan vnd den Inhalt des gantzen Psalterii des Königlichen Propheten Davids in der Furht des HErn recht anschauen vnd erweyen/ so befindet sichs/ daß demselben nach/ eines jeden Christen Leben anders nichts sey/ als eine tägliche Schule/ da lernet man/ da gleubet man/ da betet man.571

David was a great student in this school of life because he lived in fear of God, unconcerned about speculative matters above human reason:


Such a life, however, is not easy. It is full of persecution and affliction, with ‘cross’ again appearing as the key word that summarises all hardship a Christian must endure. But with

---

570 For instance about how the Calvinists misunderstand the Lord’s Supper: ‘Denn wenn wir ausser dem Wort von diesem vnd jenem Artickel vns vntersagen nach vnserm Verstande davon zu vrtheilen/ werden wir nicht allein auff mancherley opiniones vnd meynungen fa...  

571 Selnecker, *Der Gantze Psalter Davids* (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.  

572 Selnecker, *Der Gantze Psalter Davids* (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [a ij].
his Psalms David provides a model for his reader, showing that his heart was always directed towards God:

das geben vns nur fein die Psalmen des geistreichen Mannes des königlichen Propheten Davids/ da wir jhm gleich in sein Hertz sehen/ wie sich das gegen Gott erzeigen hat in noth und gefahr/ darun vns denn vielmehr gelegen/ als an den Legenden oder Exempeln/ so allein von den heiligen Wercken vnd Wundern rühmen. Denn gleich wie ich viel lieber/ wolte einen Heiligen hören rede[n]/ denn seine Werck sehen/ Also wolte ich noch viel lieber/ saget Lutherus/ sein Hertz vnnd Schatz in seiner Seelen sehen.\textsuperscript{573}

Nicolai lifts this description of the Psalms from Luther’s introduction to the Psalms from 1528.\textsuperscript{574} Unlike contemporary books of religious exemplars, David is presented as a model for the Christian not because of his actions, but because of his faith in God as portrayed in the Psalms. By evoking Luther’s fundamental distinction between faith and works, Nicolai thus adds a new layer to Selnecker’s central argument from the 1563 dedication. Just as there is a difference between evil books that are full of speculation, sophistry, and polemics, and good books that present the simplicity of Lutheran devotion, there is a difference between a life spent in speculation and one spent in fear of God as embodied by David.

Towards the end of the dedication Nicolai turns to his father. According to Nicolai, Nikolaus Selnecker was an ardent student in David’s spiritual school, and as he journeyed through life he always had the Psalms with him as his travel companion:

Hierbey ist schließlichen zu erinnern/ daß auch mein Seliger Vater/ ein sonderlicher Liebhaber dieser Geistlichen Schulen gewesen/ der seines Lebens Lauff darinnen zubracht/ und dahero des Königlichen Propheten Davids Psalterlein/ sein stetes \textit{Vade mecum} hat seyn lassen/ welches ich je lieber worden/ dann ihme derselbe wider allerhand Geistliche und leibliche Anstösse nicht wenig genützet/ ihme tröstlich gedienet/ vnnd wenn er dem Tode genahet/ ihn gleich wieder erquicket hat.\textsuperscript{575}

Here Nicolai lets his father embody the Davidic ideal described in the dedication. That Selnecker’s life was full of spiritual and bodily hardship only strengthens the narrative, and it adds authenticity to the \textit{Psalterbuch}. Indeed, as his father wrote in his dedication from

\textsuperscript{573} Selnecker, \textit{Der Gantze Psalter Davids} (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’ [a ij’].

\textsuperscript{574} WA Bibel 10/I, p. 100.

\textsuperscript{575} Selnecker, \textit{Der Gantze Psalter Davids} (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.
1563, the Psalms require an interpreter broken by the experience of living under the cross. Selnecker was not ready to adopt that description of himself in 1563, but now Nicolai ascribes it to him after his death: Selnecker became worthy of the *Psalterbuch* by living a life true to its teachings.

Throughout his dedication Nicolai reproaches the papacy. Whereas David and his father had accepted the burdens given to them by God, as should all Christians, papists often wrongly seek to impose cross on themselves:

> Ferner vnd zum andern/ erlernen wir auch aus dem Psalterio, den Zustand der Christlichen Kirchen/ daß sie/ so Christo angehören/ nach gesuchtem vnd selbst erwehleten Creutz/ (wie im Bapstumb zu geschehen pflegt) selber nicht streben dürffen.

Later Nicolai recounts Luther’s effort to translate the Psalms into German. He contrasts the Reformer’s work to the practices of Catholic monasteries, where the daily singing and praying of the Psalms took place in Latin and without understanding:

> Jm Bapsthumb haben Münch/ vnd Nonnen/ vnd Pfaffen/ den Psalter täglichen in der Kirchen Lateinisch gelesen vnd gesungen/ aber ohne allen Verstand/ gleich als wenn eine Ganß daher geschnattett hette/ jtzo aber/ hat ein jeglicher den Psalter in seiner Muttersprach verdeutschet vnd verdolmetschet/ daß vns derselbe so läufflig/ vnd so einen lieblichen Geruch in vnser Hertz von sich giebet/ vnd solch Fewer des Geistes in den Gläubigen anzündet: Das haben wir zum grossen theil dem thewren Manne Gottes Luther/o seliger gedächtniß/ zu dancken/

The Psalms are now available in the mother tongue, as if the Holy Spirit wanted to speak German. Finally, in a striking passage that reveals his subtle shift in focus towards Rome, Nicolai retells his father’s main reason for publishing his *Psalterbuch*: Calvinists threatened to destabilise the country. At the end of the same paragraph, however, he writes:

---

576 'Ob nun wol vnser Seliger lieber Vater/ sein Vnvwürdigkeit hierinnen erkennet/ daß er sich eben an ein solch groß trefflich vnd Geistreich Buch gemacht/ welches einen erfahrenen versuchet/ vnd durch viel vnd mancherley Creutz gezogenen vnd recht gebrochenen Doctor vnd Außleger erforderd/ hat er sich doch endlichen erinnert/ daß jhm solches keines weges werde können verweillichen seyn'; Selnecker, *Der Gantze Psalter Davids* (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.


---
While Selnecker’s original concern was with the ‘die Sacramentirer/ Calvinisten/ vnd andere Rottengeister’, as Nicolai writes, the latter opens a new battlefield with his attacks on the Roman Church. Considering the historical moment of this publication, immediately after the anniversary of Luther’s Ninety-five Theses and in the early years of the Thirty Years’ War, it makes sense that Nicolai frames Rome as a primary threat. His adaption of the trope of evil times to fit the current context emphasizes and sheds new light on particular themes already present in the original Psalterbuch.

The dedication could have ended there. Nicolai has explained the purpose of the book and his father’s reasons for writing it. But after his own text ends, and separated by an empty line, Nicolai’s widow Maria Treube picks up the pen on behalf of herself and her children. The abrupt shift in voice seems deliberate: by taking over the text, Maria can build upon Nicolai’s words and use them to support her own agenda.

Biß hieher hat der Selige Herr Nicolaus Selnecker/ mein Hertzliebster Schatz/ diese Vorrede verfertigt/ vnd nicht gar geendet/ weil er von dem getreuen Allächtigen Gott mit grosser Leibesschwachheit angegriffen worden/ darüber er auch seinen Geist aufgegeben.

Maria explains that the family wants to honour a final wish of Nicolai by dedicating the work to the city magistrates. She then describes how Nicolai would often praise Leipzig for the generosity the city had show his father and express how grateful he was for the position of deacon at the Thomaskirche.

579 Selnecker, Der Gantze Psalter Davids (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.
580 Selnecker, Der Gantze Psalter Davids (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.
581 Selnecker, Der Gantze Psalter Davids (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.
582 ‘Jnmassen [Nicolai] denn bey seinem Leben zum öftren gerühmet/ die sonderbare trewe Freundschaft vnd hohe vielfältige Wolthaten/ welche ein Ehrnvester vnd hochweiser Rath zu Leipzig/ seinem auch in Gott ruhenden Vater/ Herrn D. Nicolao Selneccero, wolverdienten vnd weitberühmten Tehologo, erzeigt vnd beweisen. So hat er sich nichts weniger für seine Person/ der beschehenen beförderung danckbarlich
Nicolaus and Nicolai had both served Leipzig and were always treated well in the city, Maria states, and she ends her part of the dedication by stressing that the council has never forgotten the achievements of two theologians. Now, she hopes, that goodwill will continue to be extended towards herself and her children:


Following Nicolai’s anti-Catholic reframing of the Psalterbuch and his commemoration of Nikolaus, Maria Treube transforms the dedication into a material testimony to the deep relationship between Leipzig and the Selnecker family. It allows Nicolai to make a case for printing his father’s book again, and his family then builds on his arguments to plead for support from the Leipzig city council to whom the edition is dedicated.

**Conclusion**

The final edition of the Psalterbuch is shorter, denser, and less singular than the preceding ones. It was printed in the aftermath of the anniversary of Luther’s posting of the Ninety-five Theses and in the first years of the Thirty Years’ War, at a time when the Catholic Church was often presented as a common opponent among Protestants and the timbre of devotional language was shifting. The edition’s paratexts are layered and include material from the editions of 1563, 1571, 1581, and 1593. Selnecker’s relatives are conspicuously present on the pages of the dedication. First, Selnecker’s son Nicolai emphasizes the pious character of his father’s life and the Lutheran foundation of the Psalterbuch. Hereby, he activates and

---

583 Selnecker, Der Gantze Psalter Davids (1623), unpaginated ‘Vorrede’.
augments specific thematic threads in his father’s text to make it more appealing to the concerns of the new century. Because of Nicolai’s death, the dedication is finished by his widow Maria Treube. She transforms the Psalterbuch into a material testimony to the long-standing relationship between Leipzig and the Selnecker family.
9. Conclusion

The previous chapters have tracked the transformations of the Psalterbuch across a period of sixty years. The study of each edition reveals the fundamental instability of the Psalterbuch, which from 1563 to 1623 was continually revised, redesigned, and reframed, and it shows that these changes took place in response to shifting historical contexts and in dialogue with other more or less similar publications. As physical and literary forms morphed with each iteration, the different editions of the work invited readers to engage with the Psalterbuch in new ways, some more individual and others more communal. In the first edition Selnecker claims that there is nothing new in his Psalterbuch: his argument, in its most basic form, was the troubles of his day had an essentially a-historical and eternally effective remedy. The present historical analysis challenges the author’s staging of his work by setting its ongoing transformation in dialogue with the changing world outside the text.

In the chapters of the thesis I showed how:

1. Selnecker stages the first edition of the Psalterbuch as emerging from his life at the electoral court and as an aid to a public threatened by evil, polemical, and ungodly books. Typographically, the edition emphasizes the homilies, and the paradigmatic rhetorical modality is communal, pastoral, and didactic.

2. In the editions of the Psalterbuch from 1565 and 1569 Selnecker incorporates his work on the proper Christian response to the plague and revises a controversial passage on the ungodliness of the nobility. Together, these revisions soften and justify Selnecker’s critique of the nobility and augment the practical devotional register of the Psalterbuch.

3. Printed at a time when Selnecker was facing critique from multiple confessional parties, the 1571 edition presents the Psalterbuch as a devotional argument for unity and an instrument of devotional practice. The edition adds and visually emphasizes prayers and citations from Scripture.
4. In 1581 Selnecker mobilized the *Psalterbuch* as a testament to his non-polemical preaching and his early identification of Calvinism as a threat to the societal stability of Electoral Saxony. Published as a single large volume in which the various texts bleed into each other, this *Psalterbuch* assumes a stronger representational character, standing as an important work by an influential theologian.

5. The edition from 1584 to 1585 is small but luxurious. Printed in six quarto volumes, each interpretation consists of the Psalm text, an abbreviated version of Selnecker’s interpretation, and a concluding prayer. It presents Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch* as the devotional literature of choice at the electoral court.

6. The edition from 1593 was published after Selnecker’s death. Now the *Psalterbuch* is out of Selnecker’s hands, and it materializes as a testimony to his life and a negotiation of his legacy. Selnecker’s son critically embraces humanist tradition and uses his father’s suffering as the model for a Davidic life. In a funeral sermon for Selnecker, Georg Mylius focuses not on Selnecker’s personal life but on his contribution to the establishment of Lutheran unity and creates the sense of the *Psalterbuch* as a testimony to a greater past.

7. The final edition from 1623 compresses the *Psalterbuch* and makes more material fit on each page. It was printed in the aftermath of the anniversary of Luther’s posting of the Ninety-five Theses and in the first years of the Thirty Years’ War. Selnecker’s relatives underscore the Lutheran foundation of the *Psalterbuch* and present it as a material testimony to the long-standing relationship between Leipzig and the Selnecker family.

The *Psalterbuch* began as three consecutively published volumes, and as new editions were prepared, it absorbed new content while expanding and shrinking in physical size. It was variously contained in a single, large volume and scaled down to a six-volume edition in a smaller format. Each edition has different emphases, created not just by additions and subtractions to the content but also by shifts in typography and layout; the presentation of words on the page operates on a spectrum between the communal and the individual, the private and the public. Where early editions (1563–1569) highlight the sermons and address the reader primarily as a member of a congregational community, later editions (1571 and 1584) amplify prayers, hymns, and the biblical text, inviting readers to use the *Psalterbuch*.
as an instrument of devotion. The pages of the final editions (1581, 1593, and 1623) become increasingly crammed and present the *Psalterbuch* as a testimony to its eminent author and to a better past.

The *Psalterbuch* was continually in dialogue with other works of devotional literature. The second edition incorporated Selnecker’s *Christlicher bericht* (1566), and the edition from 1571 absorbed his *Tröstliche sprüche* (1566). Included in the *Psalterbuch*, these publications take on new meaning and, conversely, affect the character of the *Psalterbuch*. Towards the end of his career, Selnecker repurposed material from the *Psalterbuch* in other publications: The *Christliche Psalmen* (1587) contains many of its hymns, while the *Ehe Spiegel* (1590) featured a selection of passages outlining the ethics of the Lutheran household. These focused publications shed light on the composite character of the *Psalterbuch*; it is part homily collection, part prayerbook, and part hymnbook. Finally, publications such as Selnecker’s *Paedagogia Christiana* (1565), *Psälterlein* (1571), his edition of Luther’s *Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen* (1577), and his *Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten* (1590) shed light on specific thematic threads in the *Psalterbuch* and show how Selnecker mobilized the Psalms in other avenues.

The Book of Psalms has been considered particularly close to the heart of the Christian throughout the history of its Christian interpretation. Altogether, this study demonstrates how the versions of the *Psalterbuch* handle this potential for privacy in diverse ways, mobilizing it in different genres to address shifting agendas. Rather than a dichotomy between the public and the private, the *Psalterbuch* allows us to approach early modern privacy as a question of emphasis and gradual levels. All editions address a public; all editions stage voices and ideals of private devotion, but they emphasize these positions to a different extent and with different effect.
Editions of Nikolaus Selnecker’s *Psalterbuch*

**1563–1564**


Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Das Dritt Büch vnd letzte Theil des Psalter Dauids/ Außgelegt durch Nicolaum Selneccerum, Churfürstlichen Sächsischen Hofpredicanten* (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1564/1565), VD16 S 5639

**1565–1566**


Selnecker, Nikolaus, _Das Dritt Buch vnd letzte Theil des Psalter Davids/ Außgelegt durch M. Nicolaum Selneccerum, Noribergensem_ (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1566), VD16 S 5642

1569


Selnecker, Nikolaus, _Das Dritt Buch vnd letzte Theil des Psalter Davids/ außgelegt durch M. Nicolaum Selneccerum/ Noribergensem_ (Nürnberg: Christoff Heußler, 1569), VD16 S 5643

1571

Selnecker, Nikolaus, _Der gantze Psalter Davids ausgelegt/ vnd in dieser elenden zeit frommen Christen zu Trost vnd Vnterricht geprediget/ vnd in Druck gegeben. Jetzt aber auffs newe zum letzten mal vbersehen/ gebessert/ vnd gemehret/ vnd mit sonderlichen schönen Gebetlein auß ein jeden Psalm fleissig zugerichtet/ Durch Nicolaum Selneccerum D_. (Leipzig: Jacob Bärwald, 1571), VD16 S 5644

Selnecker, Nikolaus, _Der Ander Teil des Psalters/ vom fünffzigsten Psalm an/ bis zu dem hundert vnd ersten: Ausgelegt durch Nicolaum Selneccerum D_. (Leipzig: Jacob Bärwald, 1571), VD16 S 5644

1581


1584–1585

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Der sechste theil des Psalters Davids, aussgelegt, vnd auffs newe vbersehen, durch Nicolaum Selnecerum* (Dresden: Andreas Morgenrodt, 1585), British Library, C.108.d.29

1593–1594


1623

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Der Gantze Psalter Davids/ Zu Trost vnd Vnterricht frommen Christen außgeleget Durch NICOLAUM SELNECCERUM, Der H. Schrift Doctorn, vnd gewesenen Superintendenten zu Leipzig/ Vom Autore, noch für seinem Seligen Ende selbst vnersehen/ gebessert vnd gemehret/ vnd mit sonderlichen schönen Gebetlein auff ein jeden Psalm fleissig zugerichtet/ Jizo aber auffs newe
mit einer Vorrede Herrn Nicolai Selnecceri, gewesenen Vesperpredigers zu S. Thomas in Leipzig/ neben der Leichpredigt des Autoris zum fünfften mal in Druck verfertiget (Leipzig: Justus Jansonius, 1623), Stadtbibliothek Braunschweig, C 218 Z. S4
Manuscripts

Dresden, DrSLUB, Bibl.Arch.I.Ba, Vol.20
Washington, Museum of the Bible, Washington, DC, MS 000339
Works Published Before 1800


Becker, Cornelius, *Der Psalter Davids Gesangweis/ Auff die in Lutherischen Kirchen gewöhnliche Melodeyen zugerichtet* (Leipzig: Apel, 1602) <VD17 1:658789E>


*Biblia/ Det er den gantske Hellige Scritfi/ vdsæt paa Danske* (København: Ludowich Dietz, 1550)

Blarer, Ambrosius, *Psalmen und Geystliche Gesang* (Zürich: Froschauer, 1570) <VD16 P 519>

Blarer, Ambrosius, *Psalmen und Geystliche Gesang* (Zürich: Froschauer, 1570) <VD16 P 5194>

Bugenhagen, Johannes, *PSalter wol verteutscht auß der heyligen sprach* (Basel: Adam Petri, 1526) <VD16 B 3292>

*Catalogus universalis, hoc est designatio omnium librorum, qui hisce nunndinis vernalibus Francofurtensibus & Lipsiensibus anno 1623. vel novi vel emendatiores & auctiores prodierunt* (Leipzig: Abraham Lamberg, 1623; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag <www.olms-online.de>)

*Catalogus universalis, hoc est designatio omnium librorum, qui hisce nunndinis vernalibus Francofurtensibus & Lipsiensibus anno 1621. vel novi vel emendatiores & auctiores prodierunt* (Leipzig: Abraham Lamberg, 1621; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag <www.olms-online.de>)

*Catalogus universalis, hoc est designatio omnium librorum, qui hisce nunndinis autunmalibus Francofurtensibus & Lipsiensibus anno 1621. vel novi vel emendatiores & auctiores prodierunt* (Leipzig: Abraham Lamberg, 1621; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag <www.olms-online.de>)

Clausen, Johann, *Der gantz Psalter/ Durch Johan Clausen/ obersten Brandenburgischen Secretarium etc. gar verstandlich auch geschicklich in Deutsche Vers oder Reimen gebracht* (Leipzig: Wolrab, 1542) <VD16 B 3309>

Cureus, Joachim, *Exegesis perspicua & ferme integra controversiae de Sacra Coena* ([Leipzig]: [Ernst Vögelin], 1574) <VD16 C 6382>
Daniel Hofmann, *Propositiones de Deo, et Christi tum persona tum officio* (Helmstedt: Lucius, 1598) <VD16 H 4184>

Dietrich, Veit, *Der XCI.Psalm. Wie ein Christ in sterbßleufften sich trösten soll. Zu Nuernberg gepredigt/ durch Vitum Dietrich* (Nürnberg: Johann vom Berg, 1544) <VD16 D 1563>


Fischer, John, *DEfensio Regie assertionis contra Babylonicam captiuitatem, per Reuerendum patrem et D.D. Johannem Roffensem Episopum* (Köln: Quentel, 1525) <VD16 F 1227>

Friedrich [III, Elector Palatine], *Catechismus Oder Christlicher Vnderricht/ wie der inKirchen vnd Schulen der Churfürstlichen Pfaltz getrieben wirdt* (Heidelberg: Johann Mayer, 1563) <VD16 P 2166>


Henninges, Georg, *Der Psalter des heiligen Königes vnd Propheten Dauids: Jn kurze einfeltige Deudsche Reimen verfasset* (Magdeburg: Wilhelm Roß, 1574) <VD16 B 3335>

Henninges, Georg, *Der Psalter des heiligen Königes vnd Propheten Dauids: Jn kurze einfeltige Deudsche Reimen verfasset* (Magdeburg: Wilhelm Roß, 1574) <VD16 B 3335>


Kircher, Timotheus, Martin Chemnitz, and Nikolaus Selnecker, *Apologia, Oder Verantwortung deß Christlichen ConcordienBuchs/ Jn welcher die wahre Christliche Lehre/ so im ConcordiBuch verfasset (Heidelberg: Spies, 1583) <VD16 K 1028>

Lauterback, Georg, *Regentenbuch Aus vielen trefflichen alten vnd newen Historien/ mit sonderm fleis zusammen gezogen […] (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1557) <VD16 L 777>

Lobwasser, Ambrosius, *Der Psalter dess Königlichen Propheten Dauids/ In deutsche reymen verstendiglich vnd deutlich gebracht […] (Leipzig: Steinmann, 1573) <VD16 L 2187>

Luther, Martin *Der Psalter mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luth. (Leipzig: Berwald Erben, 1576) <VD16 ZV 28278>

Luther, Martin *Der Psalter mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luth. (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1581) <VD16 ZV 1609>


Luther, Martin, *Das diese wort Christi (Das ist mein leib. etce) noch fest stehen widder die Schwermgeister […] (Wittenberg: Michael Lotter, 1527) <VD16 L 4274>

Luther, Martin, *DAs dritt teyyl des alten Testaments […] (Basel: Adam Petri, 1525) <VD16 B 2914>

Luther, Martin, *Der Achte Teil der Bücher des Ehrwirdigen Herrn D. Martini Lutheri: darinnen die verdeutschte Auslegunge begriffen vber die Psalms graduum/ vnd den 110 Psalm/ Das fünfte buch Mose/ vnd diese Propheten/ Hosea/ Joel/ Amos/ Obadia/ Micha/ Nahum/ Zephania/ Haggai/ Malachias/ Nach anzeigung des Registers/ so nach der Vorrede verzeichnet (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1556) <VD16 L 3328>

Luther, Martin, *Der Dritte Teil der Bücher des Ehrwirdigen herrn doctoris Martini Lutheri/ darin zusammen gebracht sind christliche vnd tröstliche Erklerung vnd auslegung der furnemesten Psalmen […] (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1550) <VD16 L 3312>

Luther, Martin, *Der Psalter Deudsch Mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luther. (Wittenberg: Schwenck, Lorenz, 1574) <VD16 B 3336>
Luther, Martin, *Der Psalter deutsch. Martinus Luther. Wittenberg* (Wittenberg: Cranach and Döring, 1524) <VD16 B 3281>

Luther, Martin, *Der Psalter mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luther* (Leipzig: Bärwalds Erben, 1575) <VD16 ZV 1606>

Luther, Martin, *Der Psalter mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luth.* (Leipzig: Rhambaw, 1561) <VD16 ZV 1599>

Luther, Martin, *Der Psalter mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luth.* (Leipzig: Bärwalds Erben, 1576) <VD16 ZV 28278>

Luther, Martin, *Der Psalter mit den Summarien. D. Mart. Luth.* (Leipzig: Rhambaw, 1561) <VD16 ZV 18623>


Mathesius, Johannes, *Oeconomia Oder Bericht Vom Christlichen Hauswesen. [...]* (Wittenberg: Hans Krafft, 1564) <VD16 M 1421>

Melanchthon, Philipp, *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae. Quae est summa orthodoxi et catholici dogmatis; complectens doctrinam puram & veram Euangelii Iesu Christi [...]* (Leipzig: Ernst Vögelin, 1560) <VD16 M 2883>


Musäus, Simon, *Kurtze Außlegunge des ein vnd neuntzigsten Psalms/ vnd Simeons Gesangs/ Zu trost vnd unterricht/ wider die geschwinde seuche der Pestilentz* ([n.p.]:[n.pub.], 1565) <VD16 M 5040>

Mylius, Georg, *Christliche Predigt/ Bey der Leiche des Ehrwirdigen vnd Hochgelahrten Herrn: NICOLAI SELNECCERI [...]* (Jena: Donat Richtzenhan, 1592) <VD16 M 5268>


Nigrinus, Georg *Jüden Feind. Von den Edlen Früchten der Thalmudischen Jüden/ so jetziger zeit in Teutschelande wonen/ ein ernste/ wolgegründete Schrifft [...] (Oberursel: Heinrich, 1570) <VD16 S 4641>*.


Psalterium regii prophetae Davidis, ex hebraico in Latinum et Germanicum [...] (Leipzig: Rambau, 1566) <VD16 B 3272>


Rhau, Georg, *Hortulus animae. Lustgertlin der Seelen. Mit schönen lieblichen Figuren [...] (Wittenberg: Rhau, 1548) <VD16 ZV 13181>*


Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Ad D. Theodori Bezae Calvminias, Brevis Et Necessaria Nicolai Selnecceri Responsio [...]* (Wolfenbüttel: Konrad Horn, 1571) <VD16 S 5441>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Bericht Von der waren gegenwertigkeit des leibs vnd bluts vnseres Herrn Jesu Christi in seinem H. Abendmal/ gestellt [...] (Heidelberg: Johann Mayer, 1565) <VD16 S 5455>*
Selnecker, Nikolaus, Christliche Leÿchpredigten So vom Jar 1576. bis fast an das 1590. Jar zu Leipzig/ Durch D. Nicolaum Selneccerum der zeit Superintendenten vnd Professorem alda/ geschehen vnd auffgezeichnet worden sind [...] (Magdeburg: Kirchner, 1590) <VD16 ZV 20275>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, Christliche Psalmen/ Lieder/ vnd KJrchengesenge/ Jn welchen die Christliche Lehre zusam gefasset vnd erklert wird/ Trewen Predigern in Stedten vnd Dörffern/ Auch allen frommen Christen zu diesen letzten vnd schweren zeiten nütz vnd tröstlich (Leipzig: Beyer, 1587) <VD16 S 5494>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, Christlicher bericht/ Wie sich ein jeder Christ/ inn Sterbensleufften trösten vnd halten soll. Der XCI. Psalm ausgelegt [...] (Leipzig: Berwald, 1565) <VD16 S 5508>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, Colloquia Oder Christliche Nützliche Tischreden Doctoris Martini Lutheri [...] (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1577) <VD16 L 6763>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, D. Nicolai Selnecceri Pædagogiæ christianae, continens Decalogi explicationem, iam postremo recognitæ & auctæ [...] (Frankfurt: Georg Rab, 1571) <VD16 ZV 23080>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, D. Nicolai Selnecceri paraphrasis Psalterij: Sive carminum Davidicorum [...]. (Wolfenbüttel: Konrad Horn, 1573) <VD16 B 3228>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, De verbis Actor. 3. Oportet Christum coelum accipere. Brevis et necessaria commonefactio Nicolai Selnecceri D. Henricopoli (Wolfenbüttel: Konrad Horn, 1571) <VD16 S 5676>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, Der gantze Prophet Jeremias Zu diesen schweren vnnd gefehrlichen zeiten frommen Christen zum vnterricht vnd Trost Ausgelegt (Leipzig: Jakob Bärwald, 1566) <VD16 B 3788>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, Der herrliche Prophet Esaias/ in diesen schweren vnnd kümmerlichen zeiten/ zur lehre/ zum trost/ vnd zum gewissen vnd waren vntrricht in den gefehrlichen spaltungen/ so in die Kirchen von alten vnnd newen Rottengeistern eingefüret werden [...] (Leipzig: Jakob Bärwaldt, 1569) <VD16 ZV 1781>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, Der herrliche Prophet Ezechiel/ frommen Christen zum Vnterricht vnd trost/ zu diesen schweren vnnd gantz gefehrlichen zeiten Ausgelegt (Leipzig: Jakob Berwaldt, 1567) <VD16 ZV 1784>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, Der Prophet Daniel/ vnd die Offenbarung Johannis [...] (Leipzig: Jakob Bärwald, 1567) <VD16 ZV 14329>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, Der Prophet vnnd ernster Bußprediger Amos vnd Obadias/ ausgelegt [...] (Leipzig: Jakob Bärwald, 1567) <VD16 ZV 1793>
Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Der Psalter mit kurzen Summarien/ vnd Gebetlein für die Hausueter vnd ihre Kinder [...]* (Leipzig: Jakob Bärwalds Erben, 1571) <VD16 ZV 20832>


Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Ehespiegell. Christliche Lere/ vom heiligen Ehestand/ Vrsprung/ Wirdigkeit/ Creutz vnd Trost desselben [...]* (Eisleben: Andreas Petri, 1589) <VD16 S 5524>


Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Eine Christliche Leichpredigt/ Bey dem trawrigen öffentlichem Begegnis des Christlichen seligen Abgangs/ des Durchleuchtigsten/ Hochgeborenen/ Fürsten vnd Herrn/ Herr AVGVSTI [...]* (Jena: 1586) <VD16 ZV 17115>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Eine Christliche Leichpredigt/ Bey der Begrebnus des Weyland Ehrnvesten [...] Herrn Eckart Luebbern/ Buergermeistern der alten Stad Hildeßheim [...]* (Helmstedt: Lucius, 1592) <VD16 S 5482>


Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Kurtzer Bericht M. Nicolai Selneckers auff die vnwarhafftige anklage/ Das er von denen vom Adel/ nichts oder gar wenig halte/ Vnd spöttlich daun in seinen Psalmen/ vnd anderswo solle geprediget vnd geschrieben haben [...]* (Jena: 1566) <VD16 S 5591>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Nicolai Selnecceri operum latinorum [...] Secunda pars examinis theologici, de persona filii Dei* (Leipzig: Steinman, 1584) <VD16 S 5615>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Nicolai Selnecceri operum latinorum pars prima, continens formam explanationis examinis ordinandirum [...]* (Leipzig: Steinman, 1584) <VD16 S 5615>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Paedagogia Christiana, continens capita et locos doctrinae christianaë, forma et serie catechetica uere & perspicue explicata, & ad usum docentium & discentium doctrinam Filij Dei scripta a M. Nicolao Selneccero, cum in Aula Illustris. Electoris Saxonie Catechismi capita pro concione deoceret. Nunc primum in lucem edita [...]* (Franfurt am Main: Braubach, 1565) <VD16 S 5622>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Paedagogiae christianæ, pars prima. Unterweisung in den Hauptstücken der gantzen Christlichen Lehre/ nach ordnung des heiligen Catechismi [...]* (Leipzig: Bärwald, 1569) <VD16 S 5627>; *pars secunda* (1569) <VD16 ZV 22875>; *pars terita* (1569) <VD16 S 5628>


Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Physics; Propositiones et quaestiones in octo libros physicorum Aristotelis [...]* (Basel: Oporinus, 1561) <VD16 S 5634>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Sechs Sonderbare Leichpredigten vber Keyser/ Kôn. Chur vnd Fürsten/ Todt vnd begengnis [...]* (Magdeburg: Wilhelm Roß, 1590) <VD16 S 5658>

Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Sententiae consolatoriae. Ex sacra scriptura collectae, & ad conscientias tristibus cogitationibus, & alijs incommodis oppressas accommodate. [...]* (Nürnberg: Hans Daubmann, 1553) <VD16 G 3424>


Selnecker, Nikolaus, *Tröstliche sprüche/ vnd Grabschrift/ aus Heiliger Schrifft zusammen gefasset/ vnd kúrtzlich erklert/ damit wir vns zum Tod gefast machen sollen [...]* (Leipzig: Berwaldt, 1566) <VD16 S 5673>

Selnecker, Nikolaus. *Der Psalter Dauids/ Mit kurtzen Summarien vnd Gebetlein/ für die Hausveter vnd ihre Kinder/ Durch Nicolaum Selneccerum D.* (Leipzig: Lantzenberger, 1592)

Vischer, Christoph, *Christliche einfeltige Außlegung des gantzen Psalters des Königlichen Propheten Dauids [...]* (Uelzen: Michael Kröner, 1590) <VD16 B 3353>

Vischer, Christoph, *Christliche/ Einfeltige Außlegung des Güldenen kleinods/ des Psalters Dauids/ was man daraus in diesem letzten elenden betrübteten leufften für Lehr/ Trost vnd ermahnung nehmen solle [...]* (Dresden: Andreas Morgenrodt, 1585–1587) <VD16 B 3346>
Works Published After 1800


Bast, Robert James, *Honor Your Fathers: Catechisms and the Emergence of a Patriarchal Ideology in Germany 1400–1600* (Leiden: Brill 1997)


Bepler, Jill, ‘Die Rolle von Inventaren für die erforschungen von Fürsinnensbibliotheken in
Bertram, Gitta, ‘The History and the Analysis of Illustrated Title Pages, in Gateways to the Book: frontispieces and title pages in early modern Europe (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 61–91


Bireley, Robert, Ferdinand II, Counter-Reformation Emperor, 1578–1637 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Blair, Ann M., Too Much to Know. Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010)


Boge, Birgit and Rolf Georg Bogner, eds., Oratio Funebris, Die katholische Leichenpredigt der frühen Neuzeit, Zwölf Studien (Leiden: Brill, 1999)


Christ, Martin, ‘Preaching during Plague Epidemics in Early Modern Germany, c.1520–1618’, *Studies in Church History*, 58 (2022), 91–111


Clemen, Otto, ‘Ein unbekanntes Pestregiment, Dresden 1566’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin*, 20 no. 2 (1928), 175–178


Dingel, Irene ‘Die Torgauer Artikel (1574) als Vermittlungsversuch zwischen der


Horch, Andre, Buchwidmungen der Frühen Neuzeit als Quellen der Stadtw- und Druckgeschichte (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2014)


Ingen, Ferdinand van and Cornelia Niekus Moore, eds., *Gebetsliteratur der frühen Neuzeit als Hausfrömmigkeit. Funktionen und Formen in Deutschland und den Niederlanden* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2001)


Keller, A.V. and E. Goetze, eds., *Hans Sachs*, vol. 18 (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1890)


Kipfer, Sara, *Der bedrohte David. Eine exegetische und rezeptionsgeschichtliche Studie zu 1Sam 16–1Kön 2* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015)

Klein, Thomas, Der Kampf um die Zweite Reformation in Kursachsen 1586–1591 (Köln, Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1962)


Lehmann, Hartmut, ‘Saving One’s Soul in an Age of Crises’, Journal of Early Modern Christianity, 1 no. 2 (2014), 207–217

Leppin, Volker, ‘“... das der Römische Antichrist offenbaret und das helle Liecht des

Lyster, Jens, ‘Johannes Avenarius (Habermann), Johannes Mathesius und Nicolaus Selnecker als Vorbilder für den dänischen Theologen und Liederdichter Hans Christensen Sthen’, Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie, 51 (2012), 222–233


McKitterick, David, Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)


Nagler, Georg Kaspar, Die Monogrammisten und diejenigen bekannten und unbekannten Künstler aller Schulen […] (München: Französische Buch- und Kunsthandlung, 1871), IV, pp. 684–685


Pelgen, S., ‘Schwarzenberg(er), Melchior’, in Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens Online <http:dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004337862__COM_190933> [accessed 28 February 2022]


Roper, Lyndal, ‘Martin Luther’s Body: The “Stout Doctor” and His Biographers’, The American Historical Review, 115 no. 2 (2010), 351–384

Rudolf, Rainer, Ars moriendi: von der Kunst des heilsamen Lebens und Sterbens (Cologne, Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1957)


Schmidt, Eberhard, Der Gottesdienst am kurfürstlichen Hofe zu Dresden. Ein Beitrag zur liturgischen traditionsgeschichte bis zu Heinrich Schütz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961)


Smith, Helen and Louise Wilson, eds., *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Sommer, Wolfgang, *Die lutherischen Hofprediger in Dresden: Grundzüge ihrer Geschichte und Verkündigung im Kurfürstentum Sachsen* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006)


Wallmann, Johannes, ‘The Reception of Luther’s Writings on the Jews from the Reformation to the End of the 19th Century’, Lutheran Quarterly, 1 no. 1 (1987), 72–97


Wandell, Lee Palmer, Reading Catechisms, Teaching Religion (Leiden: Brill, 2016)

Watanabe-O’Kelly, Helen, Court Culture in Dresden. From Renaissance to Baroque (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)


This study analyses seven editions of the *Psalterbuch*, a vernacular interpretation of the biblical Psalms by the Lutheran theologian Nikolaus Selnecker (1530–1592). It tracks the transformation of the *Psalterbuch* across a period of sixty years, from 1563 to 1623, and it shows how the work was continually reshaped in response to shifting historical conditions and in dialogue with other works of devotional literature. The point of departure is the question of how the private character of the Book of Psalms is appropriated in early modern Lutheran biblical interpretation. Nikolaus Selnecker was a musical prodigy and a prolific writer who held numerous influential offices in the course of a turbulent career in an ever-shifting confessional landscape. In the *Psalterbuch*, he interprets the Book of Psalms in homilies, hymns, poems, and prayers, and the study shows how the editions of the *Psalterbuch* have different emphases, created not just by additions and subtractions to the content but also shifts in typography and layout.

To grasp the complexity of the *Psalterbuch*, the analysis of each edition focuses on three components: 1. the historical context surrounding the publication; 2. publications related to the *Psalterbuch* in terms of overlapping or similar content; 3. the paratexts of each edition. Together the three elements reveal the hybrid character and fundamental instability of the *Psalterbuch* as a work and open a window into the diversity of early modern Lutheran Psalm interpretation.

Selnecker stages the first edition of the *Psalterbuch* as emerging from his devotional practice at the electoral court and as an aid to a public over which looms the threat of chaos, caused specifically by evil, polemical, and ungodly books. Alongside the *Psalterbuch*, Selnecker published his interpretation of the core texts of the Catechism and together the two publications form a confessional counterweight to the Calvinist *Geneva Psalter* of 1562 and the *Heidelberg Catechism* of 1563. Typographically, the edition is spacious with ample room...
for the homilies that constitute the bulk of the edition. The first edition of the Psalterbuch is essentially a collection of homilies that also contains some prayers and hymns.

The editions of the Psalterbuch from 1565 and 1569 feature subtle modulations. Selnecker’s work on the proper Christian response to the plague has been incorporated into his interpretation of Psalm 91, and he has revised a controversial passage on the ungodliness of the nobility in his interpretation of Psalm 112. Together, the new features soften and justify Selnecker’s controversial critique of the nobility and augment the practical devotional register of the Psalterbuch.

Printed at a time when Selnecker was facing severe critique from multiple confessional parties, the 1571 edition presents the Psalterbuch as an instrument of devotional practice. The edition adds and visually emphasizes prayers and citations from Scripture. The same year, Selnecker also published his Psälterlein which offered a uniform devotional programme consisting of Scripture, summary, and prayer, and compared to this work, the hybrid character of the Psalterbuch is striking.

In 1581 Selnecker mobilized the Psalterbuch as a testament to his non-polemical preaching and his early identification of Calvinism as a threat to the societal stability of Electoral Saxony. Published as a single large volume in which the various texts bleed into each other, this Psalterbuch assumes a stronger representational character, standing as an important work by an influential theologian. In 1577, Selnecker reprinted Luther’s late anti-Jewish writings, and they shed light on how Selnecker activates Psalm 59 to attack the Jews in the Psalterbuch.

The edition from 1584 to 1585 of the Psalterbuch is printed in six quarto volumes. It is a small but luxurious publication. Each interpretation consists of the Psalm text, an abbreviated version of Selnecker’s interpretation, and the concluding prayer. Most likely, the copies of this edition were meant to serve as gifts, and it presents Selnecker’s Psalterbuch as the devotional literature of choice at the electoral court.
The edition from 1593 was published after Selnecker’s death. Now the *Psalterbuch* is out of Selnecker’s hands, and it materializes as a testimony to his life and a negotiation of his legacy. Selnecker’s son critically embraces humanist tradition and uses his father’s suffering as an example of a type of knowledge that can only be experienced. He casts the *Psalterbuch* as the fruit of Selnecker’s Davidic life. In a funeral sermon for Selnecker, Georg Mylius focuses not on Selnecker’s personal life but on his contribution to the establishment of Lutheran unity and creates the sense of the *Psalterbuch* as a testimony to a greater past.

The final edition of the *Psalterbuch* from 1623 is less singular than the preceding ones. It was printed in the aftermath of the anniversary of Luther’s posting of the Ninety-five Theses and in the first years of the Thirty Years’ War, at a time when the Catholic Church was often presented as a common opponent among Protestants and the timbre of devotional language was shifting. In their dedication, Selnecker’s relatives underscore the Lutheran foundation of the *Psalterbuch* and present it as a material testimony to the long-standing relationship between Leipzig and the Selnecker family.

The study concludes that each edition of the *Psalterbuch* has different devotional emphases on a spectrum between the individual and the communal. These are created not just by additions and subtractions to the content but also by shifts in typography and layout. With its focus on the material textuality of the *Psalterbuch*, the study contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about Lutheran devotional literature, the diversity of sixteenth-century biblical interpretation, and possible approaches to the study of early modern privacy.
Danish Summary


retoriske form er pastoral og pædagogisk. Udgaven fremstår som en prædikensamling, der også indeholder en række bønner, salmer og digte.

Udgaverne af Selneckers *Psalterbuch* fra 1565 og 1569 indeholder subtile nuanceringer. Hans vejledning til den rette kristne respons på pesten er blevet inkorporeret i fortolkningen af Salme 91, og han har revideret en kontroversiel passage om adelens ugdelighed i sin fortolkning af Salme 112. Tilsammen både modererer og retfærdiggør disse nye træk Selneckers kritik af adelen, samtidig med at fromhedenspraksissen får større spillerum i værket.


I udgaven fra 1581 præsenterer Selnecker sin *Psalterbuch* som et vidne om hans ikke-polemiske forkyndelse og om hans tidlige identifikation af calvinismens trussel mod samfundets stabilitet i kurfyrstendømmet Sachsen. Udgaven blev trykt i et enkelt, stort bind, hvor de forskellige tekster er mindre skarpt opdelt end i den foregående udgave. Dermed får denne *Psalterbuch* en mere repræsentativ karakter og kommer til at fremstå som et stort og betydningsfuldt værk af en indflydelsesrig teolog. I 1577 genoptrykker Selnecker Luthers antijødiske skrifter, og de kaster lys over, hvordan Selnecker bruger Salme 59 til at angribe jøderne i *Psalterbuch*.

