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USING SPEECH ACT THEORY AS A TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE AUTHORSHIP OF BALTHASAR MÜNTER

Abstract

This paper sheds light on the German (Danish at that time) theologian Balthasar Münter's authorship and focuses on how his writings adapted to his intellectual, social and cultural surroundings. Münter served as a preacher in the German congregation in Copenhagen between 1765 and 1793 and left many writings to posterity, including 17 volumes of sermons. These texts are written in a public and political environment, offering shifting conditions for the church.

The reflection concentrates on how he changed his preaching and teaching under the different conditions the church was offered in this period. A central question is what Münter *is doing* when preaching, writing and teaching, i.e., how he wanted this to be understood by the 18th-century reader? This approach to 18th-century intellectual history draws on the speech act theory, such as this theoretical foundation developed by the British intellectual historian Quentin Skinner.

Keywords: Speech act theory, Quentin Skinner, text, context, Denmark, Norway, sermons, church life, Balthasar Münter.

This article thematises the works of the German theologian Balthasar Münter (1735–1793), who served as a pastor in the German St. Petri Congregation in Copenhagen from 1765 until his death in 1793. In our own time, Münter is most known for having been the spiritual advisor to Johann Friedrich Struensee (1737–1772), after Struensee was sentenced to death for his illegitimate leadership over Denmark–Norway from September 1770 to January 1772. In the weeks before the execution, Münter attempted to convince Struensee of the truth of the Christian gospel. According to Münter's reports, the doomed man confessed his Christian faith before being beheaded. The process is described in Münter's most famous work, *Bekehrungsgeschichte des vormahligen Graf Johann Friedrich Struensee*, which was printed in several subsequent editions and

was translated into several foreign languages. Through this publication, Münster achieved international fame.¹ Yet even if Münster himself claims to have documented Struensee's conversion, modern scholarship has questioned the legitimacy of his allegations.²

The main aim of this article is to examine how the so-called speech-act theory, as formulated by British scholar Quentin Skinner, can be used to understand Balthasar Münster's authorship. *Bekehrungsgeschichte* is only one among many theological writings left by Balthasar Münster to posterity. Münster, who already in his student days in Jena had distinguished himself as one of the most talented students of the famous theologian Joachim Darjes, published a prodigious number of theological texts during his career, among which are 22 volumes of sermons and sermon sketches. With this considerable number of printed texts, Münster can be compared to his colleague and fellow citizen Johann Andreas Cramer, who, with 27 volumes of sermons and sermon sketches in addition to individual sermon pamphlets and other publications, is known as the pastor who published the most sermons during the eighteenth century. Like Cramer, Münster also published texts other than sermons during his pastorate in the Danish capital, including two volumes of *Sacred Songs (Geistliche Lieder)*, a two-volume review of Christian doctrine, and an introduction to Christianity for the pupils in Copenhagen's German schools.³

Münster made his sermon outlines and sermons available to the public during all his time as a pastor in Copenhagen.⁴ From 1778 to 1793, Münster's sermons were published according to how they were delivered in the Sunday service. A seven-volume series of sermons on the Gospels came out from 1778 to 1784, while his sermons from 1785 to 1793 were published in the series *Oeffentliche Vorträge*.⁵ Therefore, his large

¹ The title of the first edition, published in Copenhagen in 1772, is „Bekehrungsgeschichte des vormahligen Graf Johann Friedrich Struensee, nebst desselben eigenhändiger Nachricht von der Art, wie er zur Aenderung seiner Gesinnungen über die Religion gekommen ist“.

² Jens Glebe-Møller, *Struensees vej til Skafottet*. Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanums forlag (2007), pp. 105–107; Asser Amdisen, *Til Nytte og Fornøjelse*. Copenhagen, Lindhardt & Ringhof (2012).

³ The two-volume systematic review is *Unterhaltungen eines nachdenkenden Christen mit sich selbst über die Wahrheit und Göttlichkeit seines Glaubens, aus innern Gründen*, published in 1775–1776. The introductory book was titled *Anleitung zur Erkenntnis und Ausübung des Christlichen Glaubens*, published in 1782.

⁴ From 1765–1769, Münster published four volumes of *Inhalt aller Predigten*. This series of outlines was followed by a series of eight volumes, *Abgekürzte Predigten über einige Evangelien und den Cathecismus nebst einigen neuen geistlichen Liedern* (1778).

⁵ The series published from 1778 to 1784 was titled „Predigten über die gewöhnlichen Sonntagevangelien“, and dedicated to the prince of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel,

number of theological writings and his complete series of sermons make it possible to follow theological authorship through shifting contexts. Nevertheless, while many theological texts can give a good picture of Münster's theological writings, only a few biographical sources have survived from Münster's own time. Münster, therefore, cannot be studied as a historical person but only as one who can be known through what he wrote. Thus, the question is to what extent Münster's writings adapt to their intellectual surroundings. This question relies upon understanding language as conventional and always related to prevailing ideas and opinions. This point of departure makes Quentin Skinner's theories useful as a tool for apprehending Balthasar Münster's writings.

As a student of Darjes in Jena, Münster was taught in a tradition emphasising that Christian revelation was in accordance with human reason. This tradition gained substantial inspiration from Christian Wolff, and the influence from the Wolffian tradition was strengthened during Münster's own working life. As a pastor in Copenhagen, Münster was in touch with high-profile theologians such as Johann Jerusalem, with whom he exchanged letters.⁶ *Bekehrungsgeschichte* discloses that Münster used Jerusalem's writings in his discussions with Struensee, along with recently published books by another famous contemporary theologian, Johann Spalding.⁷ This theological background strongly indicates that Münster's preaching and teaching were following this clearly enunciated Enlightenment theology. This theology, which among other things, represented a critical attitude towards Christian dogmas as well as a firm belief that reason and revelation were compatible, came to be known as *neology*.⁸ The neologians also believed that the Bible consisted of texts with language styles adapted to the various contexts in which they were written.

Ferdinand von Braunschweig. The full title of the next series was „Oeffentliche Vorträge über die Reden und Begebenheiten Jesu nach den vier Evangelisten“. Both series were published in Copenhagen.

⁶ This can be documented from Balthasar Münster's son Friedrich's correspondence. See for example the letter from Johann J. Jerusalem to Friedrich Münster, 8 December 1782. Copenhagen, The Royal Library, Ny Kongelig Samling 1698, Fol.

⁷ Balthasar Münster, *Bekehrungsgeschichte des vormahligen Graf Johann Friedrich Struensee, nebst desselben eigenhändiger Nachricht von der Art, wie er zur Aenderung seiner Gesinnungen über die Religion gekommen ist*. Copenhagen (1772), p. 3.

⁸ See for instance Albrecht Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (2009), pp. 112–115; and Walter Sparr, „Auf dem Wege zur theologischen Aufklärung in Halle: Von Johan Franz Budde zu Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten“, in Norbert Hinske (ed.), *Halle: Aufklärung und Pietismus* [Wolfenbüttler Studien zur Aufklärung. Zentren der Aufklärung, 15]. Heidelberg, De Gruyter (1989), pp. 71–90.

Münter wrote his texts and delivered his sermons in a political environment that offered changing conditions for the church. After Struensee was dismissed, the nationally oriented and conservative theologian Ove Høegh-Guldberg came to power and ruled the country for the next twelve years. Høegh-Guldberg is known to have introduced some restrictions, not least among them a restriction to regulate the press. This was put into effect after a rescript was promulgated in 1773. Høegh-Guldberg is also known to have endeavoured to prevent modern Protestant theological impulses from being asserted in the Evangelical-Lutheran church as well as in the public sphere. His theological orientation resulted in two key works: in 1765, he wrote a book on natural theology, in which he argued that human reason should be used to prove the validity of revealed truth; and in 1773, he published a treatise on what he believed to be the most important teaching of the Bible — revealed theology.

Høegh-Guldberg's tenure was followed by the government of Andreas Peter Bernstorff, who governed from 1784 and had different preferences from his predecessor. Instead of controlling the church and its development, Bernstorff introduced reforms that increased individuals' freedom and secured their rights as citizens. Even if the press regulations approved under Høegh-Guldberg's period were still legally valid, the new governmental line led to a more tolerant public discourse, where a wide range of different opinions was accessible to the reading public. In a Protestant country like Denmark–Norway, where church and state were legally tied, one could easily imagine that political changes of this kind could affect the church and its preaching.

As a pastor in the St. Petri congregation, Münter worked in a church with close connections to state leaders and societal elites. St. Petri, which was — and still is — Copenhagen's largest and oldest German church, was a wealthy community, with intellectuals, aristocrats, and prominent politicians amongst its congregation.⁹ Since the seventeenth century, the church had been under the jurisdiction of a patron chosen from the country's political elite. During Münter's pastorate, three patrons were responsible: Foreign Minister Johan Hartvig Ernst Bernstorff, Otto Thott, and Andreas Peter Bernstorff. Otto Thott, who served as a patron between 1772 and 1785, was one of the most influential ministers in Høegh-Guldberg's government. Thus, there had been a tradition of close contact between St. Petri Church and the nation's political leaders for many years. Moreover, different sociabilities and clandestine groups could be connected to the congregation. These were a part of Copen-

⁹ Louis Bobé, *Die deutsche Saint-Petri Gemeinde zu Kopenhagen: ihre Kirche, Schule und Stiftungen MDLXXCV–MCMXXV*. Copenhagen, Im Auftrag des St. Petri Kirchenkollegiums (1925), p. 8.

hagen's institutional life: salons, clubs, societies, and lodges where the city's aristocracy frequently appeared as guests. Andreas Peter Bernstorff, for instance, while a rational political leader in his professional life, was privately occupied with a sort of mystical religion, claiming to have a special contact with Christ. In Münster's intellectual surroundings, some artists defended a typical contemporary understanding of the arts as potential media for religious experiences. One of these was Friedrich Klopstock, who had launched a theory about poetry's meditative potential in the introduction to the epos *Messiah*, written ten years before Münster came to Copenhagen.¹⁰ Klopstock was central to a political initiative around 1750, which helped put the Danish capital on the cultural map of Europe. Although Klopstock left Copenhagen when Struensee came to power, Münster remained in close contact with him, as proved in the preface to Münster's *Sacred Songs (Geistliche Lieder)*, where Münster acknowledged Klopstock for his inspiration in the writing of such texts.¹¹ The contemporary salons, which were particularly important venues for the upper social strata in society, became sites for practising these ideas about art's potential as media for a transcendent experience.¹²

With this background, one could easily assume that Münster developed his preaching and teaching under the various contextual conditions affecting the church in Copenhagen during his pastorate. Since relatively few contemporaneous sources have survived from Münster's own time, I will read Münster's texts to explore what they operationally express or how they were meant to be perceived by the contemporary reader. Hence, the texts will be understood as representations of the writer. Quentin Skinner's theories are helpful here because they emphasise the connection between meaning, language, and conventions. Skinner's starting point is that the use of language should always be seen in the light of intellectual surroundings, and even if the term "intention" plays an important role in his methodology, he avoids the intentional fallacy by defining intentions as distinctions between the conventions in the context and the specific use of the expression.¹³

¹⁰ Gerhard Kaiser, *Klopstock. Religion und Dichtung*. Gütersloh, Cornelsen Verlag (1963), pp. 327–347.

¹¹ See Balthasar Münster, *Geistliche Lieder*, vol 1, p. 1.

¹² Anne Scott Sørensen, "Min Lanterna Magica — om Charlotte Schimmelmann og Sølyst", in Anne Scott Sørensen (ed.), *Nordisk Salonkultur. En studiet i nordiske skønånder og salonmiljøer 1780–1850*. Odense, Syddansk Universitetsforlag (1998), pp. 76–100.

¹³ "Intentional fallacy" refers to the well-known claim of the impossibility of grasping the intentions of the writer. See "The Intentional Fallacy", in William K. Wimsatt

This article addresses this matter in three parts. Firstly, it presents Quentin Skinner's theories, such as those presented in his 1969 article "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas". The second part gives a synopsis of Münter's authorship from 1772 to 1793. The third part comprises an elaboration on how Skinner's ideas can be used for understanding Balthasar Münter's writings.

Quentin Skinner's Speech-Act theory

Quentin Skinner (b. 1940) can be regarded as one of the most important intellectual historians of our own time, with historical works focusing mainly on early modern Europe. Together with John Pocock and John Dunn, Skinner is regarded as the founder of the Cambridge school in political history. During the last 50 years, the Cambridge school, whose representatives generally concentrate on the intellectual context and actual historical conditions of a given epoch, has exercised a fundamental influence on the history of political thought. A few historians have helped develop the movement further. Their works have also gained influence on a broader basis — Quentin Skinner's two-volume work, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1978), has been regarded as one of the 100 most influential books since World War II.¹⁴

As a theorist, Skinner assumes that utterances should always be understood in their intellectual contexts. In his 1969 article, he adapted John Langshaw Austin's theory that to say something is also to do something. In his *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), Austin elucidated the speech-act theory and emphasised that a speech act always has three different aspects: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary.¹⁵ The locutionary speech act is the utterance itself, the illocutionary speech act depicts what one does when one says something, and a perlocutionary speech act describes the consequence of the given expression. While Austin proposed a philosophical theory, Skinner made this theory relevant for historians working with texts. In his 1969 article, Skinner demonstrated this through examples from early modern political history.

Skinner emphasises the illocutionary aspect of the speech act and underlines that an expression will always be dependent upon the context in which it is uttered. It follows from this that a speech act will

and Monroe Beardsley (eds.), *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*. Lexington, University Press of Kentucky (1954), pp. 3–18.

¹⁴ *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 October 1995.

¹⁵ John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words. The William James Lecture Delivered at Harvard University 1955*. Edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Oxford, Oxford University Press (1962), p. 3.

always be conventional and that its meaning can be understood only by taking notice of the surrounding conventions. Thus, a writer will always be captured in her or his context, and the meaning of an expression can thereby transcend what the writer can comprehend. However, the retrospective observer can grasp this meaning. With her or his privileged access to the speech act's intellectual context, he or she can also disclose structures of which the writer was unaware. That is the historian's prerogative: "it is commonplace ... that our own society places unrecognized constraints upon our imaginations. It deserves, then, to be a commonplace that the historical study of the ideas of other societies should be undertaken as the indispensable and the irreplaceable means of placing limits on those constraints."¹⁶

Skinner's use of the term "intention" should be seen in the light of his understanding of the writer's lack of ability to grasp his or her context. "The writer's intention" is not to be understood as a meaning of which the writer was necessarily aware, but how the expression was meant to be understood when it was uttered. To understand Machiavelli's sayings that a prince must learn how not to be virtuous, for example, it is not sufficient to understand what was said or to grasp that the meaning of what was said may have changed.¹⁷ Instead, one must focus on what it meant not to be virtuous; or how what was said was meant when it was uttered. It can be described as a two-step process, and Skinner unfolds the first step in the process in this way:

My first suggested rule is: focus not on the text to be interpreted but on the prevailing conventions governing the treatment of the issues or themes with which the text is concerned. This rule derives from the fact that any writer must standardly be engaged in an intended act of communication. It follows that whatever intentions a given writer may have, they must be conventional intentions in the strong sense that they must be recognizable as intentions to uphold some particular position in argument, to contribute in a particular way to the treatment of some particular theme, and so on.¹⁸

The process of finding out how what was said was meant to be perceived can be derived from studying all the possible ways a given expression could be used during the given time. Skinner admits that this enterprise is "almost absurdly ambitious", but through his focus on possible

¹⁶ Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press (1988), pp. 61–62.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Quentin Skinner, "Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts", in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press (1988), p. 77.

ways of using a particular expression, he does at least shed light upon how the meaning of utterances may change.¹⁹

The second step in the prescribed process is unfolded as follows:

Focus on the writer's mental world, the world of his empirical beliefs. This rule derives from the logical connection between our capacity to ascribe intentions to agents and our knowledge of their beliefs. This rule can also be applied critically as well as serving as a heuristic device.²⁰

Thus, the meaning of the given expression is constituted at the intersection between the text and the public sphere and is thereby never contingently connected to the speech act. This implies that Skinner distinguishes between *intention to do* and *intention in doing*. While the intention to do does not necessarily lead to the action itself, intention in doing is logically connected with the speech act and a force that is coordinated with the meaning of an utterance in itself. The intention in doing can be (to mention a few) to warn, advise, command, or provoke. This form of "interior" intention can be traced in the text and will be the key to grasping the given speech act. Understanding what the author intended to do can only be grasped by studying the contexts surrounding the utterance at stake. The question of whether Machiavelli meant to confirm or dismiss an accepted moral law with his famous statement from *The Prince* must, therefore, according to Skinner, not be derived from studying the expression and its meaning or from the study of its social context. Instead, it should be derived from exploring whether this advice was commonly given in Renaissance moral tracts. According to Skinner, these explorations disclose that Machiavelli's *intention in doing* was "to challenge and repudiate an accepted moral commonplace".²¹ It is also identical to the illocutionary force of Machiavelli's utterance. Nevertheless, the question of what Machiavelli did can never explain the *meaning* of this saying because knowledge of the given context can only assist the historian in encountering the question of what Machiavelli intended to say with this expression.

This theory will also form the background for elaborating on the question of what Balthasar Münter did when preaching, teaching, and writing. In the following, I will focus on two themes that will be crucial for deciphering Münter's intentions and which are central to his contexts. These themes are a) dogmatic currents and b) the understanding of the

¹⁹ Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding", p. 56.

²⁰ Skinner, "Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts", p. 78.

²¹ Quentin Skinner, "Social Meaning' and the Explanation of Social Action", in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*. Princeton, Princeton University Press (1988), p. 86.

divine service. The two chosen themes will have different conventions, all of which can be derived from studying the various ways they are used and applied. The question of Münster's intentions can be derived from the intersection between his concrete application of the current issue and the conventions reigning in its contexts. Skinner's "almost absurd enterprise" begs for a closer delimitation, and it will here be restrained to texts known to have been important for Münster. These are written by, for instance, Johann Spalding and Johann Jerusalem.

Balthasar Münster's Authorship

Münster's authorship in the years studied in this article falls into two separate epochs, coinciding with the different governments during these years. While Münster, in a sermon series running from 1778 to 1784, used the official lectionary readings and cross-referenced them with other biblical readings, in 1785, he took on a new project with the series by presenting the sermons as lectures and expounding on the Gospel as a coherent history. Münster meant that the traditional pericopes gave a fragmented picture of the Gospels, and he received the government's permission to exchange the standard Bible texts with a chronological presentation of the accounts of Jesus as was presented in the Gospels.²² For almost nine years, the congregation in Saint Petri could go to church on Sundays and follow a continuous presentation of one historical event on the Sundays Münster officiated.

a) 1772–1784

The synopsis presented in the following will focus on Münster's sermons.²³ The sermon series Münster delivered during Høegh-Guldberg's governmental epoch follows the theological trends of his era and has clear connections to contemporary neology. It pertains, for instance, to the concept of devotion, the concept of original sin, and the institutional church service. The concept of devotion played an important role in neological preaching and writings. In his book *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, published in 1758, Johann Spalding presented devotion as

²² In the preface to the ninth volume of *Oeffentliche Vorträge*, Balthasar Münster's son Friedrich related that his father had considered the prime minister Andreas Peter Bernstorff as an important support for the structure chosen from 1785. Münster dedicated the first and last volumes of this series to Bernstorff. See Friedrich Münster, *Oeffentliche Vorträge*, Vol. 9, Vorwort.

²³ Münster's other writings mentioned in the introduction — the sacred songs, the two-volume review of the Christian doctrine, and the introduction for school children — were all written during Høegh-Guldberg's governmental period.

an inner quality that signified a new nature.²⁴ This inner quality could be seen as a condition including both rationality and feelings. Devotion should be a consequence of the heart's preoccupation with God, and it expresses feelings and an inner disposition that resulted from encountering something sacred. In *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle in dem Christenthum*, which was among the books Münster gave to the imprisoned Struensee, Spalding stressed that the religious feeling aroused because of studying the Bible and all feelings which could not be seen in connection with the Bible could be written off as imaginings of a dreamer.²⁵ Therefore, it was important, Spalding underlined, to be attentive to the kinds of feelings one was encountering. Spalding also emphasised a significant difference between the feelings that arise from a proper understanding of Scripture and other feelings. The genuine religious feeling will strengthen and confirm contact with the divine. Accordingly, one could then say that the basis of the religious feeling is twofold: it has its origin in God's word, but it must also support man's inner motivation to seek God.²⁶ Thus, one should concentrate on the word of the Bible and be open to how it communicates.

Münster concurs with important neologians in understanding this feeling as a necessary consequence of studying the Bible. In several of his sermons, he underlines that the Bible should be heard with alertness since Scripture is the creative and constitutive power for the religious experience. The preacher's language is thereby to be understood as a necessary tool for disseminating God's word, even if the sermon is also seen as the basis for religious experience. According to Münster, the Word of God itself brings sanctification, and as Christians, we should study God's words regularly. In a sermon for the second Sunday of Lent 1783, Münster uses the words of Paul to illustrate how faith arising from the sermons based on the truths of the Gospel, as well as the Gospel itself, can be seen as an outcome of God's word.²⁷ It is thus clear that

²⁴ Johann J. Spalding, "Der vernünftige Werth der Andacht", in Johann J. Spalding, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, ed. Albrecht Beutel, Daniela Kirschkowski, and Dennis Prause [Johann J. Spalding Kritische Ausgabe 1/1]. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck (2006), pp. 224–254.

²⁵ Johann J. Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle in dem Christenthum*, ed. Albrecht Beutel and Tobias Jersak [Johann J. Spalding Kritische Ausgabe 1/2]. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck (2005), p. 26.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

²⁷ See Matt. 15.21–28, *Predigten* vol. 6, p. 152. Also, in Münster's other sermons and writings, it is possible to see this weight on the significance of God's words for arousing religious feelings. See for example his sermon on Matt. 5.20–26 and Phil. 1.9–11, *Predigten* vol. 1, pp. 353–368, and his sermon on John 16.5–15, *Predigten* vol. 5, pp. 225–240.

religious devotion can be seen as a result of the Scripture alone, but it is mediated through the pastor's preaching. Münster also agreed with the neologians in their understanding of moral action as the consequence of the religious feeling.²⁸

There is also an explicit affinity between Münster and Spalding when it comes to the idea of original sin, and the connection surfaces in their use of the same formulations and expressions. The understanding of original sin as a dominant characteristic in human nature is a frequent theme in Münster's writings, and it has fundamental anthropological consequences. In *Gedanken*, Spalding portrays a living God who makes people aware of their misery and causes them to turn to the Lord. In one of his sermons from 1782, Münster seems to have paraphrased this well-known German theologian.²⁹ Consequently, both Münster and Spalding see confession as an act imbued with joy, and Luther's understanding of repentance acts as a prototype.³⁰ Moreover, both stress the necessity for daily repentance because sin must constantly be counterbalanced. God's grace incites a constant awareness of the need for daily confession, thus ensuring that sin cannot gain the upper hand. With their understanding of God's grace as the precondition for salvation, Spalding and Münster can be seen as examples of how Luther's conception of *Sola Gratia* is assimilated and interpreted in the age of the Enlightenment. However, with this emphasis on original sin as a dominant characteristic of human life, Münster distances himself from Johan J. Jerusalem's interpretation of this central Christian doctrine. In his efforts to convert Struensee to Christianity, Münster had used Jerusalem's bestseller *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion*.³¹ One of the most important characteristics of this book is that Jerusalem does not link Adam's fall to sinful human nature.³² Instead, Adam is seen as an archetype. According to Münster, Adam's fall contaminated human

²⁸ See for example Spalding, *Gedanken* (see above, n. 24) vs. Münster's sermons Matt. 3.13–17, Matt. 26.28, Eph. 1.7, *Predigten* vol. 6, 129–144 and Mark. 16–18, Rom. 6.4, *Predigten* vol. 5, pp. 161–176.

²⁹ Spalding, *Gedanken* (see above, n. 24), p. 147 and Münster's exegesis of John 16.5–15, *Predigten* vol. 5, pp. 225–240.

³⁰ Spalding, *Gedanken* (see above, n. 24), pp. 147–148 and Münster's sermon on Isaiah 55.6–7, *Predigten* vol. 5, pp. 209–224.

³¹ Münster regards this unfinished work, which was published between 1768 and 1779, to be the one that shows Struensee longing for immortality. See *Bekehrungsgeschichte*, p. 30.

³² Johann J. Jerusalem, *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion*, 3 vols. 4th Ed. Braunschweig, Verlag der Fürstl. Waysenhaus Buchhandlung, (1773–1779) vol. 2, pp. 89–210.

nature thenceforward and forever.³³ Münter thereby reflects a classic understanding of original sin and neglects an important feature in one of the books he perceived as important during his work with Struensee.

In his attempts to convert Struensee, Münter also used Spalding's recently published sermons. In several of these, Spalding discusses the duty to attend the institutional church service versus living in constant service to God. Here he devalues the importance of the public church service in the life of a Christian. In his sermon on the regular service of the Christian (*Den beständingen Gottesdienst eines Christens*) (1768), Spalding discusses the faithfulness of Anna, which is described in Luke 2: Anna never left the temple but served God in prayer and fasting. This, he underlines, must mean that she complied with all external duties related to attending church.³⁴ Anna did what she did to glorify God, and she is thus a good example of how contemporary people can also honour God. With this example, Spalding draws attention away from an understanding of the church service and institutional church life as the only conceivable way to practice the Christian faith. The example is given extra weight through Spalding's rhetorical question in the same sermon: he asks whether Christianity only extends as far as the church service or whether it should not influence people's daily lives. This awakens a potential for doubt about the primary importance of church service.

Even though Münter emphasises the importance of allowing the contents of the church service to become manifest in practical daily living, he underlines the significance of attending regular church services and discusses this explicitly. In his sermons on Luke 14.1–11 (1780 and 1783), Münter explains the direct connection between the church service and the Christian life in a way that dismisses all doubt about its primary importance. This sermon is entitled *The Christian's duty to attend the public worship service*. There are no direct claims comparing the institutional church service with the service to God expressed through actions. For Münter, "the common and public church service accords so closely with the spirit and goal of the Gospel, that anyone who thinks it can be neglected simply cannot have the right understanding of the nature and intention of Christianity".³⁵ The institutional church cannot be replaced by anything else, it is a primary and absolute part of the Christian life.

During Høegh-Guldberg's governmental period, Münter demonstrates that he is a minister with strong roots in contemporary German theology.

³³ See Münter's sermon on John 3.16–21, *Predigten* vol. 5, p. 298.

³⁴ Johan J. Spalding, "Der beständige Gottesdienst eines Christens", in Spalding, *Neue Predigten*, ed. Albrecht Beutel and Olga Söntgerath [Johann Joachim Jerusalem, Kritische Ausgabe II/2]. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, p. 86.

³⁵ Luke 14.1–13; Rom. 10.14, *Predigten* vol. 3, p. 395.

He is also someone who adapts his preaching to the reigning political restrictions. MÜNTER reflects an obvious connection to Spalding's thoughts and writings but diverges from Spalding's teaching on the role of the institutional church service in the Christian's pious life. Hence, MÜNTER's sermons from this period demonstrate the neological legacy, but it is done in a way that must have been relatively unproblematic to the political-theological guidelines laid down by Ove Høegh-Guldberg's regime.

b) 1785–1793

Turning to the sermons MÜNTER published starting from 1785, *Oeffentliche Vorträge*, it is relatively easy to find threads of continuity between this series and the previous one. MÜNTER has specific theological agendas running through his pastorate: he draws attention to how the Christian's inner orientation must be renewed and emphasises the perpetual need to seek personal and fervent contact with God. The essence of faith is devotional life, insofar as a contemplative attitude is the hallmark of the person who communicates with God. This devotion can be regarded as the outcome of reading and hearing God's words. Yet, in addition to these points of continuity, there are basic differences as well as shifts in his sermon series of both formal and theological character. In the series published during Høegh-Guldberg's government, MÜNTER uses the ordinary lectionary readings as the point of departure for his sermons. Substantially, these readings are linked with other passages which MÜNTER has chosen himself and provide a framework for the theme on which he wants to preach. The readings are taken from both the Old and New Testaments, as well as from deuterocanonical writings. In *Oeffentliche Vorträge*, each sermon is part of a larger unity; seen together, they provide a historical narrative about the life and work of Jesus. MÜNTER thus creates an intellectual understanding among his listeners and readers, and the Gospel stories and the theme of the history of Jesus determine what he will say to his congregation.

The most important changes pertain to the role of the institutional church service in a Christian's life. In the abovementioned sermon on Luke 14.1–11, MÜNTER discussed the necessity of church attendance. Here, he described how one should participate in the service and prepare for it. The Sabbath was ordained for the benefit of believers, MÜNTER pointed out, thus shedding light upon how Christians are obliged to participate in the Sunday service. However, in *Oeffentliche Vorträge*, MÜNTER places much more weight on human freedom concerning church attendance. What he now focuses on is the difference between the worship service of the Jews and the practice introduced by Jesus. MÜNTER points out how the Christian worship service now allows freedom. He repeatedly

criticises the Jew's outward form of worship and stresses that a different kind of worship now replaces this with entirely different contents. Yet this freedom involves more than an end to compulsory forms of behaviour and the keeping of Jewish laws — for the person in Münster's own time, it extends to participation in the Sunday service. This time of communal worship invites the Christian to participate freely, Münster claims, and he continues to stress that one is in no way forced to participate.³⁶ In certain instances, Münster says that it would even be preferable to renounce churchgoing. Jesus healed on Sabbath, thus acting on behalf of his neighbour in a way that was far superior to church attendance. True worship consists of showing one's faith when interacting with others, of acting in ways that benefit others. Considering this, Münster stresses that no place is more holy than any other, and no time of day is more suitable for worship than any other.³⁷

Thus, there seem to be important differences between the sermon series which Münster delivered during Høegh-Guldberg's regime and those delivered during Bernstorff's regime. One such difference is the formal aspect — that the chosen structure and the continuous story of Jesus determine what he will say to the congregation. There are also significant differences with respect to the conception of worship service. In *Oeffentliche Vorträge*, the church service can be seen as secondary, in the sense that it cannot provide norms for where Christianity can be found, nor can the institutional church service be seen as obligatory. Thus, during Bernstorff's pastorate, Münster's conception of the church service took a radicalised turn which can be seen in the light of Bernstorff's greater degree of openness and pragmatic attitude to religion: Münster no longer treated church attendance as a necessary means for religious experience. Further, through the historicising structure, the sermon became an object for different intellectual understanding than under the previous governmental period. Neological theology seems accordingly to be accommodated to the premises prevailing in Münster's contexts.

Münster's intentions in writing

What, then, were Münster's intentions in writing, according to Quentin Skinner's definition of this expression? A diachronic study of Balthasar Münster's preaching shows a division paralleling the change of the government. Münster seems to use his theological inheritance to confirm or promote the predominant political convention of the church at the given

³⁶ Luke 2.22, *Oeffentliche Vorträge*, vol. 2, p. 171.

³⁷ John 4.7–26, *Oeffentliche Vorträge*, vol. 2, pp. 108–109.

time. M \ddot{u} nter's illocutionary force, or what he performs when uttering what he does, lies in what he confirms, and this was his intention when delivering his sermons. "Meaning" should here be understood in the light of Skinner's thoughts about the writer's intentionality. M \ddot{u} nter declaims on the basis of premises laid down for his current public spheres, and the confirming he does also includes theological innovations and/or historical changes. Not least, by moulding his sermons as parts of larger historical narratives, he challenges his own homiletic tradition. That, in turn, contributes to the theological changes and alterations typical for that time.

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