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**Matthias Flacius Illyricus as a Teacher  
at the Early Modern Lutheran Universities of Wittenberg  
and Jena in the Middle of the Sixteenth Century**

**Abstract**

*The multi-faceted career of the Croatian-born Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575) included teaching positions at the newly founded early modern evangelical universities in Saxony and Thuringia. Flacius, who had been a student in Wittenberg, obtained his first appointment at the Faculty of Arts as a teacher of Hebrew in 1544, a post he held until Easter 1549. After an academic hiatus between 1549 and 1557 spent in Magdeburg, which nonetheless denoted an important period of gaining broad recognition as a theologian and church historian, Flacius was invited to occupy the chair in New Testament at the Collegium Jenense. The University of Jena functioned from its beginning as a Lutheran confessional academic institution and Flacius' role as a leading theologian was of great significance in setting a course for the religious landscape of Ernestine Saxony.*

*This paper also addresses issues of hierarchy concerning faculties, disciplines and professors, and explores the related questions of institutional flexibility versus rigidity within the university system through Flacius' example. Additionally, it touches upon some of the interplay between the confessional identity of the universities and the principle of “cuius regio, eius religio” that operated in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation from 1555 onward.*

**Key words**

Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Wittenberg, Jena, confessional education, religious politics, early modern Protestant universities, sixteenth century

The teaching career of the Croatian-born Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575) included employment at the newly founded early modern evangelical universities in Saxony and Thuringia.<sup>1</sup> The later well-known Lutheran theologian, church historian, linguist and philosopher from Albona (Labin) left home to pursue further education in Venice at the age of sixteen. After this first stop, where he received a Renaissance humanist education for three years, Flacius crossed the Alps, moving northward. His *peregrinatio academica* took him to the Universities of Basel and Tübingen, and he eventually enrolled at the University of Wittenberg at the age of twenty-one. There he also obtained his first teaching post as a lecturer of Hebrew in 1544. Flacius left Wittenberg in 1549 and following an eight-year-long academic hiatus spent mostly in Magdeburg, he assumed a professorship in Jena in 1557.

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How did Flacius fit into the system of early modern confessional universities and to what degree did he challenge its established norms and limits? In addition to tackling this question this paper also addresses issues of hierarchy concerning faculties, disciplines and professors, and touches upon the related questions of institutional flexibility versus rigidity within the university system through Flacius' example. Additionally, it explores some of the important facets of how the confessional identity of the universities was managed and maintained within the political and legal framework of the principle "cuius regio, eius religio" that operated in the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation from 1555 onward.

### Wittenberg

The University of Wittenberg had been established in 1502 by the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise (1463–1525). Within two decades it began experiencing significant reforms under the leadership of Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) and became the first Protestant university. Matthias Flacius arrived in Wittenberg as a student in 1541. He matriculated at the University in the summer semester (May 1) under the rectorship of Kilian Goldstein the Elder (1499–1568) as a pauper (*gratis inscriptus*).<sup>2</sup> By that time, Flacius already knew the classical languages, having learned Greek from Egnazio Giambattista Cipelli (1478–1553), Johannes Oporinus (1507–1568) and Matthias Garbitius Illyricus (ca. 1505–1559),<sup>3</sup> and Hebrew from Sebastian Münster (1488–1552) and Johann Forster (1496–1558). However, he continued learning Greek in Wittenberg where his professor was Veit Örtel (1501–1570) from Bad Windsheim.<sup>4</sup> It was then, at the age of twenty-one that he met Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon. As a student, Flacius's life was limited to his room, the University and the church, and he became known for his utter devotion to research and serious scholarship. In 1544 Flacius received a teaching appointment for Hebrew language at the Faculty of Arts at Wittenberg University as the successor of Matthias Goldhahn (Aurogallus, ca. 1490–1543), who had occupied the post between 1521 and 1543.<sup>5</sup> The instruction of Hebrew, a new discipline in the sixteenth-century curriculum, began in 1518 at Wittenberg with the establishment of a chair (Lehrstuhl) at Luther's initiative.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, "Wittenberg was the first German university to hire a permanent professor of Hebrew."<sup>7</sup> As a Hebraist, Flacius taught several well-known people who were older than him, including Johannes Aurifaber from Breslau (1517–1568), Paul Eber (1511–1569), Friedrich Staphylus (1512–1564) and Johannes Mathesius (1504–1565).<sup>8</sup> In 1545 Flacius married Elisabeth (†1564), the daughter of the evangelical pastor Michael Faust (ca. 1483–1561)<sup>9</sup> from Dabrun, a village close to Kemberg, southeast of Wittenberg. Martin Luther was among the guests attending his wedding.<sup>10</sup> Four months after Flacius' November 1545 nuptials, Luther died. On February 25, 1546, only seven days after Luther's death in Eisleben and three days after Melanchthon and Johannes Bugenhagen had delivered funeral orations, Flacius was awarded a master's degree in philosophy for which he wrote a thesis entitled *De vocabulo fidei* (On the Word "Faith"), a linguistic treatment of the term on the basis of its Hebrew derivation, following basic Melanchthonian grammatical principles.<sup>11</sup> The work was published in 1549 and Melanchthon himself wrote the fourteen-page foreword for his young colleague. Flacius graduated as the best in his class of thirty-nine students.<sup>12</sup> Flacius' time in Wittenberg was not only significant concerning his academic development and his career path, but it also coincided with a period of grow-

ing confessional identification for him. He was influenced by both Luther and Melancthon in his theology. Although his relationship with these two Reformers was very different, both of them impacted young Flacius in important

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Karl Eduard Förstemann (ed.), *Album Academiae Vitebergensis*, vol. 1: 1502–1560, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen 1976 [reprint of the original 1841 Leipzig edition], p. 191. In the enrolment records of the Wittenberg University Flacius is listed as “Mattheus Watzer ex Dalmatia.”

3

For the relationship between Garbitius, Flacius and Melancthon see Luka Ilić “Praeceptor Humanissimus et duo Illyri: Garbitius et Flacius”, in: Irene Dingel and Armin Kohle (eds.), *Philipp Melancthon. Lehrer Deutschlands, Reformator Europas* [Leucorea-Studien zur Geschichte der Reformation und der Lutherischen Orthodoxie 13], Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2011, pp. 65–79.

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This information is found in a short sixteenth century biography of Flacius published by Heinrich Pantaleon, *Der dritte vnd letzte Theil Teutscher Nation Heldenbuch...*, Nikolaus Brylinger (Erben), Basel 1570, pp. 426–429 and is also repeated in Wilhelm Preger, *Matthias Flacius Illyricus und seine Zeit*, Theodor Blässing, Erlangen 1859 and 1861, vol. 1, p. 21. Another sixteenth century source is Joachim Camerarius who does mention that Flacius’ knowledge of Greek was average at that time and states that Flacius devoted much more time to perfecting his Hebrew language skills. It is also interesting to note that Camerarius mentions how Flacius passionately studied Hebrew while in Tübingen. See Joachim Camerarius, *Das Leben Philipp Melancthons*, trans. by Volker Werner [Schriften der Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten in Saschen-Anhalt 12], Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2010, p. 206: “Flacius, der im Griechischen nur mittelmäßige Kenntnise besaß, verlegte sich damals ganz und gar auf das Erlernen der hebräischen Sprache.”

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For details about Flacius’ appointment as professor, see Walter Friedensburg, “Die Anstellung des Flacius Illyricus an der Universität Wittenberg”, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 11 (1914), pp. 302–310.

6

Klara Vanek, “Philologie im Dienste der Orthodoxie: Die “Adhortatio ad studium linguae Hebraeae” des Matthias Flacius Illyricus”, in: Günter Frank and Stephan Meier-Oese (eds.), *Hermeneutik – Methodenlehre – Exegese. Zur Theorie der Interpretation in der frühen Neuzeit* [Melancthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten 11] (Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt, 2011), pp. 89–122, here p. 105.

7

Stephen G. Burnett, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500–1660): Authors, Books, and the Transmission of Jewish Learning* [Library of the Written Word 19; The Handpress World 13] (Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2012), p. 58.

8

Flacius, *Erzählunge der Handlungen/ oder Religionsstreiten vnd Sachen Matthiae Fl: Illyrici/ von jm selbs trewlich vnd warhafftiglich/ auff Beger der Prediger zu Strasburg/ beschrieben/ Anno 1568. zu Strasbourg* [VD16 F 1379] in Caspar Heldelin der Jüngere, *Eine Christliche predigt vber der Leiche des Ehrnwuerdigen vnd hochgelerten Herrn/ M: Matthiae Flacij Illyrici/ Weiland getrewen Dieners vnd bestendigen Merterers Jesu Christi/ fromen hertzen zu gut gestellet/ Durch M. Gasparem Heldelinum Lindaiusensem. Item/ Summarischer Bericht/ der Handlungen vnd Streitsachen Herrn Matthiae Flacij Illyrici/ von jm selbst verzeichnet* (Nikolaus Henricus d. Ä., Oberursel, 1575; VD16 H 1563), X 2r: “Bin derwegen hart vor Ostern allein hinweg gezogen/ denn meine Hausfraw war grosschwanger/ Die Lection befahle ich M. Johanni Aurifabro von Preslaw / der dazumal die *Sphaeram* lase/ vnd von mir Hebreisch gelernt hatte/ wie auch Eberus/ Staphylus/ Mathesius/ vnd andere mehr.”

9

For more about him, see “Faust, Michael”, in: Heinz Scheible (ed.), *Melancthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe: Regesten und Personen* [henceforth MBW], Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt, 2005, vol. 12: *Personen F-K*, p. 50. Melancthon mentions pastor Faust a number of times in his correspondence between 1553 and 1558 in a positive manner in MBW 6984, 7500, and 7870 (*Regesten* Vol. 7, pp. 124, 314, 449), and MBW 8549 (*Regesten* Vol. 8, p. 203), suggesting that Faust stayed loyal to Wittenberg and to Praeceptor Philipp Melancthon. See Flacius’ letter to Simon Musaeus, dated in Jena on September 2, 1557, in which he refers to Faust as “my father-in-law” (*meus socer*) and further talks about Faust’s annual pension in Otto Clemen, *Kleine Schriften zur Reformationsgeschichte (1897–1944)*, in: Ernst Koch (ed.), Zentralantiquariat der DDR, Leipzig 1985, vol. 6, pp. 240–243, here p. 240.

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Matthias Flacius Illyricus, “Erzählunge der Handlungen oder Religionsstreiten vnd Sachen Matthiae Fl: Illyrici von jm selbs trewlich vnd warhafftiglich auff Beger der Predi-



ways. Luther personally helped him overcome a crisis of faith that Flacius experienced while still a young student in Wittenberg.<sup>13</sup> As for Flacius' relationship with Melancthon, it can be stated with certainty that the *Praeceptor Germanie*, as he was called, influenced Flacius academically much more than Luther and this can be most clearly seen in the way he interpreted history, as well as in the employment of an Aristotelian method for theology and the use of rhetorics and dialectics. Due to Flacius' disagreements with the theological stances of the Wittenberg faculty and the political changes, he resigned from his position at the university around Easter 1549 and left Wittenberg.

Between 1549 and 1557 Flacius did not have an academic position and lived in Magdeburg. These years nonetheless denoted an important period of his life as he gained broad recognition as a theologian, church historian and polemical author. There he developed an idea for a history project that would later result in two works: *Catalogus testium veritatis* and *Historia Ecclesiastica*. The latter, commonly referred to as "The Magdeburg Centuries," was intended to be a "summation of the history of the church from the time of Christ 'to the present time', the first of its kind since Eusebius." As a result, Flacius was invited to take up the post of chair in the New Testament at the *Collegium Jenense*, established in 1548, which was aiming at becoming a university. Flacius' call thereby played a role in and coincided with the transition from college to university by building up a Faculty of Theology.

## Jena

The history of the founding of the University of Jena began in the aftermath of the defeat of the Smalcald League, as a result of which Elector Johann Friedrich I (1503–1554) lost two thirds of his territory, including Wittenberg and its university. As an attempt at establishing a new school that would continue to preserve the true Lutheran teaching in his shrunken sphere of influence an academy, the *Collegium Jenense*, was founded in March 1548 at the former Dominican monastery of the town. In the first year, around 170 students enrolled at the "Salana". The first two professors at the new establishment were Johannes Stigel (1515–1562) from Gotha, a humanist, poet laureate, personal friend of Melancthon's and former professor at Wittenberg,<sup>14</sup> and the philosopher and theologian Victorin Strigel (1524–1569) from Kaufbeuren, who was Melancthon's former student.<sup>15</sup> Stigel was the founding rector; thereafter he and Strigel alternately occupied this post. In January 1557 Erhard Schnepf (1495–1558), who had been teaching Hebrew and theology since 1549, was named rector.<sup>16</sup>

Already in July 1556, Flacius had made a commitment to the Ernestine dukes, Johann Friedrich II (1529–1595), Johann Wilhelm (1530–1573) and Johann Friedrich III (1538–1565) to move to Jena by Easter 1557 in order to assume the professorship and the position of general superintendent (*Obersuperintendent*) of Ernestine Saxony offered to him.<sup>17</sup> The letter of call that Flacius received from Duke Johann Friedrich II on July 17, 1556, while still in Magdeburg, outlined his duties, were he to accept the position:

"That he [Flacius] together with the honorable and learned, our beloved doctor of the Holy Scriptures, Erhard Schnepf, should be a General Superintendent and should exercise supervision over all superintendents, pastors and church employees of all the churches in the principality, that no one should introduce new doctrines and ceremonies, and that each pastor persevere in the religion established in the land. Beyond that, he should lecture one hour each day – three days a week in Greek on the New Testament and on the other days in Latin on a Gospel or an epistle of St. Paul."<sup>18</sup>

Flacius arrived in Jena in late April 1557 and immediately took steps toward fulfilling his teaching mandate: already on April 28 it was announced that the first course he would be teaching was to be on the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>19</sup> In typical fashion for professors occupying new posts at German universi-

ger zu Strasburg beschrieben Anno 1568. zu Strasbourg”, in: Caspar Heldelin der Jünger, *Eine Christliche predigt vber der Leiche des Ehrnwuerdigen vnd hochgelerten Herrn M: Matthiae Flacij Jlyrici Weiland getrewen Dieners vnd bestendigen Merterers Jesu Christi fromen hertzen zu gut gestellet Durch M. Gasparem Heldelinum Lindauissem. Item Summarischer Bericht der Handlungen vnd Streitsachen Herrn Matthiae Flacij Jlyrici von jm selbst verzeichnet*, Nikolaus Henricus d. Ä., Oberursel 1575, T 3v: “Habe auch etliche mal mit dem Ehrwuerdigen Herrn D. Luther seliger geredt/... Es ist auch der Man Gottes auff meiner Hochzeit gewesen im Herbst des 1545. Jars.”

11

Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *De Vocabulo Fidei/ Et Aliis Quibusdam / Vocabulis, Explicatio uera & utilis, sum[p]ta ex/ fontibus Ebraicis. Scripta a Matthia Flacio Illyrico. Cum praefatione Phil[ippi] Mel[anchthonis]. Abacuc 2. Anno M.D. XLIX*, Veit Kreutzer, Wittenberg 1549.

12

Julius Köstlin, *Die Baccalaurei und Magistri der Wittenberger philosophischen Fakultät 1538–1546 und die öffentlichen Disputationen derselben Jahre. Aus der Facultätsmatrikel veröffentlicht*, Max Niemeyer, Halle 1890, p. 18. See also the speech written by Melancthon and delivered by the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Johann Stoltz (1514–1566), in Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (eds.), *Corpus Reformatorum: Philippi Melanthonis opera quae supersunt omnia*, Schwetschke & Sons, Braunschweig 1834–1860, vol. 11, nr. 89, pp. 716–721.

13

For more on the relationship between Luther and Flacius, see Luka Ilić, “Der heilige Mann und thewre held: Flacius’ View Of Luther”, in: Marina Miladinov, Luka Ilić (eds.), *Matija Vlačić Ilirik III: Papers from the Third International Conference on Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Labin, Croatia, 2010*, Grad Labin, Labin 2012, pp. 292–312.

14

For an overview of Stigel’s career see Stefan Rhein, “Johannes Stigel (1515/1562). Dichtung im Umkreis Melancthons”, in: Heinz Scheible (ed.), *Melancthon in seinen Schülern* [Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 73], Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1997, pp. 31–49. For the relationship between Stigel and Flacius see chapter fourteen, “Stigel und Flacius”, of the doctoral dissertation by Hans-Henning

Pflanz, *Johann Stigel als Theologe (1515–1562)*, Breslau 1936, pp. 105–112. Stigel and Flacius knew each other from Wittenberg: in 1546 Stigel was academic dean of the Faculty of Arts, where Flacius was teaching.

15

For his biography see Ernst Koch, “Strigel, Victorin(us)”, in: Gerhard Müller, Horst Balz, Gerhard Krause (eds.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin 2001, vol. 32, pp. 252–255; Ernst Koch, “Victorin Strigel (1524–1569). Von Jena nach Heidelberg”, in: Scheible (ed.), *Melancthon in seinen Schülern*, pp. 391–404.

16

In addition to his academic duties Schnepf also held ecclesiastical posts as pastor of St. Michael’s Church and superintendent. For more about him, see Hermann Ehmer, “Erhard Schnepf(f)”, in: Hans Günter Hockerts (ed.), *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin 2007, vol. 23, pp. 320–321; Hermann Ehmer, “Erhard Schnepf. Ein Lebensbild”, *Blätter für württembergische Kirchengeschichte* 87 (1987), pp. 72–126.

17

Flacius’ letter dated on July 6, 1556 in Magdeburg is kept at the Thuringian State Archive in Weimar, Ernestinisches Gesamtarchiv, Reg. O 908, 1r–v, 4r–v. Based on archival research in Weimar, Daniel Gehrt has shown that the Ernestine dukes began negotiations with Flacius already in March 1555. For the details of this invitation see Daniel Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik. Bekenntnisbildung, Herrschaftskonsolidierung und dynastische Identitätsstiftung vom Augsburger Interim 1548 bis zur Konkordienformel 1577* [Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 34], Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2011, pp. 109–114.

18

Johann Friedrich II. (der Mittlere), *Ad lectionem publicam & Superintendentiam universalem*, Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 79 Helmst., fol. 117r–v: “Das ihr sampt dem Erwürdigen und hochgelarten unsern lieben andechtigen Erhardten Schneppen der heiligen schriefft doctorn ain Obersuperintendent ueber alle Superintendenten pfarherr und Kirchen diener aller Kirchen unsers Fürstenthumbs Lande unnd Herrschaffen sein/ und darauff ein getrewen fleissigen auffsehen haben sollen, dass niemand Newe lehr und Ceremonien einführe, und das ein jeder pfarherr bei der im Lande aufgerichteten Religion verharre. Ueber das



ties, Flacius held a public inaugural lecture on May 17.<sup>20</sup> Preserved official manuscripts from the university testify to further courses held by him. For example, the one from August 4, 1558 revealed that he would be lecturing on the Gospel of John.<sup>21</sup> The continuation of his lecture series on John was then announced on March 29, 1559.<sup>22</sup> During 1560 Flacius held lectures on Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, on a daily basis Monday through Friday, for five hours a week total.<sup>23</sup>

In a letter to Johann Friedrich II from February 10, 1561, Flacius suggested that in addition to his other courses he should also teach Hebrew.<sup>24</sup> There is no material evidence that confirms that this took place, as later in that year he was dismissed from his position. The letter nonetheless highlights the relative institutional flexibility Flacius assumed to be operating at the university in Jena, whereby a professor could comfortably move between teaching New Testament-related courses and Old Testament-related subjects – a division of discipline rigidly observed at modern-day universities.

Flacius' arrival in Jena as a well-known person enjoying the favor of the dukes and his new professorial appointment at the *Collegium* was not welcomed by everyone. The three professors already mentioned were connected to one another through personal ties: for example Schnepf's daughter was married to Strigel. Having all lived in Jena for a while, they had also built up their own professional and personal networks in the city. Flacius walked into this tight-knit circle. Most notably, Strigel, who was looking to Wittenberg for theological direction, was opposed from the beginning to the duke's idea of inviting Flacius to Jena: the Illyrian had already acquired a controversial reputation for his criticism of Melanchthon and for his polemics against a wide range of people and groups he theologically disagreed with. At the newly formed theological faculty Flacius was assigned to teach alongside Strigel and Schnepf. There Flacius was "immediately attacked by Viktorin Strigel, who viewed him as a personal rival and some of his ideas as antithetical to his own theology."<sup>25</sup>

Apart from deep-seated theological differences, another dimension adding to tensions between the newcomer and the already established faculty members concerned Flacius' salary. Before accepting the position in Jena, Illyricus negotiated with the ducal court in Weimar an annual salary of 342 thalar for himself to be paid twice a year.<sup>26</sup> His colleagues were earning considerably less, even though they had been teaching at the school for almost a decade: Stigel was receiving 200 thalar (170 thalar supplemented by ten thalar for heating wood and twenty for rent) and Strigel 180 thalar (170 plus ten for heating wood) a year.<sup>27</sup>

On August 31, 1557, the *Collegium Jenense* was promoted to the status of university through an imperial privilege issued by the emperor Ferdinand I (1503–1564). A festivity celebrating the advancement to university was held on February 2, 1558, with more than six hundred people in attendance. The academic procession (*Festzug*) that wound through the town to the celebratory sound of bells and trumpets was headed by the three Ernestine dukes, Johann Friedrich II, Johann Wilhelm and Johann Friedrich III and representatives of the nobility, including a number of counts as their guests. Behind them came the first rector of the new university, professor of medicine Johannes Schröter (1513–1593), accompanied by Philipp IV, Count of Nassau-Weilburg (1542–1601), who was a student in Jena at the time. They were followed by Strigel, then Stigel, who were each flanked by two other professors. Flacius was walking in the fourth row of the academic section next to

the Jena superintendent Andreas Hügel (1499–1572), indicating the relatively low level of his importance at that time.<sup>28</sup>

The University of Jena functioned from its beginning as a Lutheran confessional academic institution and Flacius' role as a leading theologian was of great significance in setting a course for the religious landscape of Ernestine Saxony. In contrast to his lower-ranking position as a lecturer in Wittenberg, Flacius was now promoted to full professor in Jena. At the same time, his move from the Faculty of Arts to the Faculty of Theology indicated a certain amount of flexibility in the new school and revealed Flacius' rise within the university ranking. This was according to the traditional understanding of the hierarchy among the various faculties in the medieval scholastic university system. According to this, Arts and Humanities had traditionally been considered to have the lowest rank within the university structure, while Law and Medicine were ranked higher and Theology was held to be the "Queen of the

solle er auch in Jena alle tage ein stunde als in der woche drey tage im Neuen Testament in Griechischer sprach und in den andern tagen in Lateinischer sprach ein Euangelion oder Epistel Pauli." The English translation above is based on Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform* [Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung 20], Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2002, pp. 327–328. Olson attributes this letter to Nikolaus von Amsdorf even though he quotes it from Preger, *Flacius und seine Zeit*, Vol. 2, p. 106, who correctly identifies the author. Amsdorf most likely did write the rough draft of the letter, even though the final authorship rested with the duke. See also Thomas Kaufmann, "Die Anfänge der Theologischen Fakultät Jena im Kontext der innerlutherischen Kontroversen zwischen 1548 und 1561", in: Volker Leppin, Georg Schmidt, and Sabine Wefers (eds.), *Johann Friedrich I. – der lutherische Kurfürst* [Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 204], Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh 2006, pp. 209–258, here p. 244 n. 125.

19

See a copy (Abschrift) of the original manuscript made by Jena theology student Adam Sellanus from Hildburghausen (1536–1580) at Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart. B 213, Bl. 331r–332r. Sellanus matriculated at Jena in 1556 and studied there until 1559, where he was almost certainly Flacius' student.

20

The manuscript of the original inaugural address (*oratio Illyrici Jhenae recitata*) consists of 22 folio pages (recto and verso) and is kept at Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, 11.7. Aug. fol. (2), 2r–23v. For more information on its content and for a critical edition of the lecture see, Andreas Waschbüsch, *Alter Melancthon: Muster theologischer Autoritätsstiftung bei Matthias Flacius Illyricus* [Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 96] (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2008), pp. 151–154, 171–189.

21

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Ankündigung der Vorlesung über das Johannesevangelium von Flacius, Chart. B 213, Bl. 332v–333v.

22

Ibid., Chart. B 213, Bl. 338v–339r. Ankündigung der Fortsetzung seiner Vorlesung über das Johannesevangelium.

23

Apart from his teaching responsibilities during 1560, Flacius held a week-long public disputation with Strigel at the ducal castle in Weimar between August 2 and 8.

24

Thuringian State Archive in Weimar, Ernestinisches Gesamtarchiv, Reg. O 639, Bl. 3r.

25

Robert Kolb, *Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483–1565): Popular Polemics in the Preservation of Luther's Legacy* [Bibliotheca Humanistica & Reformatorica 26], B. De Graaf, Nieuwkoop 1978, p. 213.

26

As the result of the good salary, Flacius was able to purchase a house in the immediate vicinity of the *Collegium* already in July 1557.

27

Mijo Mirković, *Matija Vlačić Ilirik* [Djela Jugoslovenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti 50], Izdavački zavod Jugoslovenske akademije, Zagreb 1960, p. 155, referring to sources at the Thuringian State Archive in Weimar, Ernestinisches Gesamtarchiv, Reg. O 590.

28

For a detailed description of the celebrations marking the elevation of the *Collegium Jenense* to the rank of university see Johann Adolph Leopold Faselius, *Neueste Beschreibung der herzoglich Sächsischen Residenz- und Universitäts-Stadt Jena*, Prager, Jena 1805, pp. 95–96.

Sciences”. The academic procession, according to tradition, was arranged in an order that reflected the participants’ positions within the hierarchy of the university. Flacius’ place can be symbolically interpreted in that almost ten months after being hired as a rising star and taking up his professorial post, he had not been regarded as having ascended to the top rank at the faculty of theology.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, the limitations of Flacius’ influence within the ecclesiastical and political power structures in Ernestine Saxony had been previously revealed when his radical theological stances did not prevail over those of others at the Colloquy of Worms. The colloquy, held in the autumn of 1557, was meant to provide a platform for discussing questions causing disagreement between Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians, with the hope of finding consensus. Flacius got appointed by Duke Johann Friedrich II as a member of the committee to write recommendations for the Ernestinian Saxon delegates at the colloquy, together with Strigel and Schnepf. Disagreeing with his colleagues, he formulated a dissenting opinion and sent it directly to the Duke. Björn Slenczka in his newly published dissertation examines this document, in which Flacius warned of Melanchthon’s adiaphoristic tendencies, and by the content of the letter we can see that Flacius did not have the last word in forming the expert opinion (*Gutachten*).<sup>30</sup> Slenczka attributes this to the fact that Flacius was not yet fully established but was still solidifying his base in Ernestine Saxony, and that his theological opinions did not prevail at that time, either at the theological faculty in Jena, or at the ducal court in Weimar.<sup>31</sup> His call to condemn “all adiaphoristic alliances” was not accepted – in spite of repeated attempts through various channels. Instead, Flacius turned to writing and compiling a Book of Confutation (*Konfutationsbuch*), a normative confessional document for the Ernestine duchy, through which he was hoping to achieve his goals – chief among them being the refutation of what he perceived to be theological fallacies of the Wittenberg theological circle gathered around Melanchthon. The fact that the project of the *Konfutationsbuch* did succeed in spite of the opposition of Strigel and others demonstrates that Flacius’ power and influence at the ducal court did rise with time.

These episodes illustrate that parallel to his professional engagement at the university in Jena, Flacius immediately got involved in the religious politics of the territory. After all, he had been hired partly for confessional reasons, as the duke thought he would be able to use Flacius to influence the theological and ecclesiastical course of the church in his land. However, Flacius’ fall from grace and exile were brought about precisely because of his too intense involvement in the arena at the intersection of the religious and political interests of his day.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, when examining Flacius’ academic journey through the universities of Wittenberg and Jena, it is important to note the two processes taking place parallel to each other in his life. While his academic and scientific interests grew and were constantly broadened throughout his time at the universities, his confessional identification also solidified during his Wittenberg years and by the time he arrived in Jena he was formulating his theological positions in a much more refined and clear way. However, his lack of willingness to compromise on theological issues he considered to be of central importance contributed not only to conflicts with his colleagues at the Faculty



of Theology, but even influenced the process of growing confessionalization and increasing delineation among Protestants in the Ernestine Saxon Duchy in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Concerning his scientific methods, Flacius had been influenced by Melanchthon's systematization of knowledge but later also developed his own. For example, on the one hand the project of *Magdeburg Centuries* exhibited a radically new historical methodology: arrangement of the material by centuries, as Martina Hartmann claims, was a completely new way of dividing up history. On the other hand, the way each century would be further divided into a fixed range of topics, reflected the "Lokalmethode," which had been inspired by Melanchthon's *Loci communes*.<sup>32</sup>

Flacius was somewhat typical of his era: a man of many talents and interests, comfortably moving among wide-ranging disciplines. The diversity of his interests was also reflected in his teaching career, during which he moved between faculties and lectured on ancient languages, Aristotle as well as theology. As a true polymath (*Polyhistor*; *Universalgelehrter*) of the sixteenth century, he was very similar to his "cousin" from Cres, Franciscus Patricius (Frane Petrić).

29

The argument that Flacius did not have a doctorate and was therefore placed in the fourth row may be challenged, since out of all the people preceding him only Johannes Schröter possessed a doctorate, which he had earned at the University of Vienna in 1552. It is also true that Stigel held the prestigious title of *Poeta Lauerata* granted to him by Emperor Charles V, which might explain why he was placed before Flacius. Strigel, on the other hand, had the same level of education as Flacius, which supports my claim that at that stage, Flacius was not seen by the ducal court as a leading faculty member.

30

Björn Slenczka, "Flacius' Privatgutachten von 23. Juli und die Weimarer Instruktionen," in: Björn Slenczka, *Das Wormser Schisma der Augsburger Konfessionsverwandten von 1557. Protestantische Konfessionspolitik und*

*Theologie im Zusammenhang des zweiten Wormser Religionsgesprächs* [Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 155], Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2010, pp. 150–153.

31

Slenczka, *Das Wormser Schisma*, p. 487: "Offenkundig ist aber, daß Flacius zu dieser Zeit in Jena noch nicht etabliert war und um seinen Stand innerhalb der Fakultät zu ringen hatte. Ebenso kämpfte er auch um seinen Einfluß bei Hof."

32

Martina Hartmann, "Die Magdeburger Centurien und ihre wissenschaftliche Bedeutung", in: Eckhart W. Peters (ed.), *Die Magdeburger Centurien, I: Die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung des Flacius Illyricus*, Verlag Janos Stekovics, Döbel (Saalkreis) 2007, pp. 55–80, here pp. 62–63.

Luka Ilić

**Matija Vlačić Ilirik kao profesor na ranonovovjekovnim  
evangeličkim sveučilištima u Wittenbergu i Jeni  
sredinom šesnaestog stoljeća**

**Sažetak**

*Prilog istražuje sveučilišnu karijeru Matije Vlačića Ilirika (1520–1575), rodom iz Labina, na novoosnovanim ranonovovjekovnim evangeličkim sveučilištima u Saskoj i Tirišskoj. Vlačić, koji je prvo bio student u Wittenbergu, dobio je svoje prvo učiteljsko mjesto 1544. na Filozofskom fakultetu kao predavač hebrejskog jezika, a na tom položaju ostao je do Uskrsa 1549. Nakon akademske pauze od 1549. do 1557. provedene u Magdeburgu, koja ipak označava važno razdoblje u kojem je Vlačić dobio mnoga važna priznanja kao teolog i crkveni povjesničar; Vlačić je pozvan da zauzme profesuru Novog Zavjeta na Collegium Jenense. Sveučilište u Jeni je od svog početka djelovalo kao luteranska konfesionalna akademska institucija i Vlačićeva uloga kao jednog od vodećih teologa bila je od velikog značaja u postavljanju smjera za vjerski krajolik Ernestinske Saske.*

*Rad se bavi pitanjima kako se Vlačić uklopio u sistem ranonovovjekovnih protestanskih sveučilišta kao i hijerarhije koje se tiču fakulteta, discipline i profesora, te će upravo kroz Vlačićev primjer dotaknuti pitanja institucionalne fleksibilnosti naspram krutosti unutar sveučilišnog sustava. Zatim, rad istražuje neke od važnih aspekata zadržavanja vjerskog identiteta protestantskih sveučilišta po načelu "cuius regio, eius religio" koje se provodilo od 1555. u Svetom rimskom carstvu njemačke narodnosti.*

**Ključne riječi**

Matija Vlačić Ilirik, Wittenberg, Jena, religiozno obrazovanje, vjerska politika, rana novovjekovna protestantska sveučilišta, šesnaesto stoljeće

Luka Ilić

**Matthias Flacius Illyricus als Lehrer an den frühneuzeitlichen  
lutherischen Universitäten von Wittenberg und Jena  
in der Mitte des Sechzehnten Jahrhunderts**

**Zusammenfassung**

*Die facettenreiche Karriere des in Kroatien geborenen Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575) enthielt Lehraufträge an den neu gegründeten evangelischen frühneuzeitlichen Universitäten in Sachsen und Thüringen. Flacius, der Student in Wittenberg gewesen war, erhielt ebendort im Jahre 1544 seine erste Stelle an der Philosophischen Fakultät als Hebräischlehrer; eine Position, die er bis Ostern 1549 inne hatte. Nach einer Pause vom akademischen Engagement zwischen 1549 und 1557, die er in Magdeburg verbrachte und eine Phase der Gewinnung von breiter Annerkennung als Theologe und Kirchenhistoriker darstellt, wurde Flacius eingeladen, den Lehrstuhl für Neues Testament am Collegium Jenense zu besetzen. Die Universität von Jena fungierte von Anfang an als eine konfessionell lutherische akademische Institution, und Flacius' Rolle als führender Theologe war von großer Bedeutung für die Weichenstellung der religiösen Landschaft des Ernestinischen Sachsen.*

*Dieser Beitrag befasst sich weiterhin mit Fragen der Hierarchie zwischen den Fakultäten, Fachrichtungen und Professoren sowie, anhand von Flacius' Beispiel, mit den damit verbundenen Themen der institutionellen Flexibilität gegenüber der Starrheit des Hochschulsystems. Darüber hinaus beschäftigt sich der Text mit der Wechselwirkung zwischen der konfessionellen Identität der Universitäten und dem Prinzip des "cuius regio, eius religio", welches im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation seit dem Jahr 1555 galt.*

**Schlüsselwörter**

Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Wittenberg, Jena, konfessionelle Ausbildung, Religionspolitik, frühneuzeitliche protestantische Universitäten, sechzehntes Jahrhundert

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de Wittenberg et Iéna au temps de la Renaissance au milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle**

**Résumé**

*La riche carrière de Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575), né en Croatie, fut notamment marquée par des charges d'enseignement dans les nouvelles universités protestantes de Saxe et Thuringe. Flacius, qui fut étudiant à la Faculté de philosophie de Wittenberg, reçut sa première charge comme professeur d'hébreu en 1544, une position qu'il tint jusqu'à la Pâque 1549. Après une pause dans sa carrière académique passée à Magdebourg entre 1549 et 1557, qui est considérée comme une période essentielle dans sa vie, il obtint une véritable reconnaissance comme théologien et expert de l'histoire de l'église, et fut invité à occuper la chaire de professeur de Nouveau Testament au Collège théologique de Iéna. L'Université de Iéna fonctionna comme institution académique luthérienne dès ses débuts, et le rôle de Flacius en tant que chef de file de la théologie protestante eut une signification éminente pour l'orientation religieuse de la Saxe ernestine.*

*Cette contribution analyse le problème de la hiérarchie entre les Facultés, disciplines et Professeurs, et plus précisément, à travers l'exemple de Flacius, la question de la flexibilité vis-à-vis de la rigidité interne du système d'enseignement supérieur. En partant de cette situation, il s'agit de traiter les conséquences réciproques entre l'identité confessionnelle des universités d'une part, et le principe « cuius regio, eius religio » d'autre part, lequel régna le Saint Empire Romain Germanique à partir de 1555.*

**Mots clés**

Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Wittenberg, Jena, formation confessionnelle protestante, politique religieuse, Universités protestantes de la Renaissance, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle