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Beginning of the Reformation in Valais

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Translated from the German by Albert Moesle

A. Geographic and Political Conditions

Valais lies in southwestern Switzerland. At the time of the Reformation it was a republic loyal to the Confederation, i.e. the Bishop sent one or two envoys to the Tagsatzung \(^2\) in Baden to join in deliberation and decision-making.

The country is given shape by the broad Rhone valley, which starts as a glacier in the east and in the west reaches Martigny, but there heads off in a sharp rightward bend toward the north and ends in Lake Geneva. The narrow side-valleys rise approximately 1,000 meters above the valley floor. The villages there lead their own, closed-in life. The laggards of the great migration of peoples withdrew themselves there when they tired of further crossing the Alps. Each valley has its unique culture and language. Remnants of the Arabic are found for example in the mountain nomenclature “Alalin,” translated as “God sleeps.” Human beings have always sought God in the mountains. Some areas speak Old or Middle-High German. Particular families live in each village, so a person’s name reveals his heritage. High mountains close off the valley from its neighbors, but numerous passes make crossing the Alps possible.

Valais comprises the crossroads of commerce and war, so the inhabitants of Valais must watch out for their neighbors Bern, Uri, northern Italy, and Savoy.

During the Reformation period, the Bishop of Sion reigned as sovereign ruler \(^3\). He justified this power as a gift of Charlemagne, the so-called “Carolina.” \(^4\) In 999 the King of Burgundy enfeoffed Valais to the

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\(^2\) Translator’s note: until 1848, assemblies to which communities allied to the Confederation sent envoys to deliberate common business.

\(^3\) Translator’s note: Landesherr.

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Bishop of Sion because he, as an unmarried man, was not allowed descendents, and the land therefore could be newly enfeoffed at his death. Since the king died without descendents, the German Kaiser came into the inheritance. The first title of enfeoffment has been lost. In the fourteenth century Kaiser Karl IV confirmed the enfeoffment; thus the false idea developed that Charlemagne enfeoffed Bishop Theodul. Yet while Charlemagne was crowned Kaiser in A.D. 800, Theodol took part in a synod in Aquileja in A.D. 381.

The sovereign ruler called and chaired the Landrat. He signed laws and alliances. While the legislative power rested with the parliament, the sovereign ruler was encharged with the envoys of the seven Zenden and with the cathedral chapter. The Zenden consisted of several villages, which voted for representatives to the Zenden council, where the envoys to the parliament were designated. The envoys were only allowed to endorse drafts for which their Zenden gave them instructions. Should new business be discussed at a meeting, the envoys were required to get in touch with the Zenden council to procure their opinion. The Zenden council asked the villages if the population agreed with a resolution. Only by unanimous agreement did a resolution take effect.

Whenever possible, all problems were decided at the lowest level. The parliament’s resolutions could be accepted or rejected by the Zenden, just as the villages were free in their decision-making. This democratic order made for slow proceedings. Some business was drawn out for years and was finally settled of itself.

In the villages and the cities, there were only a few families that could follow political events because they had learned reading, writing, French, and Latin. Since there was a lack of schools in the country, most boys went to school in Bern, Geneva, or Basel.

5 Translator’s note: German speakers know Charlemagne as Karl der Grosse, which explains the author’s claim that he might be confused with the eponymous Karl IV. Likewise, the French nomenclature allows for a similar conflation.
7 Translator’s note: parliament.
9 Translator’s note: Domkapitel
10 Translator’s note: Zendenrat
11 Gerda Altpeter, Die Zeit der Reformation im Wallis, Sitten/Sion, 1994, p. 4
B. The Reformation from 1517-1565

In the sixteenth century a movement developed in Europe called the Reformation. “Within Humanism, which enjoyed a place foremost with the bourgeoisie, the motto of a return to the simple theology of Christ was proclaimed and the prevailing religiousness of the time criticized from the standpoint of the Bible.”

While in Germany this movement was led by Martin Luther, in Zurich it was Ulrich Zwingli and in Geneva Jean Calvin who served as leaders. Each acted according to the specific problems that they met as pastors. For Luther it was the selling of indulgences, for Zwingli the (mercenary) military, for Calvin the question of a good church organization and the doctrine of predestination, i.e. whether God predetermines a person for good or evil.

In other areas there was no one notable as in Wittenberg, Zurich, or Geneva. There the pastors and citizens sat down together and read from the Bible. They then compared the current situation of their church with what was written there. They also read the works of the great reformers, but they developed their own understanding of what Reformation should mean.

Valais suffered under Cardinal Bishop Matthäus Schiner und the mercenary leader Georg Supersaxo during the disagreement. Matthäus Schiner was Bishop of Sion from 1499-1522.

He was born around 1465 in Mühlebach by Ermen in Goms. His father Peter, a brother of Bishop Nikolaus Schiner, was a not too poorly off builder and carpenter. ... Next to Matthäus are three other sons: Kaspar, Peter, and Johann, and one known daughter. ...He was already established in 1492...
as chancellor to Georg Supersaxo. Georg Supersaxo was the extramarital son of Bishop Walter\textsuperscript{14} Supersaxo.\textsuperscript{15}

He did not wish to enter the clergy like his father, but rather he became a mercenary leader. As such he amassed a great fortune. By his wife Margaretha Lehner he fathered 23 children. At the pilgrimage church in Brig-Glis he added the “golden gate” to the St Anne Chapel. On the altar he displayed the Holy Family, while at the back of the winged altar he displayed himself with his wife and 23 children. He helped Matthäus Schiner with his business as bishopric secretary and then 1499 as bishop.\textsuperscript{16} In 1509 he joined the French Party because, due to the acquisition of Milan by the king, the country was completely surrounded. Francis I allied with the Turks against the Pope and the German Kaiser. Schiner however recognized the danger that this alliance would mean for Europe, and acted as foreign minister for the Pope and Kaiser. His eloquence succeeded in joining the two in alliance with England and Spain, as well as putting the Swiss Confederation in the service of Popes Julius II and Leo X. At the 13-14 August 1520 parliament in Sion, he declared Georg and his followers to be rebels.\textsuperscript{17} Georg was taken into custody in Freiburg, but bribed his way to escape and took up the fight against the bishop and cardinal.


\textsuperscript{15} Han Anton von Roten, \textit{Die Landeshauptmänner von Wallis 1388-1789}, BWG 23, 1991, p. 56


\textsuperscript{17} Dionys Imesch, \textit{Die Walliser Landratsabschiede seit dem Jahre 1500}, Volume 2 (1522-1529), Brig, 1949, p. 4
On 12 September 1517 the parliament met “in den Mertmatten” at Sion to create a new order that would bring peace to the land. The articles clearly show that democracy had gained in strength. The document begins: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The nobles were not supposed to hold court secretly in their homes; rather each case was to take place in front of a judge that the country installed. Each case was to take place in a public location for that purpose. Rich and poor were to be equal before the law. No one was to be favored. Bribery was penalized. An objection was to be heard. Statements under oath could only be accepted when the witnesses were previously aware of the accusations. The accusers were to be openly named. Foreign courts were not to be recognized; rather the citizens of Valais were to be put before their own courts. No Zenden was to take up arms against another Zenden, but the whole country was to see to it that violence was stamped out with violence. Whoever called foreigners to the country to attack one’s fellow citizens was to be punished as an enemy of the country. All past discord was to be forgotten.

In the following legal articles, the work of the reformers in Valais becomes clear. They sought to turn the princedom-bishopric into a democracy.

Word for word it states: “Should then no lord of Valais ride without the country’s favor, knowledge, and will; and, if that takes place, that the lord [remain] away longer than three days and six weeks, a cathedral chapter and country may choose another lord (bishop).”

Since the bishop already had been long absent from Valais in service of the Kaiser and Pope, through this article the bishop was taken from office in Valais by the parliament. He returned home no more, but rather remained abroad until his death. Interestingly, the choice of bishop was awarded to the cathedral chapter and parliament, while the Pope could only confirm or deny. This regulation kept its validity into the 20th century.

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21 Imesch Dionys, *Die Walliser*, Volume 1, p. 39
22 Gerda Altpeter, *Die Zeit der Reformation im Wallis*, Sitten/Sion, 1994, p. 8
Further articles accuse Matthäus Schiner. "Item, so the honorable lord Matthäus Schiner, Cardinal, as the accusation reports, burdened many pious people in sundry ways in body, life, and goods ... and violently persecuted in small matters and in matters of honor the Swiss Confederates, in violation of justice, by which he did not remove or excuse himself, should the same lord Cardinal not return to the country, but rather keep himself abroad."  

The other clerics behaved just as annoyingly. They served as jurists and drafted agreements that were costly. They carried swords and wore magnificent clothing. Not just at this assembly "in den Mertmatten," but also later, the assembly passed articles to arrange for good conduct among the clerics.

Here the matters of concern to the Reformation were already taken up. It was not theologians who drew up and concluded the country's peace "in den Mertmatten." Nor was it professional politicians, or noble, high lords. It was citizens, who were voted for by their fellow citizens, to take charge of governmental business in the country. They had suffered for many years under the partisan fighting of the greats – Kaiser and Pope, the French king – so they wanted a just peace and an order that guaranteed every countryman equal justice and freedom from harm to body and soul ... Ecclesiastical lords and noble lords would take up no more special position; rather, they would rather bow before the same law as any simple countryman.  

Cardinal Bishop Matthäus Schiner reacted indignantly to the country's peace. Through the Pope he published a Bull against Valais that forbade the distribution of the sacraments. Such an action hit the people hard, since they feared for the well-being of their souls. Since the people of Valais never allowed their bishop out of exile until his death in 1522, Basel suggested that Georg Supersaxo be exiled, which happened in 1529. Georg fled to Vivis, the present-day Vevey, and died there shortly later.

2. Parliamentary Decisions against the Reformation

At Sion’s parliament of 17-21 December 1522, the following resolution was passed by the newly-elected Bishop Phillip am Hengart

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23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p. 9
(or de Paltea), the head of government²⁵, Anton Blanc, and the envoys of the seven Zenden:

“To the glory and honor of the almighty God and to the eternal salvation of our souls, that no one present God, the Almighty, his holy wounds and suffering, with strong or other denials contrary to the Mother of God, and who does so, should from that hour onward, to show his obedience and regret, kiss the earth; whoever hears such a thing is required by their oath to admonish him. If, however, such a swearer does not do so, they should in penitence that hear it, report it to the mayor of the church, near where he lives. To the same he is required to make penitence without contradiction.”²⁶

Through this decree it becomes clear what position the parliament took concerning the Reformation. It sought reforms concerning improper behavior among church clerics, but it did not wish a reformation. It was concerned about the unity of the Church and at the same time the unity of the country. It feared, not unjustifiably, religious fighting and civil war.

A decree from Friday, 10 September 1524, speaks even more clearly. It states:

“So Lutheran belief and opinion continue to be seen. Through them, however, arise many errors and offenses in Christian faith. To forestall all such things, it is ordered and unanimously decided by the majority of the envoys that from now on, no one in this country of Valais, either spiritual or worldly, should discuss or dispute Lutheran faith or opinion, but rather wherever one meets them, and whenever they refuse to back away from Lutheran opinion, the dissenters should be taken by the judge at the places where they are found, and handed over to our merciful Lord (Bishop) of Sion, and punished according to law and merit.”²⁷

It is important to read this decree carefully. It means first of all obviously that envoys were evangelical too, since not all of them spoke out in favor of the decision. On the other hand, the Reformation in Valais must have made such inroads that the government found it necessary to

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²⁵ Translator’s note: Landeshauptmann
²⁶ Dionys Imesch, Die Walliser Landratsabschiede seit dem Jahre 1500, Volume 2 (1522-1529), Brig, 1949
act against this movement among the people. The Valais authorities received on top of it all a letter from Lucerne dated 11 November 1524, in which the new communities write: “Protest against infiltration of the new teaching, the peculiar behavior of Zurich, the rebellion in Thurgau.”

The behavior of clerics in Valais is handled at the session of 11-16 December 1527. The Reformation, which was announced in the 1524 pamphlet, was to have the floor taken out from under it. In written German, it states:

1. Since a great rupture has been caused in the world [to] the Christian faith through dissolute and idle people, who strive for worldly lust and who interpret God’s Word in the church according to their wishes or otherwise contrary to its substance, display and pronounce strange sins, and who listen to and rely on the preacher, or whomever it might be, falls into punishment and forfeits life and property ...

2. Likewise, because quite many under the priesthood live against the laws of God, whoring and in other unseemly ways, and often going to the holy sacrament of the altar, as well as unseemly usury, bringing poor people to great harm, such as often lending a little grain or corn for a crown, found nights in the alleys or in other unseemly places with just a sword. They also claim that their goods, which come to them from the laity, are not taxable ...

3. Similarly, many priests who currently go to the pulpits are totally inexperienced in the Holy Scriptures, and because of them it is to be decided at a Landrat, which priests should be allowed to openly preach, and which should be determined to stand down. 28

This is how the Landrat tries on the one hand to guard against the infiltration of the Reformation’s thinking and at the same time to pass necessary reforms concerning the country’s clerics. In fact, no evangelical ministers from the Reformation period remained in Valais. At the Landrat session of 30 January – 4 February 1528, the following articles were drafted up concerning priests:

4. Whenever priests demands payment from the sick or the laity, the heirs are not required to provide it.

5. No priest should take remuneration for the distribution of the sacraments.
6. The confessor may give no one secular punishment.
7. From now on, priests shall carry no swords, rapiers, axes, daggers.
8. Priests should not lead an unchaste life with girls and nevertheless read the mass and administer the sacraments. He should dismiss such females within a month.
9. Since many poor people, who can barely feed their own children, are forced by priests to give to the seasonal donations, relief shall take place.
10. Many schoolchildren go abroad and there learn Lutheran ways, and for this reason the honorable shall allocate a sinecure for a schoolmaster, who can keep an honorable school for the country’s children.29

These articles were presented to the bishop and the cathedral chapter for comment. They requested time for reflection. They hesitated because they lived together themselves with their housemaids and wives and were used to wealth. No one wanted voluntarily to renounce income and live in poverty. The Landrat waited for an answer in vain. The reforms were not executed.

The displeasure grew among the people, particularly among those who studied in Bern, Basel, or Zurich. At the Landrat in Sion of 30 April – 1 May 1528 many prominent citizens of the city of Sion appeared and complained that they were charged with Lutheran practice. They indignantly denied it. They wanted to remain Catholic, but they wanted reforms or a reformation.

3. A Pamphlet from the Year 152430

In the crossroads of Valais there were connections to all corners of the world, so it is no wonder that in Sion there occurred as much struggle for understanding of the Bible as in Bern, Zurich, or Wittenberg. Among the supporters of Georg Supersaxo there were humanistically educated

30 Staehelin, Ernst, Eine unbeachtete Flugschrift des Jahres 1524, Zwingliana Volume V, Zurich, 1933, p. 50-65.
men who in this stormy time sought justice and peace. They saw the people’s need and felt responsible to deal helpfully in the right way.

In the Landrat decision of 11 July 1519, a priest named Georg Steger is mentioned who because of his membership in the French Party was excommunicated.

The pamphlet begins, in modern language:

“It came to be that in the small town of the monastery of Valais at the time of fasting of the 24th year, four decent men sat down next to one another and raised themselves up to speak about a variety of things. During such talk, they came in their words to the opinion about the Holy Word of God, and they particularly praised the gentlemen in Zurich for their brave undertaking to arrive at the same Holy Word in truth and clear understanding.”

The title picture shows Peter and Paul before God. They hold between them a broken chain. Peter looks down sadly at it. Paul holds a roll of parchment in hand and looks happily at God, who nods in a friendly manner to him.

The men – Lutius Steger, Othmar Karg, and two others – know the Bible and contemplate it. They want to order their lives according to its directives. For them, the chain that long bound Christendom together is broken.

Lutius Steger invokes John 6,2: “where two or three gather in the name of Jesus, there God himself teaches.” He sees confession as a link in that chain with which Christians are seduced and betrayed. Through confession, the monks
supposedly caused war and bloodletting; envy, hate, and rage were stoked; many were made beggars; virgins were deflowered. Widows and orphans supposedly were cheated out of their inheritance in order to enrich cloisters and monasteries. Man supposedly relied on his own works, on holy water and salt for the health of animals, on sanctified wax in the child’s bed, and on holy signs for the expulsion of the devil. In such comfort one placed one’s trust and not in God’s help and mercy. Christ speaks in John 10: “I am the door, through me alone must you pass.” And Matthew 11: “Come here to me, all of you so burdened, I will give you rest.”

Lutius Steger means that one should confess to the person to whom one committed an injustice and replace to him what was destroyed. His criticism is directed at the pastors who do not know the Bible. A true pastor, who knows the Bible, can hold confession and offer good counsel, when his parishioner is in sin or doubt. “So we learned in this way neither God nor our brothers to insult or to deceive, and each of us to reconcile himself with his adversary and to confess to him, and thus call on God for each other … So you understand then what it means to bind and to loosen; it must happen through the pastor’s mouth only in God’s Word. There lies the key, not in the ears. With joy we should accept and keep Christ in our homes. May God help us for all time into eternity. Amen.”

Thus concludes the first and most important pamphlet of the people of Valais, who want to be true to God in His Word. They strive for the return of the Church in its original form, a renewal of head and members. They do not want the division between old and new believers, between a Roman-Catholic and an Evangelical-Reformed Church. They search for the truth, which derives from God, and binds all believers in Christ. Renew, not divide: that remains their principle in further action. In that way they go in uniquely labyrinthine ways, which border on the contradictory.

4. Johannes Albertini

“Among the educated pastors of this period stood Johannes Albertini, “Priest from Valais,” who composed numerous writings on the Reformation and its representation, but also sent two “Letters to the

Tagsatzung” in Baden and one to Bern. The armorial of Valais sketches the picture of his life: “Johann of Leuk or Naters, priest, rector of the hospitals of St. Anton in Brig in 1500 and in Sion from 1512-1544, party supporter of Georg Supersaxo, faced Church ban in 1519; composed numerous writings in Latin and German languages on the reform of the Church and many proceedings of the Confederal Tagsatzung, author who proved himself visionary” 32 This conclusion does not stand up to scrutiny however.

Albertini’s citations from the Bible show that he took seriously the accounts of the prophets and the apostles. For him, praise and love of God and man were the central duties of Christians, which he missed particularly in governments and Christian churches. In that way, he differentiated between the “population of believers” 33 and the composition of churches, just as does the Lutheran Confession of Augsburg. 34

I mean that the apostles and the prophets really speak to the sinful, current world in the political sense, as if all human beings were good or, as the case may be, could be good. Their requirements were found by many governments to be quixotic, although a realization of their thinking would have fended off war, created order, and brought justice. The apostles and prophets emphasize that they do not communicate their own ideas, 35 and Albertini takes the same approach. They declare God’s commandments and are the conscience of their time. 36

The two writings to the Confederation in Baden: “The first originated from 9 January 1525 and the heading reads: “To the praiseworthy Confederation, of the general reformation of the churches, through which force ought to be brought to be and to which time and at what place to begin, a declaration [of] Johannes Albertini, Priest from Valais; given to Baden on the ninth day of January 1525.” The second originated from 26 January 1525 and the heading reads: “An exhortation to the praiseworthy Confederation to create a general peace, which should occur, beginning with a general reformation of the churches; given to Lucerne on the XXVI day of January 1525. From Johannes Albertini, Priest from Valais.”

32 Walliser Wappenbuch, Zurich, 1946, p. 3.
33 Translator’s Note: “Volk der Gläubigen”
34 Augsburger Bekenntnis, Articles 7 and 8, in Evangelisches Gesangbuch für die Landeskirche Württemberg, Stuttgart, 1996, p. 1497.
35 Among others, Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1, Luke 9.
The following books by Johannes Albertini are known:

De mirabili temporibus mutatione ac terrene potestatis a loco in locum translatione, Geneva, 1524 (BPUGe, Volume 1470), printed by Vuygandi Köln

Ad orthodxe fidei cultores. De ecclesiastica unione exhortatio, Geneva, 1527, (BPUGe, Be 788/1)

Libellus in quo ostendit fides et intellectus, Geneva, 1527 (BPUGe, Bc788/2)

Zuo guot gemeyner tütcher nation, Zurich, 1531, printed by Froschauer under the signature 4°Polem in the Bavarian National Library, Munich

Uff das jar, so man zellet nach der geburt Christi unsers erlösers MCCCCCXXXII, Zurich, 1532, printed by Froschauer under the signature re 123c in the Cantonal Library, Sion

Eine jurze anzeygung allen Christgkoubigen zuo einem guoten saeligen jar, Geneva, 1532 (BRUGe, Bc 788/3).

Albertini reads and observes, like many people of his time, the stars and their explanation by astrologers. He describes particular circumstances in his writings. The subject is an exceptionally bright constellation of stars. According to a report by a current astrologer, who calculates using a computer, the planets Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn stood behind one another from 2-6 February 1524, so that there was a bright appearance. Right nearby stood Venus. The constellation was best seen on 4 February. For that time, however, one must bear in mind that the new calendar was not yet in effect. One must add ten days; one arrives at 12-16 February. The three planets –

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Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn – are considered signs of war; Venus, on the other hand, of love. The astrologers interpreted this constellation as a change in the world. Albertini hypothesized that the change meant the Reformation, which was desperately needed, but should happen not through war, but rather through love.

On 25 March 1525, the day of the Annunciation, he gets the feeling that God is calling him personally to announce among the people this change that he calls “Reformation.” Since he can reach from the chancellery of the hospital only a few people, he reads in the Bible that he would go further with writing.\(^{38}\)

Since Albertini uses apocalyptic texts, he must have viewed his time as apocalyptic. Apocalypses occur in situations of distress. The government (the “above,”\(^ {39}\) as he calls them) oppresses the subjects. A free expression of ideas is not possible. Criticism can lead to severe penalties on one’s living conditions.\(^ {40}\) Since open discussion no longer applies, apocalyptic thinkers write in pictures of animals, natural events, or heavenly bodies within an alien environment. They want to give comfort to fearful people, exhort them to patience, and communicate hope. They proclaim the fall of the rulers; only a little more time, and they will be no longer. Justice and freedom will come.

The confusion comes not just from the political power, but also from the false teachers, who threaten the community with destruction. That applies to the time of John the Apostle, when the Roman emperor persecuted Christians and Gnostic teachers made them insecure. That applies to the time of Albertini, when Lord Phillip de Platea was not affirmed by the Pope as a follower of Georg Supersaxo and various reformers confused the people. In the Apocalypse, the imagining of a good earthly future mixes itself with the hope for final justice and the last day.\(^ {41}\)

At Albertini House in Leuk, there are several frescoes that portray various chapters of the John’s Apocalypse, which Albertini also uses in his books and letters as a reference text. The picture of John’s Apocalypse 12 is interesting: it shows a woman – according to


\(^{39}\) Translator’s Note: the “Oberen.”


Albertini’s interpretation, the Church – whose child is brought before God and is saved from the beasts.

Albertini explains the events of his time from the Bible. He does this as Jesus also did. He uses the Vulgate, the Latin translation, which was employed at that time. In the Latin scripts, he addresses the citizens of his country who know Latin and are familiar with the Bible. He calls on them to check over his statements to confirm their truth. His goals are: (1) a universal peace among Christians; (2) a reformation of the condition of the Church; (3) the reacquisition of the Holy Land. Thus he strives to unite the orthodox and Roman-catholic church through a common struggle into one church. He writes about the Reformation: “The priests and leaders of the Church are not united concerning the sacraments.” Albertini would like to appeal to them, like Susanna and Daniel, to return to God’s law to find out the truth. The early patriarchs of the Church spoke correctly about it. God Himself would have to install a new lawgiver, so that the change in teaching would take place properly. If that does not occur, a general council would have to appoint a representative. The Church might have the power to amend and to create laws, however only when she does so with the help of the Holy Spirit. Now had come the time of reformation, the time of change.

42 Ibid, p.89.
43 Ibid, p.93.
44 Ibid, pp.97-98.
Albertini goes another step in the German scripts. He understands the love of God better than before. He writes in his work from 1532:

““So there are in particular ten beneficial things or gifts that God in his blessedness sends or gives to his people.

The first beneficial thing or gift is the revelation of meaning, to understand the secrets of the scripture, which speak of this blessedness. Their understanding has been concealed until this time.

The other is the forgiveness of sins by God.

The third is the disposal of all tyrannical afflictions and unjust human laws.

The fourth is the call to all peoples to the unity of Christian faith and Godly laws.

The fifth is the opening of jails and the release of all prisoners.

The sixth is the destruction of all tyrannical violence.

The seventh is the planting of truth and justice in the hearts of men.

The eighth is the strengthening against all opponents of Christian faith and of truth and justice.

The ninth is surplus of all fruits, as well as increase in riches of gold and silver.

The tenth is a general, long-lasting peace over the whole earth ...

However the change takes place, so too would the understanding of the scriptures be found and manifested. And so the sixth age of the world ends, and the seventh begins, which quite a few have called the golden age, in which God calls to his blessedness not just his believers, but also all peoples such as Jews, Turks, and Unbelievers.”

Unlike Reformers and Catholics, Albertini includes Jews and Turks in this blessedness. He sees in it the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 23, verses 5-6: “Behold, the days come, says the Lord, and I will raise up to David a just branch: and a king shall reign, and shall be wise: and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell confidently.”
Albertini recapitulates that he does not want to anger anyone. Therefore he shows the weaknesses of the evangelicals who assume that they can obtain this blessedness without a medium. The old, Catholic Christians should not fear any error, but rather hold to the Church teacher Hieronymus and others of this period. An assembly of all Christian churches should investigate how the gospels and other holy scripts can be understood correctly. That does not mean the powerful such as the pope, Kaiser, prelates, or lords, but rather those called by God. He then cites Joel chapter 2, verse 1: "Blow ye the trumpet in Sion." Then he adds Joel 1, verse 14: "Sanctify ye a fast, call an assembly, gather together the ancients, all the inhabitants of the land into the house of your God: and cry ye to the Lord." All believers should take part in this assembly.46

Newly and unexpectedly, Albertini states here that also Jews, Turks, and other unbelievers are called by God. Like the Roman-Catholic Church, the other reformers persecuted, tortured, and killed Jews, Muslims, and unbelievers, with the justification that God wishes it.

It is a tolerant and peaceful position that I have found among the reformers only in Albertini. He describes here a vision that remains a vision today, but which also describes hope in our time.47

The evangelical Christians in Valais directed themselves towards the writings of Albertini. They went abroad or took on a Catholic appearance in order to remain in their homeland. The last traces were lost in 1670.

5. Thomas Platter

Thomas Platter wrote the first autobiography in the German-speaking realm.48 He gives 1499 as his birth-year. His parents come from Vispertal. There his father owns a farm in Niedergrachen. The mother comes from a recognized pedigree of Summermatter, from which emerge priests and high politicians.

Since the land produces little high in the mountains, the men travel into Bernbiet and buy wool that the women spin and weave during the long winter months. On such a trip the father dies of the plague and dies before the child is born. The mother is accommodated by the noise of the church-bells on Sunday in a stall. Only the oldest daughter is there to

46 Ibid., p.122.
47 Ibid., p.127.
offer help. The mother rejects the fatherless child and thus the sister brings the little one to the sister of the father. He is fed through a hollow bone.

At six years of age, he must tend 80 goats in Eisteen. When it snowed he could hardly peer over the snow: the goats run around because he is still too small. The older herders help him. At nine years, he went to a priest relative in order to learn to read and to write. “At first it made me ill, since the gentleman was an angry man, and I an awkward farm boy. He hit me cruelly, took me often by the ear, and hoisted me from the hearth so that I screamed like a poked goat and that the neighbors often thought that he wanted to murder me.” Then a cousin Summermatter took him as errant pupil. But he could not learn anything because he had to beg and steal for the older pupils. At 18 Mykonius in Zurich accepted him. He had to sit in the first grade and to heat the schoolroom for his board. Somehow he had to find the wood for himself. “So I went into the church to the next altar and found a Gospel of John and took him to the school and into the oven and spoke to him: ‘Jögli, don’t buck, hold still or I’ll have to close the little oven door.’” Mykonius said later that Platter kept the heat well.

He learned Latin, Greek, and Hebrew quickly, as well as rope making. In Basel he gave Hebrew instruction at the university. Then he married at the wish of Mykonius his daughter and moved with her to Valais, where he opened a school in Visp in 1529. Many pupils came since the country school closed because the cathedral chapter did not want to give any money for a teacher’s salary.

The bishop, Adrian von Riedmatten, proposed to Platter to take over the country school stipulating that he should receive a good salary. Since, though, the teacher would have to sing with the pupils at Catholic mass,
he did not wish to take the office, and rather moved with his wife and
daughter, who was born meanwhile, to Basel. There he became a book
printer, issued Calvin’s *Institutio* and took over the “school in the castle.”
Since there was a continued dearth of schools in Valais, Platter
accommodated up to 35 pupils so that there would be enough educated
people there who could serve the country as *Landrat* envoys. Thus,
through the young people, reformed thoughts came into the country.

From a spa trip to Brigerbad Thomas Platter writes to Bullinger in
Zurich: “Finally, it has occurred that I … have encountered all so that the
highest hope exists that also you will accept the truth. That this is
delayed lies in the fact that the righteous people wait for the opportunity
where this can happen without insurrection. The bishop himself, with
whom I have spoken and dined at length, and who seems no bad man,
directs himself towards the farmers. All farmers complain in unison
about the priests (since they lead an immoral life). On the other hand,
they do not want Lutheranism because they believe it is, I do not know
how, abhorrent and godless what is taught by us; namely, they are
seduced and wheedled by the clerics. The third category of people, those
who exercise power according to the bishop, are in the main swayed by
the gospels; their number is large, but not yet so many that they could
not be coerced by the farmers, in case the latter suspect Lutheranism among
them. They therefore conceal it very well and explain meanwhile to the
farmers and their relatives the true way of the Holy Spirit, indeed at
home and everywhere, where it is spoken about … those good people
guard against insurrection, go with the others to services and always say
that the judgment of God is to be expected, he shall show the way so that
things turn out well for his people … The farmers value these men since
they in fact vote them into office.”

As Thomas Platter describes here the Protestant evangelicals in
Valais, so they remain until the counter-reformation forces them to
emigrate from Valais or to pretend to be from the outside Catholic
–while being on the inside evangelical. Their descendants know even
today who behaved that way. They showed me the frescoes in their
homes that clearly show the evangelical position.

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51 It refers to the people in Valais.
52 Thomas Platter to Heinrich Bullinger Letter from 12 July 1538, Ms.F.62 fol. 449
   and 550
Adrian von Riedmatten, Bishop from 1529-1548

After the death of Cardinal Bishop Matthäus Schiner, the Landrat voted Phillip de Platea as new bishop. Since he belonged to the party of Georg Supersaxo, the Pope refused to install him. In 1529 he stepped down resignedly. The Landrat voted in his place his nephew Adrian von Riedmatten. The latter grew up in Visp and matriculated at Cologne on 17 October 1494. Shortly thereafter he becomes head of the cathedral in Sion, probably still as a boy. From 1497-1510, he lives peacefully and contentedly at Valeria Palace. During this period he gets to know Margaretha Inwinkelried and has a child with her. She mentions this first in 1535, when he already is bishop. He then cares kindly for his son and his grandchildren. One of his grandchildren by the name of Hildebrand later incidentally becomes Bishop of Sion. The son’s family is domiciled in the minster in Goms. They produce capable priests and politicians and influence life in Valais.

Adrian von Riedmatten supports Cardinal Bishop Matthäus Schiner. Like his bishop, he had to leave Valais. His father requests the Landrat on 23 April 1523 to allow his son to return. Adrian writes to the ruling Landeshauptmann: “I want to share good and bad times with the noble country folk and live and die with them.”

On 8 September 1529, Adrian von Riedmatten is voted bishop by the Landrat. Upon entering his office as bishop and “Count and Prefect of Valais,” the bishopric and countryside found themselves in a condition of insecurity and unrest. In autumn 1531 he resides, perhaps because of the danger of plague, at Tourbillon Palace. Troops from Valais come “enthused by the faith under the leadership of Colonel Gilg Imahorn to the help of Catholic localities. They take part in the skirmish at Gubel and return with a few spoils.”

Not until 15 May 1532 does he becomes installed in Rome by Pope Clement VII and on 21 July anointed as bishop in Lausanne. He visits Valais twice. He shows concern for his evangelical relatives, otherwise is of a weak nature, and thus the Reformation spreads under his administration. At the Landrat sits a row of envoys that is supportive of the new faith.

54 Ibid., Issue 1, p.10.
55 Ibid., Issue 2, p.87.
The Landrat decree of 26-29 April 1536\textsuperscript{56} reports of the interrogation of Chaplain Hans Vyche from Sion. According to the report, he follows the new teaching, abuses the Sacraments, and collaborates with other priests who are likewise evangelical. The Landrat does not employ the severe penalties to body and goods, but rather repeats the restriction on the importation of Lutheran or Zwinglian books into the country. Since however surveillance declines at the passes where goods are brought in, the legislation is no success.

At that time, the Confederation belonged in name to the German Reich, but the connections were so loose that not only Switzerland but also each canton engaged in its own foreign and confederal policy. In the year 1526, the city of Geneva concluded a new castle law with Bern and Freiburg: “The nobility of the area around Geneva that associated with the so-called “Löffelbund,” fought and sieged the city in alliance with an army from Savoy. Bernese, Freiburgers, and Solothurners liberated, however, the hard besieged sister at Leemansee in autumn 1530. The Peace of St. Julien came to pass.\textsuperscript{57} It was decided that Waadt go to Bern, in case the duke attack again.

Shortly thereafter, Geneva introduced the Reformation and expelled the bishop. He found asylum with the Duke of Savoy and prepared with him for war to reconquer the city. In 1535 he besieged Geneva, as the French king tried on his side to conquer Savoy and Geneva to more easily move towards Milan. In January 1536, Bern declared war on the duke due to its alliance with Geneva from 1526. ...Bern conquered the right bank of Lake Geneva in two weeks and advanced beyond the city to Thonon. The people of Valais hatched a good clever idea. The bailiff of St. Moritz, Gilg Imahorn, sent secret envoys, who were supposed to argue to the people of Chablais to place themselves under the protection of the Bishop of Sion since the Landesherr could defend them no longer. That way they could guard the Catholic faith, since the Bernese would force the Reformation on their conquered territories.

In fact, the subjects of Savoy offered Valais protection and help. The Landrat sent former Landeshauptmann Kaspar Metzelten, former bailiff Jost Kalbermatten, and Fänner Peter Owlig to the Bernese camp and received the friendly promise that the people of Valais were welcome as confederal partners. They could take the land to the Dranse, a stream


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between Evian and Thonon. To the Duke of Savoy, they wrote\textsuperscript{58}, “that they wanted to help him, in that they would save his land through an occupation from the reformed Bernese, since he himself was not in the position to defend it from the evangelicals. His subjects would be handled kindly and would be allowed to remain Catholic. As soon as he reconquered Waadt from the Bernese, in other words when he could defend his land again, they would withdraw given remuneration of their costs.\textsuperscript{59}

The Landrat found itself thus forced to exercise tolerance toward its Protestant citizens because of its alliance with its Protestant Bernese compatriots. It only took action only when it was forced to by the Inner-Swiss. In the Landrat decision of 26-29 April 1536 it states that Gilg Ruppen of Brigerberg with two associates, who --it states -- made it necessary for him, and afterwards fled the country, that during the last fasting period ate meat. The Landrat sentenced him to 14 days in jail, 7 of them with bread and water. Upon his release, he was to go bare-chested from Majoria Palace in Sion to Theodul’s Church, carrying in one hand a piece of meat and in the other a rod. There he was to sacrifice two pounds of wax. Similarly, Niklaus Im Eich, the Younger, from Visp was judged. Anni, wife of Joder of Shalon, publican of Visp, allegedly served him meat at table. She was to go barefoot and with open hair from the publican house of Hans Perrig to Theodul’s Church and carry one pound of wax along the way. Stephan von Riedmatten was judged at the same Landrat to make an open apology because he allegedly scuffled over his new faith in the lower church of Visp with the old-faith chaplain Peter Kaufmann. The bishop was supposedly very indignant about the punishment of Stephan.

On 8 December 1545, the Landrat requests in a letter\textsuperscript{60} that youth who were sent to school in Lutheran cities should be taken back home by Easter since through this exposure to Lutheranism there was much useless and unseemly talk against the old faith. Likewise, Lutheran books were banned.\textsuperscript{61}


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p.328 (Landrat closing of 16-22 December 1545).
up in good breeding and honor. If the lords of the seven Catholic communities wanted them at other schools, they would have to pay for it themselves. Promptly Bern inquires what justification Valais has to pull their children out of reformed cities. The pupils of Valais who had received such Lutheran instruction were not found upon their return home to be less well prepared academically than their peers from the Catholic communities.

One of the most eager advocates of the Reformation we find in Johann Venetz. Through a relative, Peter Venetz, who changed from monk to evangelical pastor in Württemberg, he came in contact with new ideas. In 1539, he served in office as head of church and schoolmaster in Stalden, and in 1541 as schoolmaster in Brig. In 1563 he corresponded with Antistes Bullinger in Zurich, and received from him directions concerning how he could preach the Word of God most successfully. In 1551, we meet him as prior in Lötschen and from there as pastor and head of the cathedral in Sion.

Bishop Johann Jordan, 1548-1565

Johann Jordan was born in Weiler Bach near Brig in 1491 or 1494. In 1525, he was prior in Martinach and became then canonicus in Sion until he was elected bishop. He was characterized as learned and peace loving, and these traits indeed led to his election. He lived with his housekeeper in a marriage-like relationship and cared kindly for his children, four sons and one daughter. The Freiburgers accused him of only being concerned with building beautiful houses for his children and thus giving the benefices and money to bad and incapable clerics. The palaces of the diocese, on the other hand, he left dilapidated.

His children became evangelical and the grandchildren went to reformed schools. In Rome he had to pay high sums of money to receive his installation by the Pope. The French cardinals did support him, although later it came to disagreements between them and the new bishop. During the time of his administration, the influence of the evangelicals increased in the country. He was indeed too indulgent in order to act out energetically against the new teaching.

In his period there occurred in 1550 a rebellion of some Zenden that was called the Trinkelstierkrieg. In Valais, trinkeln is designated by

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62 Mario Possa, Die Reformation im Wallis bis zum Tode Bischof Johann Jordans 1565, in BWG 9, Brig, 1940, p. 1-216.
cowbells. The leaders carried cowbells in front of them while marching and created with them an awful noise. Even today during carnival such trinkeln is used to create noise and fright.

In Valais, salt is one of the most important imports because one can preserve foodstuffs with it, for example, cabbage, meat, and cheese. The French king raised the price of sea salt and thereby stirred the anger of the country folk. Then when Heinrich II wanted to renew the alliance among the confederal allies in 1549, the people declined the offer. They did not want to grant the French king right of passage. They were angry at the fact that the leading people of Valais were not held equal to the rest of the confederal elites, demanded back pay, and spoke of meat sales and embezzlement of pensions by the great families.

The insurrection belongs to the series of Farmer and Peasant Boot Wars, but had a religious side. The talk of “meat sales” reminds one of Zwingli, who characterizes the mercenary army in that way and forbade it through the council of the city of Zurich. It is also significant that the insurrection broke out in Leuk, which stood on the other side of the evangelical issue. The people of Leuk marched with the Sidersern to Visp, mobilized the Lötschentalers and the Schattenbergers, infiltrated into Saastal and then turned on Sion. The bishop called the Gommers for help and tried to convince the Zenden that they should hold meetings separately to bring forward their concerns properly. At the Landrat of 21-26 January 1550, each Zenden raised its concerns. It was demanded that the French king receive no right of passage, to reduce the service time of mercenaries, to distribute the pensions in a just manner, and to deal with reforms in the religious area. The agitators were punished severely.

After the Trinkelstierkrieg, the Evangelical Party strengthened itself among the envoys in the Landrat. First, it was forbidden to strive for appellations abroad. Then the Papal Bulls were declared invalid and anyone was allowed to rip off such announcements from the church door. It did not come however to an edict of tolerance. The bishop continually had to fight for his rights. Influential families became evangelical. The sister of the Landeshauptmann Peter von Stockalper, Landeshauptmann from 1546-1647 and 1551-1553, married the new believer Thomas von Schalen. Churchly life showed at that time even in Zenden of Brig some new elements. The pastor, Anton Blumen von Naters, head of the cathedral of Sion, was punished for denegation of purgatory. Peter

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Venetz, evangelical pastor in Württemberg, held in summer 1554 in Brig an evangelical service. If there were also in Brig followers of the new teaching like Brinlen Hans, Thomas von Schalen, etc., it does not appear to have come to the founding of a new community. The internal Protestant strife about teaching made an even worse impression among the people of Valais than the degenerate customs of the clerics of Valais.

The descendants of Johann Kalbermatten of Sion, Landeshauptmann from 1549-1551, became Protestant and remained in the capital until 1629. Peter Allet of Leuk, Landeshauptmann from 1558-1559, 1564-1565, and 1568-1569 allowed his sons Ulrich and Bartholomäus to study at evangelical schools. The sons became leading personalities among the people of Leuk’s evangelical community.

In 1554, Peter Venetz, former resident of Valais and monk, then evangelical pastor in Württemberg, visited Landeshauptmann Stockalper in Brig. Men from the best families were assembled to celebrate religious service and dinner. The assembled argued for a Reformation in faith and allow books to be sent from Zurich to orient themselves more exactly. In Unterwalden a few books were intercepted and researched by the bishop through learned men. The books were banned.

In 1556, an announcement was posted at the marketplace in Sion in which the theses of the new teaching on the Bible were capitulated. When a man from Saviese tore it down, he was taken before the court of the City of Sion. In Brig, the pastor was thrown into jail because he denied purgatory. In Visp, Pastor Peter Kaufmann acted on behalf of the interests of the Reformation. Pastor Fabry of Leuk was punished before the diocesan fiscal because he presented the Mass as devil’s deceit and boasted to have lived with his housekeeper as well as his legal wife together.

It is interesting to ascertain that the publicans often worked as zealous apostles of the new teaching. In spa areas, there were often arguments between the cure guests, since these were free baths that were visited by Evangelical and Catholic sick. In Leukerbad, dispute in the bath was forbidden under punishment of standing for three hours in a neck iron. Lorenz Kalbermatten from Martinach, Michael Zum Buel from Sion, and Peter Owlig from Brigerbad became famous as publicans and evangelicals.

In France meanwhile the fight over faith raged on. The Guises, supported by the king, provided leadership for the Catholics, and the

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Prince of Condé, Henry of Navarre, led the Huguenots. Both sides sought mercenaries in Switzerland. The Catholic communities contracted the Guises, and the Evangelicals sent nine patrols to the Prince of Navarre.\textsuperscript{65} The Landrat of Valais forbade the deployment of mercenaries; nevertheless four companies from Valais found themselves ready to contribute to the Prince of Condé’s cause. At the Landrat of 4-6 November 1562\textsuperscript{66}, Captain Heinrich Inalbon had to answer for himself and was sentenced to a fine of 280 crowns. The other mercenaries received the order to return home promptly. At the Landrat of 9-19 December 1562, the three lower Zenden Sion, Siders, and Leuk requested that those in the war only be punished lightly, since they “are from honorable homes on which one can rely in time of war ... Peter Ambyell and Captain Heinrich Inalbon would have received with this promise only the appanage for the country.”\textsuperscript{67}


1519 Image of a Mazze on the wall of the Church in Brig-Glis
The Inner-Swiss communities sent envoys to Upper Valais to call upon the farmers there to protest against the mild punishment of the Swiss mercenary. The traditional right of Mazze was invoked. The Mazze is a right of subjects who are not content with the authorities to revolt. A face is cut out in a tuber—sometimes the root is left as is—and the root is displayed in the marketplace. The Mazze symbolizes the oppressed farmers. Whoever wants to help the Mazze bangs a nail into the tuber. He thereby obliges himself to fight. If enough malcontents assemble with weapons, they then march to the house of their opponent, plunder, burn, and impose their will upon the authorities. Mazze insurrections are proven historically to have taken place during the Reformation. They served the Gommer farmers in their efforts for the recatholicization of the country. At the Landrat of 15-17 January 1563, Moritz zum Brunnen, old Meier von Ernen, appeared and complained that unfortunately he was forced to invalidate the official seals of the four Zenden (Leuk, Raron, Visp, Brig, and City of Sion) of the above mentioned alliance and to give each one back and to confiscate the seal from each.

At the Landrat of 9-21 December 1563, Moritz zum Brunnen excused himself in the name of the council and community of Emen. He said they had decided to “annul” the alliance letter because a general rumor had gone around that in Sion the pictures and images would be thrown out of the church (although that was not so); further, through fraudulent, untruthful rabble rousers the community had been led to believe and had been given to understand that the alliance wanted to bring them to the true, old, Christian faith ... The Landrat concluded that the official seals should be redone because a Reich needed unity ... As a warning ... the parish of Emen was ordered to pay each Zenden that earlier took part in the alliance 20 crowns for activities and expenses.

In 1565, Bishop Johann Jordan died.

68 Translator’s Note: the German word Wurzel stands for the English tuber, root, and radical, which perhaps explains the symbology of displaying a root for insurrection.
C. The First Evangelical Community in Valais

In Leuk, the first evangelical community developed in Valais. Sixteen communities belonged to the Zenden. The proximity to the much-visited spa in Leuk with Evangelical and Catholic cure guests influenced the citizens of Leuk. "The strong movement of Leuk students since 1537 to reformed secondary schools in Basel is remarkable. We find no less than 17 Leuk students from the finest families listed in Basel registries from 1537-1581 ... How many young people from Leuk society have studied in nearer-by Bern we do not know unfortunately. They might have been more numerous than in Basel. So it is no surprise that gradually in Leuk the adhesion to the old faith ebbed and the new teaching gained ground. As a third factor we may add the miserable degenerate example of the old faith clerics of Leuk." 71 Peter Allet, pastor 1511-1532 in Leuk, "understood excellently how to increase his income. Of his two natural daughters, one, Petronella, became the wife of Governor Peter Allet’s son." 72 The successors also had out-of-wedlock children. Peter Zalfred, pastor from 28 January 1549 on, studied in Basel. He corresponded with the reformed predicants in Langnau, Nikolaus Grossilten from Valais.

The most important reformed man in Leuk seemed to be Peter Ambuel. He studied 1549-1550 in Basel and later in Paris. He rose above his compatriots in the knowledge of languages and began his political career in 1553 as court scribe of Grosskastlan von Niedergesteln-Lötschen. In 1562 he took part in the Lyon campaign to come to the aid of the French Huguenots. In 1560 the Catholics dubbed him "an evil heretic." ... There is no doubt that his outstanding gifts and his distinguished position contributed substantially to the spread of the new teaching in Leuk society. Among Ambuel’s first soul mates in Leuk belonged Peter Allet, one of the leading men of Valais, who from 1558-1559, 1564-1565, and from 1568 until his death ruled in Valais as Landeshauptmann. He was involved in written correspondence with Thomas Platter, the Basel schoolmaster and book printer. 73 In Leuk it was considered possible that the Reformation, successful in the north and in the west, would win the upper hand in Valais as well. In Ambuel’s house near the church is found a room in which the Evangelicals held

72 Ibid., p.41.
73 Ibid., p.43.
their religious services. There in fresco is portrayed Daniel’s rescue from the lion’s den and the punishment of his enemies.  

Daniel in the Lion’s Den: Fresco in the Ambuel House, Leuk.

There it is portrayed that the enemies of Daniel wheedled King Darius that one should worship only him for a month. Daniel however continues to pray to God, the Creator of heaven and earth. As punishment he is thrown into the lion’s den, but the lions do not touch him. The king sees in this his innocence and lets him go. For this his enemies are thrown into the den. The lions descend upon them and eat them. Daniel is portrayed as a young man in the blue robe of truth and innocence. The enemies wear bishop’s caps. The Evangelicals of Leuk thus see themselves in the young Daniel, innocent and good, their enemies on the other hand as old and evil, the bishops whom they villainize.

We do not know how exactly the Leuk Protestants celebrated their religious services. They obviously went with their fellow citizens to the Catholic church, but they also celebrated alone. They probably, like the people of Sion later, read the Bible and sang psalms. Later they withdrew

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74 Daniel 6.
Beginning of the Reformation in Valais

to the Gemmi in order to dine alone and to have their children baptized in their own faith.

“The history of the Reformation movement concluded in Leuk with a fully unexpected and dramatic effect. In September 1651 Leuk’s Catholic pastor Michael Ryter left his office, went to Bern, and went over officially to the reformed faith.”

D. Bibliography


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**About the Authoress:**

Gerda Altpeter, née Rappaport, grew up in Germany during the Hitlerian period. Owing to its Jewish origin her family was persecuted by the Nazis. Therefore Dr. Altpeter had to postpone her studies in theology until after the War. In 1947 she married Horst Altpeter. Since in those days women were not allowed to become ministers, she decided to become instead a parish assistant. Dr. Altpeter assisted her husband in his parish and taught Religion and Hebrew in various local high schools. In 1973 the family moved to Switzerland and settled in Ausserbinn in the Valais. In Lausanne Dr. Altpeter acquired her Licence II and doctorate in Theology. She also taught at the Kollegium in Brig and from 1980 until 1988 led the reformed parish of Leukerbad, becoming a synodal councilor and a delegate from the Valais to the Swiss Evangelical Church Federation.

In addition to numerous articles and sermons, she has published the following books:


