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Citation

Müller, J. M. (2019). A two- and a threefold cord: Martin Statius on mixed marriages and interconfessional relationships. *Church History And Religious Culture*, 99(3-4), 465-484.
doi:10.1163/18712428-09903008

Version: Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

A Two- and a Threefold Cord

Martin Statius on Mixed Marriages and Interconfessional Relationships

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Abstract

Religious coexistence and even mixed marital unions were an undeniable reality in many parts of early modern Europe. Despite occasional harsh criticisms by the clergy, church authorities often had no choice than to silently accept religious diversity as an embarrassing fact of life. This article addresses the rare case of the Danzig Lutheran preacher Martin Statius (1589–1655), who tried to articulate well-balanced guidelines for the question of how to deal with religious diversity in public and private spaces. In order to create a theological framework for the discussion of this problem, Statius distinguished between three forms of human love: “natural, civic and spiritual.” Categorizing love and friendship in this manner enabled Statius to bridge the deep gap between theological ideals and the unruly reality of everyday life and offers an illuminating insight into confessional discourses and their relation to the social reality in multiconfessional cities.

Keywords

early modern religion – religious coexistence – Danzig – mixed marriages – preaching – Lutheranism – Baltic – religious diversity

In many regions of early modern Europe, religious coexistence and marriages between adherents of different confessions were a fact of life, even though they were harshly criticized by church officials, as they challenged confessional identities and their reproduction in future generations. In cities of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch Republic, often cited as the prime example of religious diversity in Western Europe, intermarriage rates ranged from 1 percent to peaks of 8 percent, while marriages between different Protestant

confessions were much more common than between Catholics and Protestants. In the Holy Roman Empire, numbers varied greatly from city to city: in Bamberg, a town with one of the highest intermarriage rates, the percentage ranged from 13 to 18,5 percent and by the end of the eighteenth century, a town like Oppenheim, which had a long multi-confessional history, reached 16 percent.¹ Even though clerical authorities of all confessions did their best to denounce such mixed unions and some theologians even declared marriage to apostates “a greater sin than adultery,” or equated interconfessional marriage itself to apostasy, they often had to grudgingly accept the status quo.²

Studies on confessional coexistence in early modern Europe often depart from the assumption of a discrepancy between doctrine and practice in matters of interconfessional contacts, friendships, and marriages. On the one hand, the ideal of a unified *corpus christianum* remained a central idea for centuries and representatives of confessional institutions were usually expected to uphold clear doctrinal standards. On the other hand, groups and individuals were more often inclined to accept confessional differences and bridge the boundaries of faith in everyday life. Even though a non-confessional vocabulary of a com-

- 1 Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge/MA, 2007), 283–285. On intermarriage rates in early modern Holland and Utrecht, see Benjamin J. Kaplan, “Intimate Negotiations: Husbands and Wives of Opposing Faiths in Eighteenth-Century Holland,” in *Living with Religious Diversity in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Scott Dixon, Mark Greengrass, and Dagmar Freist (Farnham, 2009), 225–248; Donald Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland in de 17de en 18de eeuw: processtukken en moralisten over aspecten van het laat 17de- en 18de-eeuwse gezinsleven* (Assen, 1982), 135; Bertrand Forclaz, “The Emergence of Confessional Identities: Family Relationships and Religious Coexistence in Seventeenth Century Utrecht,” in *Living with Religious Diversity* (see above), 249–266; Manon van der Heijden, *Huwelijk in Holland. Stedelijke rechtspraak en kerkelijke tucht, 1550–1700* (Amsterdam, 1998). On intermarriage rates in the German bishopric of Osnabrück and other German territories, see Dagmar Freist, “Crossing Religious Borders: The Experience of Religious Difference and its Impact on Mixed Marriages in Eighteenth-Century Germany,” in *Living with Religious Diversity* (see above), 203–224; Dagmar Freist, *Glaube—Liebe—Zwietracht. Konfessionell gemischte Ehen in Deutschland in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin/Boston, 2017); *Mixed Matches. Transgressive Unions in Germany from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, ed. David M. Luebke and Mary J. Lindemann (New York, 2014); Joel Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge, 2014); Cecilia Christellon, *Mixed Marriages in Early Modern Europe*, in *Marriage in Europe, 1400–1800*, ed. Silvana Seidel Menchi (Toronto, 2016), 294–317. On clerical critiques of interconfessional marriages, see also: Christine Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics during Holland’s Golden Age: Heretics and Idolaters* (Cambridge, 2012), 156–157.
- 2 Freist, *Glaube—Liebe—Zwietracht*, 31 (see above, n. 1). See also the anonymous pamphlet *Ein Trewhertziger und Heilsamer Rath/ von wegen der Heyrathen/ so zwischen Personen widerwertigen Religion geschehen* (s.l., ca. 1620).

mon Christian faith existed, such forms of acceptance were typically based on daily practice rather than on reflected ideals of religious tolerance. As Christine Kooi has argued in a study on religious coexistence in the Dutch Republic, interactions between adherents of different confessions took place in three “metaphorical spaces”: a confessional, a civic, and a private one. While hostility and antagonism was “normative and expected” in the confessional realm, it was unavoidable to interact in civic and private spaces that united citizens of early modern towns, members of guilds or trade organizations, and families, that were internally divided between various confessions. As coexistence in these spaces flourished by the grace of the “willingness to overlook” these differences, it was seldom articulated or explicitly addressed. As Judith Pollmann, Benjamin Kaplan, and others have shown, interconfessional friendships could therefore often coincide with staunch doctrinal convictions.³

In the context of this ‘doctrine vs. practice’-model, this article addresses the case of the Danzig Lutheran clergyman Martin Statius (1589–1655) who treated the controversial issue of mixed marriages and interconfessional relationships in a rather exceptional way. In 1617, when Statius applied for the office of *Diakon* in the Saint John’s Church of Danzig, he held a public proof sermon that would qualify him for his new appointment. In this sermon, he addressed the question “if adherents of different religions can live together as citizens or in marriage and love each other.”⁴ Preaching on such topics was a complex issue: until far into seventeenth century, clerics who defended marriages between adherents of different confessions from their pulpits could face disciplinary measures and as the theological faculty of Rostock declared in 1616, an argument in favor of interconfessional partner choices was a clear transgression of the rules of “the common orthodox doctrine.”⁵ Despite such calls to condemn unions between

3 See e.g. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith* (see above, n. 1), 237–265; Willem Frijhoff, “Religious Tolerance in the United Provinces: from ‘Case’ to ‘Model,’” in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge, 2002), 27–52; Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic. The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641)* (Manchester, 1999); Judith Pollmann, “The Bond of Christian Piety: the Individual Practice of Tolerance and Intolerance in the Dutch Republic,” in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age* (see above), 53–71.

4 I quote Statius from the 1620 printed edition: Martin Statius, *Einfeltige und Christliche Prob unnd AnzugsPredigt. In der Johannis Kirchen in Danzig/ den 27. Octobris, und 24. Decembris, Anno 1617, respective gehalten: jetzo aber sampt der nötigen und streitigen Frage/ welche der Probpredigte ein verleibet: Ob unterschiedliche Religions Verwandte Bürgerlich und Ehelich bey einander wohnen/ und sich unternander lieben können? / In den Druck verfertigt Durch M. Martinum Statium Diener am Wort Gottes zu S. Johannis daselbsten* (Wittenberg: Paul Helwig, 1620), hereafter abbreviated as *PAP*.

5 Freist, *Glaube—Liebe—Zwietracht* (see above, n. 1), 27.

partners of different confessions, church officials had often no choice but to accept the realities of daily life and the typical strategy of Protestant clergy was to silently condone existing marriages.⁶ In contrast, Statius explicitly addresses the precarious topic in a public sermon and presents a highly differentiated view of mixed marriages. As he concedes, marrying a coreligionist was strongly to be preferred, yet his rhetoric concerning marriage, friendship and coexistence across religious boundaries differs in many respects from contemporary approaches to this question. Instead of engaging in the staunch rhetoric of contemporary clergy or simply overlooking the seriousness of this topic, Statius develops a theoretical model that allows his audience to make sense of the daily reality of religious diversity and division in Danzig. The central theme that guides his answer to the question of his sermon is the command to love one's fellow Christian, as formulated in John 15,17. In the sermon, however, this command is not limited to coreligionists but explicitly includes love for relatives, spouses, fellow citizens as well as strangers, regardless of their confession.⁷ To provide a sufficient and acceptable answer to his orthodox Lutheran colleagues as well as to the wider urban community of Danzig, Statius distinguishes between three different forms of love and creates a framework that allows him to discuss the problem of religious diversity in a way that does justice to the complex social reality in the Baltic town.

This article aims to explain the position proclaimed in Statius's sermon and several of his other writings by contextualizing them with the local confessional dynamics of early seventeenth-century Danzig. As Statius states, the local situation in the multi-confessional city pressed him to find a "scriptural" answer to the challenge of daily relations with adherents of other religions.⁸ As I argue, his case illustrates another dimension of early seventeenth-century thinking about confessional coexistence, in which the challenge of confessional division was neither faced with staunch confessionalism nor swept under the carpet as an awkward secret but articulated in a framework that allowed wider audiences to find a way to combine theory and practice. Yet, addressing such a complex issue required elaborate rhetorical strategies and a thorough conceptual framework. In order to solve the question of religious diversity and love between members of different confessions, Statius distinguishes between three kinds of human love, "natural, civic, and spiritual," and discusses how these forms of love are to be applied in daily life. This

6 The only exception to this rule might be the public discussion of mixed marriages among nobles in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. See *ibid.*, 23.

7 *PAP*, H2v.

8 *PAP*, A2v.

distinction enables him to combine a message of civic and social inclusivism without compromising doctrinal standards.

It is remarkable that Statius's sermon on interconfessional love and coexistence was held to qualify him for the office of deacon and to convince his audience of his aptitude for his future task. Choosing a too contentious issue as the subject matter of his proof sermon might not have been a wise choice and even endangered his career, which suggests that his answer was deemed acceptable by his most of his superiors and future colleagues. His case shows how religious coexistence could be addressed from a perspective that possibly represented contemporary Lutheran ideas more adequately than the overdrawn warning cries of some of his colleagues. As an attempt to create a public discourse on a topic that was typically either awkwardly hushed up or decried without acknowledging the complexities of everyday life, Statius's sermon might offer us a rare insight into occasions in which theological ideals and daily practice met. To situate Statius and his sermon in the local Danzig context, I will first discuss the Baltic town's social and confessional dynamics in the early seventeenth century. Secondly, I will discuss Statius's elaborate rhetorical strategy that incorporates patristic and biblical quotes but reframes them in a way that reflected the diverse audience of the sermon. Finally, I will address Statius's distinction between natural, civil, and spiritual love and discuss this model as a possibility to accept confessional differences without giving in to an irenic and religiously indifferent position that would have been unapt for a proof sermon in a local Lutheran Church. The fact that the sermon was published with the approval of the Wittenberg Academy in 1620 further supports the claim that Statius's text was regarded as rather uncontroversial by Lutheran circles.⁹ The content of the sermon was, thus, not only deemed acceptable in Danzig but also in wider Lutheran circles in Germany.

1 Statius and the Religious Landscape of Danzig

Martin Statius was born in the small Pomeranian town of Naugard as the son of the local burgomaster in 1589. After his graduation from the University of Wittenberg he went to Danzig and became a *Diakon* in the Lutheran Saint John's Parish Church in 1617, an office he held for almost 40 years. One year after his appointment, Statius became involved in the dispute on the writings

9 *PAP*, title page. The publisher, Paul Helwig, was specialized in Lutheran theological works and maintained close contacts to the Wittenberg Academy.

on Johannes Arndt, whose writings he defended against suspicions of heterodoxy.¹⁰ In the 1620s and 1630s, he became prolific as an author and editor of theological works that stressed personal piety and devotion, for example the *Geistliche Schatzkammer* by Stephan Praetorius.¹¹ This text was again harshly criticized by the orthodox factions of Danzig's Lutheran clergy, especially for passages that concerned the doctrines of justification and baptism. Disputes like those about Arndt's and Praetorius's works occurred repeatedly and they prefigured later quarrels between orthodox and Pietist factions within German Lutheranism.

The personal practice of piety was also heavily stressed in Statius's *Martyrologium Archi-Patriarcharum* and his *Lutherus redivivus*, which Robert Kolb has characterized as "a protopietistic combination of devotional and catechetical material," based on Luther's postils and theological tracts.¹² The first edition of *Lutherus redivivus* appeared in Thorn in 1626 and the text was reissued several times until the eighteenth century. As Udo Sträter has shown, the later editions of this work circulated in Pietist circles who sharply distinguished between "true Christians" and superficial "Maulchristen," who only confessed Christ with their mouth but put little efforts in practical Christian life.¹³ In many respects, *Lutherus redivivus* resembles Statius's sermon on interconfessional relations, especially in the second part of the six hundred page volume, titled *Das ander Buch von der Liebe*. As in the *Probpredigt*, John 15, 17–22 has

10 Eckhard Düker, *Freudenchristentum: Der Erbauungsschriftsteller Stephan Praetorius* (Göttingen, 2003), 225. On Statius's defense of Praetorius and his eventual reconciliation with the orthodox Lutheran faction among his colleagues, see also Christoph Hartknoch, *Preussische Kirchen-Historia: Darinnen von Einführung der Christlichen Religion in diese Lande, wie auch von der Conservation, Fortpflanzung, Reformation und dem heutigen Zustande derselben ausführlich gehandelt wird*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt a.M./ Leipzig: Simon Beckenstein, 1686), 2: 816.

11 Stephan Praetorius, *Geistliche Schatzkammer/ Der Gläubigen: In welcher Die Lehre vom wahren Glauben/ Gerechtigkeit/ Seeligkeit/ Majestät/ Herrlichkeit/ Christlichem Leben/ und heilsamen Creutz der Kinder Gottes/ [et]c. / Anfänglich von M. Stephano Praetorio, weiland Pastorn zu Saltzwedel/ Stück Weise an den Tag gegeben* (Lüneburg: Johann & Heinrich Stern, 1636).

12 Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher, and Hero. Images of the Reformer, 1520–1620* (Grand Rapids, 1999), 168; Martin Statius, *Lutherus redivivus. Das ist: Lutheri Christenthumb. Darinn der wahre lebendige Glaube/ sein Ursprung/ Natur/ Krafft und Wirkung/ der waren Christen Majestät/ Herrlichkeit/ Heiligkeit und Vereinigung mit Christo/ wie auch ihr ungeferbte Liebe/ und Christlichs leben/ mit Lutheri gantz herrlichen und geistreichen worten für augen gestellet wird* (Thorn: Franz Schnellboltz, 1626).

13 Udo Sträter, "August Hermann Francke und Martin Luther," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 34 (2008), 20–41, there 36.

a prominent place in this work and it shapes the chapters on the “necessity of love,” the practical implications of Christian love and the question how the command to love is related to Luther’s theology of grace and his critique of good works as a means of salvation. In the entire second half of the book, Statius stresses the unconditional necessity to obey Christ’s command to love one’s neighbor, regardless of their moral conduct, religion, or social rank. In Statius’s account, this command is the foundation for the spiritual equality of mankind before God. Since the command to love is given to everyone, it follows that “a king or prince (since he is also a human being), has to acknowledge that the poorest of beggars and lepers is not a lesser person before God” and that they are obliged to love and serve him.¹⁴ The title, *Lutherus redivivus*, contained an implicit programmatic statement: since the 1590s, several anti-Calvinist polemical texts had appeared under the same title. In these texts, *reviving* Luther meant to readdress his theological differences with Calvin, especially on the nature of the Eucharist. Luther’s “original” vision was now used against those who were willing to compromise or to tolerate Reformed interpretations and practices in this regard. In contrast, Statius “revives” Luther by revisiting his writings on the nature of God’s grace, personal devotion, and the command of neighborly love. By choosing the same title, he implicitly renegotiates the essence of Luther’s writings.

As Statius states in his *Probpredigt*, his treatment of Christ’s command to love one’s neighbor is motivated by the local situation of his new hometown and the question how this command should be realized in multi-confessional cities “like here in Danzig where adherents of different religions have to constitute one *corpus civile*.”¹⁵ Danzig, the most important early modern Baltic seaport, was characterized by a high degree of religious and cultural diversity. The city’s merchants traded with the Low Countries, Scotland as well as the Iberian World and connected these regions to Eastern Europe and its rich grain resources. Because of its economic opportunities and its policies of religious toleration, the city attracted many immigrants from the Netherlands and the

14 Statius, *Lutherus redivivus* (see above, n. 12), 465: “Und laß uns hie mercken, wie dies Gebott uns für Gott all gleich macht, und alle Unterschied der Stende, Person, Ambt und Werck auffhebt, denn weil das Gebott allen unnd jeglichen Menschen gegeben ist, so muß ein König und Fürst (so er anders ein Mensch ist) bekennen, das der Armest Bettler, und Aussetziger, und nichts geringer für Gott sey, also das er ihm nicht allein schuldig ist zu helffen, sondern auch nach diesem Gebot ihm zu dienen, mit allem das er hat und vermag.”

15 PAP, F3r: “[...] wie alhie in Danzigk das unterschiedlicher Religionsverwandten ein corpus civile, constituieren müssen.”

western parts of Germany throughout the early modern period.¹⁶ Since the fifteenth century the city fell under the Polish Crown but was able to maintain the status of an autonomous city within Royal Prussia. Besides its economic privileges that were granted Danzig by the Polish kings, it was also able to maintain its own religious policies during the Reformation and the Crown only intervened to settle disputes that threatened to undermine civic harmony. Most of Danzig's German-speaking inhabitants adopted Lutheranism and, to a lesser extent, Calvinism, while members of other religious groups were not prevented from settling in the city and its direct surroundings. The coexistence of Lutherans, Calvinists, Catholics, and Mennonites required a careful negotiation of the status of each group, even the dominant Lutherans. Anxious of conflicts that might endanger civic peace, the city's magistrates repeatedly decided to intervene in religious affairs and demanded a role in the appointment procedure of Protestant ministers. Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, religious life was largely characterized by compromises between the dominant religious factions, the magistrates and the Polish central government.¹⁷

The result for the Protestant Churches in Royal Prussia was a rather flexible use of the Augsburg Confession, to which also Danzig's Calvinists claimed to adhere.¹⁸ The Reformed confession had become increasingly popular among the patriciate and members of the city council in the last decades of the sixteenth century and by 1600, a slight majority in the Danzig magistrate sympathized openly with Reformed ideas and worship. In contrast, the wider religious

16 On the early modern history of Danzig, see e.g. Maria Bogucka, *Das alte Danzig. Alltagsleben vom 15. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1987); Karin Friedrich, *The Other Prussia: Royal Prussia, Poland and Liberty, 1569–1772* (Cambridge, 2000).

17 See e.g.: Michael G. Müller, *Zweite Reformation und städtische Autonomie im königlichen Preußen: Danzig, Elbing und Thorn während der Konfessionalisierung (1557–1660)* (Berlin, 1997), 12–16. Pawel Kras, "The Religious Policy of Sigismund I and Sigismund II Augustus in the Reformation Period: Status Quaestionis," *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis* 29 (2014), 53–74. On the position of the Royal Prussian territories under the Polish Crown, see Karin Friedrich, *The Other Prussia: Royal Prussia, Poland and Liberty, 1569–1772* (Cambridge 2000), 96–120. On the dynamics between Lutherans and Calvinists in Danzig and other parts of East Prussia, see also Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, "Reformierte Eliten im Preußenland. Religion, Politik und Loyalitäten in der Familie Dohna (1560–1660)," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* (2004), 210–239.

18 Michael G. Müller, "Protestant Confessionalization in the Towns of Royal Prussia and the Practice of Religious Toleration in Poland-Lithuania," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, ed. Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (Cambridge, 2002), 262–281, there 271; Sven Tode, "Preaching Calvinism in Lutheran Danzig: Jacob Fabritius on the Pastoral Office," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 85 (2005), 239–255, there 246.

landscape and the city's parish churches were dominated by Lutherans, but even there, Reformed theologians were able to acquire leading positions, most notably Jacob Fabritius (1551–1629) who even became the director of the Danzig Academy, a post he held for almost 50 years. Consequentially, the position of the Reformed depended on continuous negotiation and even the position of a prominent figure like Fabritius was insecure at times due to attacks of both his Lutheran colleagues and the city council.¹⁹ The publication of Reformed literature could still be a precarious issue and the first historical account of the Reformed confession in Prussia, written by Fabritius, could not be published in Danzig and appeared in the Hessian town of Hanau in 1603.²⁰

Despite attempts by the magistrate to prevent religious discord, the ruptures between the city's religious groups had deepened in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Between the 1580s and 1620, Lutherans and Calvinists repeatedly quarreled about issues such as infant exorcism during baptism, images in church buildings, and the nature of the Eucharist. Between 1603 and 1606, Danzig merchant Eberhard Bötticher mobilized a group of burghers and guild leaders to protest the perceived Reformed hegemony within the magistrate. The Anti-Reformed faction went so far as to invoke the help of the Polish king and even Cracow Jesuits to diminish the influence of the "Calvinist elite."²¹ Bötticher's campaign stoked fears of a syncretic mixture of Lutheranism and Calvinism and decried the magistrate's attempt "to clot the two religions into one."²² The dispute was not immediately settled and only in 1612, King Sigismund III proclaimed that only Catholics and adherents to the Augsburg Confession could be coopted into the magistrate. However, the practical impact of this measure was rather limited since all Reformed-leaning council members already claimed to subscribe to the *Augustana* in any form.²³ While the Lutheran faction in the magistrate grew during the 1610s and 1620s, and less Reformed ministers were appointed, men like Fabritius stayed in office but were replaced by Lutherans after their retirement or death. In 1615, the magistrate issued a decree that forbade confessional polemics in print but

19 Ibid., 243–244.

20 Hartknoch, *Preussische Kirchen-Historia* (see above, n. 10), 774; Müller, *Zweite Reformation* (see above, n. 17), 38.

21 Hartknoch, *Preussische Kirchen-Historia* (see above, n. 10), 784.

22 Eberhard Bötticher, cited in: Heinz Neumeyer, *Kirchengeschichte von Danzig und Westpreußen in evangelischer Sicht: Von den Anfängen der christlichen Mission bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Leer, 1971), 1: 108.

23 The original version of Sigismund's edict is unknown and it is disputed if the text explicitly mentioned the *Invariata* or the *Variata* (see Müller, *Zweite Reformation* [see above, n. 17], 137).

such attempts to maintain peaceful coexistence were not popular among wide parts of Danzig's German population.²⁴ As Michael G. Müller has put it, "the 'common man' proved most receptive to exclusionist confessional propaganda, namely in its Lutheran variant."²⁵

Despite the great diversity of Danzig's religious landscape, the years between 1590 and 1620 marked thus a rapid hardening of confessional identities and Statius's position on interconfessional contacts needs to be situated in this complex dynamics of political and religious life. With its explicit call to 'love' adherents of different confessions, the sermon contained a message that presented a way to deal with religious diversity without downplaying doctrinal differences between the various confessions with whom Danzigers identified themselves. As Sven Tode has demonstrated, Danzig's Protestant ministers had to be aware of the diversity and variety of the religious factions among their audiences.²⁶ Preaching in the urban parish churches demanded cautious preparation and could be precarious if either the city council or the dominant factions among the clergy raised objections. The topic of Statius's proof sermon was particularly sensitive and in the context of Danzig's local social and religious dynamics, a wrong note might easily have endangered Statius's career. While Lutheran proof sermons could also be held in private and in front of a church committee, the print version of the *Probpredigt* claims that Statius preached in front of the full congregation.²⁷ A harsh tone against other religious groups carried the risk of estranging the magistrate and a rather irenic message would not have met the standards of the Lutheran church authorities.

However, this complex multi-confessional constellation of early seventeenth-century Danzig was not only a challenge but could also be an opportunity for clerics with the talents to negotiate in a dynamical social and religious landscape. Even the aforementioned Jacob Fabritius, whose Calvinist sympathies were quite obvious, was commissioned to hold sermons in the city's parish churches whenever the city council would ask him to do so.²⁸ The balance of power between the orthodox Lutheran clergy and the magistrates created a certain freedom for individuals who knew how to operate in the midst of these conflicting interests. In the case of Statius, the situation allowed him to for-

24 Michael G. Müller, "Zur Frage der Zweiten Reformation in Danzig, Elbing und Thorn," in: Heinz Schilling, *Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland—Das Problem der 'Zweiten Reformation'* (Gütersloh, 1986), 251–265, there 258.

25 Müller, "Protestant Confessionalization" (see above, n. 18), 275.

26 Tode, "Preaching Calvinism" (see above, n. 18), 243.

27 PAP, A2.

28 Hartknoch, *Preussische Kirchen-Historia* (see above, n. 10), 725–726.

multate a model that provided believers with instructions for everyday-life in a multi-confessional setting. In compliance with the wishes of the city council, the sermon contained a powerful message of civic unity and concord. At the same time, and despite his plea for practical tolerance and Christian love for adherents of other confessions, Statius did not compromise on Lutheran doctrines and he was able to convince the city's ministers who listened to his proof sermon critically.

2 United by Two or by Three Cords?

Statius's sermon starts with Christ's love command, as accounted in John 15,17–22, and the patristic interpretation of the coat of Christ as a signifier of Christian love and faith.²⁹ As he stresses, these two qualities are intertwined and inseparable since love to fellow-Christians, neighbors and spouses is a visible sign of a person's faith, a motif he also expanded on in *Lutherus redivivus*. In dramatic terms, Statius reminds his audience that Christ's command to love is an unconditional command:

He (Christ) says: I command you, that you love one another. He does not say: I give you the option to do so or not and we can remain friends in either case, but I command you under threat of temporal and eternal punishment. What do I command? That you love one another.³⁰

Mentioning a number of drastic examples from Biblical and classical literature, Statius argues that the lack of brotherly love leads to turmoil, social chaos, and betrayal. Lovelessness is not only a sin against God's command but also a violation of "natural law," as it undermines all forms of social order.³¹ With a call for social peace and obedience to Christ's love command, he addresses a number of groups. First, he urges the secular authorities to stay united in brotherly love in order to prevent chaos, paraphrasing Matt. 12,25: "How can a kingdom last when is divided in itself?"³² In the following paragraphs, he

²⁹ Jn. 19,23.

³⁰ PAP, C4v–Dir: "Ich gebiete euch/ spricht er/ das ihr euch untereinander liebet/ Er spricht nicht/ ich stelle es euch wilkührlich heim/ ihr möget es es thun oder lassen/ wir wollen gleichwohl gute Freunde bleiben/ sondern ich gebiete euch bey vermeidung zeitlicher und ewiger Straff/ was dann? Das ihr euch untereinander liebet."

³¹ PAP, C3v.

³² PAP, D3v: "Ein Reich/ das sich mit sich selbst uneins ist/ wie will das bestehen?"

calls upon spouses, relatives, and neighbors to love each other and addresses each group with select scriptural quotes, especially from Proverbs. Finally, Statius turns to strangers who do not belong to the urban community and points out in which ways they are obliged to love their host societies and one another.

In his call for love and civic concord, Statius initially remains silent about religious differences. Only after his argument that love between the various social groups in the urban community is non-negotiable and should prevail under all circumstances, he touches the question how Christ's unconditional command can be practically applied in a multi-confessional environment. As an introduction to his answer, he differentiates between three kinds of love. The first category, natural love, is further divided into love between blood relatives and between spouses. In both categories, his answer is clear: natural love cannot be hindered by disagreements in religious matters and both relatives and spouses are warned of neglecting their love for each other because of confessional differences. Concerning the love between relatives, he harshly warns of disunity and refers to the Biblical episodes of the military conflict between King David and his son Absalom and the enmity between the brothers Jacob and Esau. While David was attacked by his son, he was eventually forced to strike back but still felt "natural love" for his son. In contrast to this episode and its tragic end, Statius presents the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau as a case, in which natural love prevailed and (temporarily) ended the conflict. Natural love of "children to their parents, brothers to their sisters and vice versa as well as uncles to their nephews" should prevail above religious differences, even though "the flame of love is sometimes tempered" by disagreement, as Statius admits.³³ However, adhering to different confessions does not diminish one's obligation to love his or her relatives and deviation from this command is identified as caused by the devil.³⁴

A second manifestation of natural love can be found between spouses and Statius's judgement of this form of love is addressed in similar terms. In the

33 *PAP*, E2r: "Die natürliche Liebe so auß dem Geblüt entspriesset/ wird durch unterschiedliche Religion nit auff gehoben. Denn es können die Eltern ihre Kinder/ dagegen die Kinder ihre Eltern/ die Brüder ihre Schwestern/ und die Schwestern ihre Brüder/ wie auch Ohme und Vettern/ wegen unterschiedlicher Religion/ sich untereinander zu lieben nicht unterlassen/ dieweil dieselbe die natürliche Zuneigung unter Blutfreunden nicht aufhebet/ obs sich wol oft zutregt/ daß das natürliche Füncklein der Liebe/ durch die ungleichheit der Religion etwas gedempft wird/ es kan doch ordinarie nicht gar verloschen werden."

34 *PAP*, E2v.

first place, spouses are called to love each other, even if they adhere to different confessions. However, they should be aware of the difficulties of a mixed-confessional union:

Concerning natural love that comes forth out of affection: this form of love can exist between adherents of different religions, even though in marriage it is a thousand times better to regard correspondence in the true religion.³⁵

Despite this sub-clause, Statius is clear in his position on natural love between spouses in a mixed marriage: as he repeats, marital love is not negotiable but part of Christ's command.³⁶ Quoting 1 Cor. 1,7, he makes clear that religious differences cannot be a reason for divorce, a position that was seldom disputed in the seventeenth century.³⁷ Yet, one should be aware of the potential influence of spouses on each other: as a positive example, Statius refers to Augustine's mother Monica who was able to convert her husband but he also warns of the dangers of apostasy by reminding his audience of Salomon who was seduced into idolatry by his pagan wives.

The passages on "natural love" between spouses are rhetorically crafted in an elaborate manner. The Biblical and patristic quotes in these passages are carefully selected and in all the passages on mixed marriages, Statius avoids the harshest parts of his sources, especially when he quotes St Paul and Ambrose of Milan, who was notorious for his criticism of mixed marriages. The sermon is particularly selective in its use of Ambrose's *De Abraham*: "[...] for as Ambrose says in *De Abraham*, book 1, chapter 9: How can love harmonize if there is divergence of faith?"³⁸ In the original, this verse continues with the following sentence: "Beware, therefore, Christian, of giving your daughter as a wife to a Gentile or to a Jew" but this is left out by Statius.³⁹ The entire section

35 PAP, E2v: "Die natürliche Lieb/ so auß der affinitet herrühret/ betreffend/ die kann auch wol sein zwischen unterschiedlichen Religions-Verwandten/ wiewol es wiewohl es tausent mahl besser ist/ das man in Heirathen vornemlich auff die Correspondenz in der wahren Religion sihet [...]."

36 PAP, E4v.

37 Only some Mennonite subconfessions went as far as to require shunning practices within an existing marriage. See Samme Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente en de oude gronden. Geschiedenis van de dopersen in de Nederlanden, 1531–1675* (Utrecht, 2000), 272.

38 PAP, E2v: "[...] denn es sagt Ambros. Liber 1 De Abr. cap. 9. Quomodo potest congruere caritas/ si discrepet fides."

39 PL 14: 451: "Et ideo cave, Christiane, gentili aut Judaeo filiam tuam tradere."

in Ambrose's text starts with a general condemnation of inter-religious contacts and is introduced with the statement: "You will be sanctified with the saint and perverted with the perverted."⁴⁰ As Ambrose argues, this rule does not only apply to marriage but even to daily encounters between Christians and pagans. Statius's selective quotation leaves out Ambrose's harsh language and the more explicit warnings against inter-religious friendships and mixed unions are carefully omitted. Non-Latinate listeners in his audience probably missed the Ambrose-quote in Latin but his Lutheran colleagues were aware with Ambrose's positions and the resonance of this specific verse.

Statius's use of Paul follows a similar strategy. Even though the sermon quotes Paul several times on marriages between believers and unbelievers, the lack of any references to the Pauline dictum of the unequal yoke (2 Cor. 6,14) is striking in these passages. While the disparity between "Christ and Belial," as addressed in 2 Cor. 6,15, was a common point of reference on this topic, we do not find any traces of this discursive frame here.⁴¹ Instead of Paul's warnings of combining Christ and Belial, Statius refers to 1 Cor. 7:

For God countenances cohabitation in marital love among adherents of different religions, as the dispensation of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7,12 makes clear: "[...] for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband."⁴²

Statius's approach to this topic is in stark contrast to fellow contemporary Lutheran clergymen, who proclaimed that marital love beyond confessional boundaries could not be "true love" and was more probably based on a shared contempt for God and the pursuit of an "Epicurian life."⁴³ Statius, however, explicitly acknowledges the possibility of "natural love" between adherents of different faiths and even adds that this love is not necessarily diminished by the difference in creed.⁴⁴ While Lutheran theological condemnations of mixed

40 Ibid., 450: "Cum sancto enim sanctus eris, et cum perverso perverteris."

41 The sermon only mentions this verse in a different context and with no relation to its original reference to marriages. Statius transfers this verse to his discussion of the question whether believers owe "spiritual love" (the third category) to proselyting heretics.

42 PAP, E3r: "Denn Gott wol leiden kann, das in dem fall unterschiedlicher Religions Verwandte einander mit ehelicher Lieb beywohnen, wie aus der dispensation des Apostel Pauli 1. Cor. 7.12 zu ersehen: [...] denn der ungläubige Mann ist geheiligt durchs Weib/ und das ungläubige Weib ist geheiligt durch den Mann."

43 Freist, *Glaube—Liebe—Zwietracht* (see above, n. 1), 305.

44 PAP, E2r.

marriages typically referred to the “glorification of God” and the upbringing of children as the ultimate goals of marriage, Statius is silent on these issues.⁴⁵

In comparison to *Lutherus redivivus*, references to Luther are relatively scarce in the *Probpredigt* but in many respects it resembles the strategy to “revive” Luther and his ideas against his most orthodox interpreters. Sixteenth-century Reformers had taken a variety of new theological approaches to marriage after the break with the Old Church but in all developing traditions, marital unions lost their sacramental status. While the southern German and Swiss branches of the Protestant Reformation typically took a harsher stance against mixed unions, Luther’s early works treated marriage as a primarily “outward and corporal” matter.⁴⁶ Even if marital unions were instituted by God himself and had a spiritual dimension, they were not fundamentally different from the realm of worldly affairs such as “eating, drinking, sleeping, [...] or trading.” As a result, this repositioning left open the theoretical possibility to marry even “Jews, Muslims, and heretics.”⁴⁷ Even though Statius’s world was radically different from Luther’s and it was unthinkable to openly proclaim such positions in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth centuries, his treatment of marriage as a “natural” rather than a “spiritual” matter prefigured his later claim to represent the best of the Lutheran tradition.

The second category of love that is discussed Statius’s sermon is “civic love.” Again, he formulates hardly any restrictions: not only are inhabitants of the same town obliged to love and protect each other, civic love is also necessary to guarantee order and harmony in daily life. Avoiding adherents of other confessions would also be a practical impossibility as trade and commerce depended on contacts between various religious groups.⁴⁸ Many passages on this topic vaguely resemble contemporary political and constitutional writing, such as Johann Althusius’s *Politica*, in which the unity of a shared civic community is stressed. As Statius puts it, the internal stability of the *corpus civile* is also necessary to keep the urban community safe from both in- and outside threats. Despite confessional divisions, Danzig needs to remain united as one social body. While civic love is discussed relatively briefly, the sermon makes clear

45 Georg Dedeken, *Thesaurus Consiliorum Et Decisionum, Das ist: Vornehmer Universitäten, Hochlöblicher Collegien, wohlbestaltter Consistorien auch sonst Hochgelahrter Theologen und Juristen Rath, Bedencken, Antwort, Belehrung [...]* (Hamburg: Zacharias Härtel, 1671), 176.

46 Martin Luther, “Vom ehelichen Leben,” in Martin Luther, *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. J.K.F. Knaake et al., 72 vols. (Weimar, 1883–2009), 10: 275–304, there 283.

47 Ibid.

48 PAP, E4v–r.

that Christians should always try to lead heretics and erring co-religionists onto the right path and that practiced Christian love should be used for this purpose.

The final category, “spiritual love” is discussed in much more elaborate terms and touches the central problem of the sermon. While both natural and civic love are not essentially affected by religious differences, spiritual love is a different category and in Statius’s model, it serves to reconcile the conflicting realities of daily experience and religious ideal: this form of love constitutes the realm in which orthodoxy can be separated from heterodoxy and true religion from its false counterparts. The first cord, natural love, is basically unconditional and the second one, civic love, is the foundation of social order. The third cord, however, cannot bind individuals unless they agree on the basics of Christian faith and it is the only instance that separates humans and their social interactions.

Discussing the division between neighbors, friends, and spouses in the realm of the category of “spiritual love,” Statius introduces another model to differentiate between various forms of religious differences. In line with many of his temporary fellow clergy, he distinguishes between unbelievers and two forms of heretics: “those who err in major and in minor points.”⁴⁹ At this point, the sermon takes a remarkable turn: the “principal points” that indicate the specific degree of heresy are never specified and the audience is left alone with the decision with whom to unite in true “spiritual love”:

After the discussion of this question, it is in the discretion of every orthodox Christian to which degree he should love Papists, Photinians, Menonites, Anabaptists, Calvinists, Jesuits, monks, and other sectarians, how carefully he should interact with them to live according to the command of the Lord Christ without being led astray from the truth and how he should not distance himself too far from them in order to prevent and cut off internal strife, quarrel and anger, or even civil conflict.⁵⁰

Relationships with adherents of different confessions should thus be evaluated according to the degree to which the respective dissenting groups err in doctri-

49 PAP, Fir.; F2v.

50 PAP, F3r: “Kann demnach auß erörterung obgeregter Frage ein jeglicher rechtgleubiger Christ leicht ermesen, wie weit er Papisten, Photinianer, Menisten, Wiederteuffer, Calvinianer, Jesuiten, Münche und andere Sectirer lieben solle, und wie vorsichtig er mit ihnen conversieren müsse, damit er dem Gebot des Herrn Christi gemeß lebe, wie weit er sich auch ihrer nicht enthalten dürffe, noch könne, damit innerlichen Zwist, Hader und Zorn, und bürgerlichem Kriegen der Weg verzeunet und verhawen werde.”

nal points. While their errors exclude them from “spiritual love,” believers are obliged to love them with “natural” and “civic love,” not only to keep the urban community intact but also in the hope of future conversion. Applying the motif of the threefold cord (Ecclesiastes 2,12) to his model of threefold love, Statius makes clear that the twofold unity (“natural” and “civic”) should be regarded as a temporary state that would hopefully be completed by a “spiritual” unification in the future:

Yet, in places like here in Danzig it is unavoidable that adherents of different religions constitute one civic body, whose soul and spirit is unity and therefore we need to be united by the bond of natural and civic love until God bestows on us the desired third bond of spiritual love, so as to provide us with a threefold cord that cannot be torn apart easily (Eccl. 2,12).⁵¹

The problem of the confessional division between Christians is defused by presenting it as a temporary one: the present situation requires love and harmony in the natural and civic realm but spiritual unity remains the ultimate goal. While believers should hope for the manifestation of this complete and threefold unity, discord has to be avoided at all cost and the urban community “should stand like one man” in order defend itself against internal and external threats.⁵² As Statius continues:

As long as the cord is intact, unseparated, and uncut, it will stand well. Should it be unstitched and destroyed (which God prevent), it would soon be done with us. For discord is the only evil.⁵³

Using a wide and diverse rhetorical repertoire and creating an innovative theoretical framework, Statius is capable of articulating an answer to the challenge

51 PAP, F3r: “[...] dennoch sich begibet/ wie alhie in Danzigk das unterschiedlicher Religionsverwandten ein *corpus civile*, constituieren müssen/ welches *anima* und *Spiritus vitalis* die Einigkeit ist/ so müssen wir uns mit dem Band der natürlichen/ oder bürgerlichen Liebe verbinden/ biß der liebe Gott uns den lang gewünschten dritten Band der geistlichen Liebe auch zuwerffe/ daraus ein dreyfache Schnur gemacht kann werden/ welches nicht leicht entzwey reisset Eccl. 4.12.”

52 PAP, F3v: “[...] und alle für einen Mann stehen und sich bürgerlich behen möchten.”

53 PAP, F3v: “So lang das Band unverletzt, unzertrennet und unzerschnitten bleibt, wird es noch wol stehen, sollte aber dasselbe (welchs Gott in gnaden verhüten wolle) aufgetrennet und verhaben werden, so were es bald umb uns geschehen. Denn Uneinigkeit das einig Übel ist.”

of religious pluriformity from a confessional Lutheran perspective, and yet to present this theological evaluation as a powerful call for civic unity and harmony. By differentiating between various forms of human love, he does not have to compromise on doctrinal points and by “outsourcing” the necessity of peaceful coexistence to the realm of “natural” and “civic” matters, he is able to do justice to the complex reality in many German and European cities of his time. One year before the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War, a period in which confessional polarization had reached a new climax, such attempts to bridge theory and practice required elaborate strategies but they show that confessional rhetoric also had its limits and needed to be put in perspective with a social reality that did not always meet theological ideals.

To later audiences, Martin Statius became primarily known for his later quarrels with fervent advocates of Lutheran orthodoxy and his involvement in publications that paved the way for later piety movements within the Lutheran Church. His plea for peaceful interconfessional coexistence and his comparably balanced approach to mixed marriages might therefore easily be understood as an illustration of his untypically “moderate” position in doctrinal matters. However, there is no evidence for conflicts between Statius and the more orthodox factions among his colleagues before his ordination in Danzig. The fact that he used this particular topic for his proof sermon that decided about his future career suggests that his views were not so much an anomaly but that the local situation of Danzig enabled him to use another language than we find in other sources of this kind. The publication of the sermon in Wittenberg, and the approval of the town’s theological faculty brought the sermon even further into the Lutheran mainstream of its time. While advices from Lutheran theological faculties around 1620 tried to outperform each other in their condemnation of cross-confessional intermarriage, preaching in a local context required a different approach and needed to be adjusted to the social reality of the congregation and the urban community.

As scholarship on early modern religious coexistence in Central and Western Europe suggests, tolerance was primarily a matter of daily practice and the necessity to overlook awkward realities. The case of Statius offers a rare insight into a situation in which this puzzling problem was transferred from silent connivance to articulate public discourse. Operating under the auspices of both confessional authorities and an urban magistrate of a multi-confessional city was a challenging task but Statius’s precarious topic choice proofed his abilities to work in this environment. Both his proof sermon and his *Lutherus redivivus* do neither reflect an irenic position, in which confessional differences are vaguely diluted, nor is his approach merely “pragmatic” or indiffer-

ent. In his sermon, he did his best to approach the problem within the accepted boundaries of Lutheran theology and yet to reconcile its theological standards to the multi-confessional reality around him. His conceptual framework that differentiated between several forms of love and social interaction between adherents of various religions offered a means to bridge this gap. Despite his systematical approach, Statius still had to rely on an elaborate rhetorical strategy that anticipated the expectations of the various factions in his audience. Citing authorities like Ambrose or well-known scriptural passages from 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans, but leaving out their harshest passages or quoting only the Latin original, Statius sends different signals to the various listeners of his sermon.

An evaluation of the exceptionality of Statius's case and his position on the problem of confessional division and diversity needs take into account that the *Probpredigt* addresses a key issue of early modern religious life in a way that relates mainstream Lutheran ideas to a reality that was typically "willingly overlooked." Most available data on mixed marital unions come from the later seventeenth and the eighteenth century, when confessional differences were more internalized and institutionalized.⁵⁴ While the boundaries between different confessions were indeed rapidly developing during the life of Statius, the reality was still far more ambiguous than in the following decades and the conflict between Lutherans and Reformed Protestants in Danzig did still take place within the same institutional structures. Reformed-leaning dissidents were not a threat from outside but part of Danzig's Protestant congregations and educational institutions, in which they sometimes even played influential roles.⁵⁵ Religious divisions did not only run through the urban community as a whole but also through congregations and households. The very paradox of early seventeenth-century Protestant Danzig was that Lutheran-Reformed interactions were at once more intimate and more hostile than in most other European cities. The unique dynamics between the various factions in Danzig's magistrates and Church boards explains why Statius chose such a controversial topic for his proof sermon without endangering his future career. Further research on preaching in multi-confessional German cities would offer a more complete perspective but as the circumstances of the sermon and its publication suggest, views like Statius's articulated the experience of clerics and con-

54 An excellent micro-historical case study that illustrates the internalization of confessional identities after 1648 in Augsburg is Duane Corpi, *Crossing the Boundaries of Belief: Geographies of Religious Conversion in Southern Germany, 1648–1800* (Charlottesville, 2014).

55 See Tode, "Preaching Calvinism" (see above, n. 18), 240–245.

gregations in wide parts of the Lutheran and Protestant world.⁵⁶ What made Statius exceptional, was probably not his position but his ability to design a vocabulary around a topic that was awkwardly present in daily life but difficult to address in a public confessional setting.

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- 56 On the differences between Lutheran and Reformed public preaching, see Amy Nelson Burnett, "How to Preach a Protestant Sermon: A Comparison of Lutheran and Reformed Homiletics," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 63/2 (2007), 109–119.