

Article

Lift Up Your Hearts: The Development of the Reformed Sursum Corda

Benjamin Crosby

School of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montreal, QC H3A 0E9, Canada; benjamin.crosby@mail.mcgill.ca

Abstract

This study addresses a significant feature of many early modern Reformed Lord's Supper liturgies, the 'Reformed sursum corda.' This term refers to elaborations of the ancient liturgical phrase "Lift up your hearts" placed in the liturgy and used to teach a Reformed eucharistic piety. The article traces the development of this liturgical element throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, beginning with its origin in the liturgies of Guillaume Farel and John Calvin and turning to two separate appropriations of Calvin's Reformed sursum corda: one from the Stranger Churches in England to Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland; another from English and Scottish exiles in Frankfurt and Geneva to the British Isles. It makes three principal arguments: (1) that Farel's liturgical innovation was dependent upon his reading of Oecolampadius, (2) that the principal later versions of the Reformed sursum corda were derived from John Calvin's, and (3) that the Reformed sursum corda tradition impacted the interpretation of the English Book of Common Prayer. In so doing, this article deepens our understanding of the development of between early modern Reformed Lord's Supper liturgies as well as the connection between eucharistic theology and eucharistic practice in the Reformed tradition.

Keywords: Reformed tradition; worship; liturgy; the Lord's Supper; sursum corda

1. Introduction

The so-called 'Reformed sursum corda' is a well-known feature of a number of early modern Reformed liturgical orders. The term refers to language, typically placed immediately before the reception of the elements, in which the minister draws upon the wording of the ancient liturgical dialogue "Sursum corda/Habemus ad Dominum" in order to express the Reformed view that Christ's bodily presence is to be sought not in the elements of bread and wine but in heaven. While the existence of this liturgical feature of early Reformed liturgies has been frequently remarked upon (Spinks 2013, pp. 287–300), a detailed history of the development of the Reformed sursum corda has not yet been undertaken. This paper seeks to fill this lacuna by examining the development and dissemination of this liturgical element in French, English, Dutch, German, and Polish-language Reformed eucharistic liturgies of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. I will begin by examining the early development of the Reformed sursum corda, from Oecolampadius' first use of the sursum corda to defend Reformed eucharistic teaching to the liturgical enactments of this understanding in the Lord's Supper services of Guillaume Farel and John Calvin. I will then trace two different appropriations of Calvin's version of the Reformed sursum corda, one from the Stranger Churches of England to Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland, and the second from English and Scottish exiles on the Continent back to the British Isles.



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Over the course of tracing this history, I will make three principal arguments. First, I will argue that the inspiration for Guillaume Farel’s insertion of the first Reformed sursum corda in his 1533 *La maniere et fasson* was most likely his engagement with Oecolampadius’ (1525) *De genuina verborum Domini . . . expositione liber*. Second, I will demonstrate that the later liturgical use of the sursum corda to teach Reformed eucharistic views—though not every Reformed liturgical use of the language of elevation—can be traced back to Farel’s *La maniere et fasson* via Calvin’s *La Forme des Prières*. Third, I will show that in the case of the one major Reformed eucharistic liturgy which retained the traditional sursum corda at the beginning of the eucharistic prayer, the English Book of Common Prayer, this liturgical feature was at least in some cases understood to function as a Reformed sursum corda, calling communicants away from a focus on the materiality of the elements to Christ in heaven.

2. From Oecolampadius to Calvin: The Early Development of the Reformed Sursum Corda

Before the sursum corda was adapted for use in Reformed eucharistic liturgies, it was deployed to defend Reformed eucharistic teaching. In fact, such use dates to the very beginning of the eucharistic controversy between the Wittenberg and Swiss theologians. The Basel reformer Johannes Oecolampadius sought in his 1525 *De genuina verborum Domini, hoc est corpus meum, iuxta vetustissimos authores, expositione liber* to provide patristic evidence for the Swiss conception of the Lord’s Supper. In this book, he is the first Reformed thinker to use the sursum corda to argue against a conception of Christ’s bodily presence in the elements. He writes, “even today in sacred actions we are admonished by a most ancient custom, hearing ‘Lift up your hearts’; it is not said, ‘Turn your hearts to the bread’ or ‘to the altar’, but ‘upwards’, where certainly Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father” (Oecolampadius 1525, sig. B4r). That is, for Oecolampadius, this ancient liturgical formula was evidence for the antiquity of the Swiss view of Christ’s eucharistic presence. He argues that priests telling the people to lift up their hearts (“sursum corda”) were thereby instructing them to avoid focusing on the physical elements; they were to seek Christ not in the bread but in heaven, where he is present at the right hand of the Father. Thus, Oecolampadius avers that this teaching maintained by him and Zwingli was so broadly held by the ancient church that it was even incorporated into the liturgy.

Although Oecolampadius was the first to use the ancient sursum corda to defend Swiss eucharistic teaching, he and the other leaders of the Basel church did not develop this insight liturgically. Oecolampadius did include a version of the traditional dialogue in his 1523 communion order *Testament Jesu Christi*, though it is not used to foreclose the possibility of a physical presence in the elements or otherwise advance his eucharistic teaching (Oecolampadius 1523, sigs. B1v–B2r). What’s more, this 1523 writing was, as Bürki (1983a, pp. 199–225) has argued, intended for devotional purposes rather than as a public liturgy, and there is no relationship between it and the liturgies adopted in Basel in 1526 and 1529. Indeed, none of the major German-speaking Swiss Confederates incorporated the language of the elevation of the heart into their Lord’s Supper liturgies.

It was Guillaume Farel, the French reformer active in Geneva and the Suisse romande, who was the first to incorporate the sursum corda into Reformed sacramental practice. Farel’s first printed liturgy, the 1533 *La maniere et fasson*, was largely based on the Bern liturgy of 1529 (Bürki 1983b, p. 339). However, in what Elwood (1999, p. 43) has called “probably his unique and most enduring contribution to the Reformed liturgy and eucharistic thought”, Farel adds a call for the communicants to lift up their hearts immediately before the distribution of the elements:

Therefore lift up your hearts on high, seeking the things that are above in heaven where Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. Do not let yourselves be held back by visible things which become corrupt through use.¹ (Zuidema and Van Raalte 2011, p. 215; Bürki 1983b, p. 345)

This injunction for the communicants to lift their hearts away from an undue focus on the physical elements to heaven is echoed in the rubric concerning distribution, which forbids adoration of the bread, and the distribution formula, which declares that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father (Bürki 1983b, p. 345).

Farel seems to have given the *sursum corda* a significant place in his thinking about the Eucharist as early as 1525. In a fall 1525 letter to Johannes Bugenhagen, Farel responded to the Wittenberg reformer's *Contra Novum Errorem de Sacramento corporis et sanguinis domini nostri Jesu Christi Epistola* (Herminjard 1866, pp. 393–98). As part of this reply, Farel sketches out the “opinion of all” concerning the Eucharist, clearly aligning himself with the Zürich, Basel, and Strassburg theologians (Herminjard 1866, p. 395). He states that the Swiss and Upper German theologians teach that in the Supper, communicants are to eat the bread purely and simply as the Apostles did, giving thanks to God and remembering the Father's gift of the Son for our salvation (Herminjard 1866, p. 395). He adds that these theologians preach that in the Supper, Christians should “occupy themselves with lifting [their] hearts above, seeking those things which are above, where Christ is on the right hand of the Father, not those things which are on earth” (Herminjard 1866, p. 395). This is substantially the view of the elevation of the heart in the Supper that Farel would express liturgically eight years later in his 1533 *La maniere et fasson*. Indeed, the language of both elevating one's heart and seeking things which are above in this letter is closely echoed in Farel's later liturgical work.

Where did Farel arrive at this view of the meaning of the *sursum corda* for the Supper? I posit that Oecolampadius, and specifically his *De genuine verborum Domini . . . expositione liber* discussed above, is the most likely source. Farel had gotten to know Oecolampadius during his stay in Basel in 1524, and the two continued to correspond after Farel was expelled from the city (Zuidema and Van Raalte 2011, pp. 9–11). We know that Oecolampadius not only solicited Farel's comment on this work but in fact enlisted Farel to oversee its printing (Herminjard 1866, pp. 357–58, 369–70; Burnett 2019, pp. 105, 358). This means that Farel had access to Oecolampadius' work, with its invocation of the *sursum corda* in defense of the Swiss teaching on the Eucharist, before he wrote the letter to Bugenhagen discussed above. Now, Farel does not source his use of the *sursum corda* to Oecolampadius, and it is of course not impossible that Farel developed the idea independently. But given that Farel would have read Oecolampadius' use of the phrase just a few months before he used it himself in response to Bugenhagen, it is far more likely that Farel is taking a cue from Oecolampadius. This would make Oecolampadius the source for the Reformed *sursum corda* in Reformed liturgical practice, even though the Basler never gave liturgical expression to his understanding of the ancient liturgical phrase.

Farel's liturgical innovation, most likely drawn (as I have argued) from his engagement with Oecolampadius, was adopted by John Calvin in his 1542 Genevan liturgy *La Forme des Prieres and Chantz ecclesiastiques*.² Just as in Farel's liturgy, the *sursum corda* happens at the end of the exhortation, immediately before the distribution of the elements to the faithful. Calvin places these words in the minister's mouth:

To do so, let us lift our spirits and hearts on high where Jesus Christ is in the glory of His Father, whence we expect Him at our redemption. Let us not be fascinated by these earthly and corruptible elements which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands, seeking Him there as though He were enclosed in the bread or wine. Then only shall our souls be disposed to be nourished and vivified by

His substance when they are lifted up above all earthly things, attaining even to heaven, and entering the Kingdom of God where He dwells. Therefore let us be content to have the bread and wine as signs and witnesses, seeking the truth spiritually where the Word of God promises that we shall find it.³ (Thompson 1961, p. 207)

This elaborated form of the *sursum corda* from Farel's *La maniere et fasson* repeats the dangers of undue focus on the physical elements. But it also emphasizes the real feeding upon Jesus's substance that happens in the Supper via an ascent from the earthly to the heavenly and the proper function of the elements as witnesses of that heavenly feeding.

This liturgical use of the *sursum corda* in Geneva was reinforced by Calvin's catechism of 1542/1545. In the section on the Lord's Supper, the catechism teaches that by the power of the Spirit we truly do receive the participation in Christ's substance which the consumption of the physical elements figure, despite the fact that Christ's body is in heaven (Calvin 1867, pp. 127–28). Of course, this does not mean that Christ's body and blood are enclosed in the bread and wine; rather, as the 1542 French version has it, "to have the truth of the Sacrament, it is necessary for us to raise our hearts on high to heaven, where Jesus Christ is in the glory of his Father, and from whence we await him for our redemption, and not seek him in corruptible elements" (Calvin 1867, p. 130). Note how similar the language of the catechism is to Calvin's liturgy. First, people undergoing catechetical instruction would learn and recite this language about the Supper, and then they would hear these words from the minister immediately before receiving the elements, reinforcing the centrality of this upward piety to Genevan eucharistic practice.

Given the importance of Calvin's version of the Reformed *sursum corda* to the further development of this liturgical element, it is worth attending to the ways that Calvin used the *sursum corda* in theological and polemical works as well as catechetical and liturgical ones. In Calvin's 1541 *Petit Traicté de la Sainte Cene de Nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ*, he uses the idea of elevating the heart for the first time in print both to oppose papal error and to set forth his own positive eucharistic teaching (Calvin 1866, pp. 452, 456). Much as in the works of Oecolampadius and Farel already discussed, Calvin uses the antiquity of the *sursum corda* to argue against the adoration of the elements in the part of the tract when he discusses errors stemming from transubstantiation (Calvin 1866, p. 452). But he also uses the same phrase in discussing how those who reject Roman error *do* receive and adore Christ in the Supper: not as enclosed in the signs of bread and wine, but by elevating their hearts on high (Calvin 1866, p. 456). Calvin strikes a similar note in the *Institutes* beginning in the 1543 edition, writing that the Supper was given to help the mind rise to heaven to apprehend Christ, and so the church of old inserted the phrase "*sursum corda*" before the consecration to prevent worshippers from focusing on material things (Calvin 1863, p. 1012). In the 1557 *Last Admonition to Joachim Westphal*, Calvin uses the phrase not against Roman Catholic views about eucharistic adoration but Lutheran sacramentology. Christ descends to us, Calvin declares, only in order to draw us up to him, citing Chrysostom's interpretation of the liturgical formula (Calvin 1870, p. 214).

Calvin's Lord Supper order, with its Reformed *sursum corda*, would come to be adopted as the sole order of the Reformed churches of France, Neuchâtel, and the Pays de Vaud; it was also used by the French-speaking congregation in Strassburg (Bürki 1983c, p. 352). But the influence of this order and its distinctive liturgical use of the language of ascent to teach Reformed eucharistic piety was not limited to the French-speaking Protestant world. Rather, it is possible to trace two different appropriations of Calvin's *sursum corda* across sixteenth and early seventeenth century Reformed eucharistic liturgies: one trajectory from the English Stranger Churches to the Reformed churches of Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland, and another from English and Scottish refugees living in

Geneva to Scotland and England. It is to these two appropriations that this paper will now turn.

3. The Reformed Sursum Corda from the Stranger Churches to Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland

The next key development of the Reformed sursum corda happened not in Geneva or the Suisse romande but in England. Congregations of French and Dutch refugees fleeing religious persecution in France and the Empire were established there in 1550, with the London congregations placed under the leadership of the Polish reformer John à Lasco (Jan Łaski) (Pettegree 1986). Despite the Zürich orientation of à Lasco and many other leaders of these Churches, the liturgies of both Dutch and French congregations incorporated versions of Calvin's Reformed sursum corda. Martin Micron's adaptation of the Reformed sursum corda in *De christlicke Ordinancien der Nederlantscher Ghemeinten te London* would prove particularly influential for the future of Dutch and German Reformed liturgies via its adaptation in the 1563 Palatinate church order, while à Lasco's version would exercise some limited influence on the development of liturgy in Poland and Lithuania.

The earliest printed liturgical material we have from the Stranger Churches was published by Valérand Poullain, a French minister who had spent time in Strassburg and was pastor to a small congregation of French refugees in Glastonbury (Spinks 1984, pp. 104–5). In 1551, he published a Latin version of the liturgy of the French refugee congregation in Strassburg, the *Liturgia Sacra* (Poullain 1551; Honders 1970). In 1552, two French orders were published, the *L'Ordre des Prieres Et Ministere Ecclesiastique* and the *Doctrine da la penitence publique* (Poullain 1552a, 1552b).⁴ After Mary's accession forced the French community to flee England, Poullain published two additional Latin editions of the *Liturgia Sacra* in Frankfurt in 1554 and 1555 (Honders 1970, p. 6). All of these texts are nearly identical to Calvin's liturgy and they all include a Reformed sursum corda (Poullain 1552a, sig. B4v; 1552b, sig. B1r; Honders 1970, pp. 93–94). The 1552 French printings follow Calvin's language exactly. The Latin is quite faithful to Calvin's French original, although there are a few minor changes, of which the most important is that Poullain emphasizes that our being lifted up to heaven happens "fide," by faith (Honders 1970, p. 94).

While Poullain's texts followed Calvin either exactly or very closely in their adaptation of the sursum corda, the use of the sursum corda in other liturgies produced by the Stranger Churches departed more significantly from him. Consider the liturgy drawn up by Marten Micron and published in 1554 as *De christlicke Ordinancien der Nederlantscher Ghemeinten te London*. This text seems to have been based upon an early version of the *Forma ac Ratio*, the church order published in 1555 by John à Lasco, but the two texts are not identical and the question of the relationship between *De christlicke Ordinancien* and the *Forma ac Ratio* remains a vexed one (Springer 2007, pp. 49–50; de Jong 2022, pp. 451–52). Here is Micron's version of the Reformed sursum corda, placed shortly but not (as in Farel's and Calvin's orders) immediately before the distribution of the elements:

And so that we may feel and enjoy powerfully in our hearts the sweetness of the benefit of Christ's death in the use of the Supper, we should thus not remain stuck in the external practice or in the elements of bread and wine, but admonished by them, we must lift our senses, heart, and mind upwards to heaven, where alone Jesus Christ is according to the body—a true intercessor for us. Through this we should be doubtless be assured that we are much more certainly nourished to eternal life through the spiritual communion of the body and blood of Christ than our mortal body is daily supported through food and drink. And then we use bread and wine in the Lord's Supper according to Christ's command. May God our heavenly Father wish to give us his grace, so that we may truly taste the

true food of our souls, Jesus Christ, in our conscience unto eternal life.⁵ (Honders 1983a, p. 445)

Much of this material is very similar indeed to Calvin; the basic idea that communicants must lift their hearts away from material things to heaven, where Christ is bodily, is clearly expressed. However, the classically Calvinist language of being nourished by Jesus' "substance" in the Supper is missing here, replaced with somewhat more cautious language of a "gheestelicke gemeinschap" (spiritual communion) between Christ and the Christian. In addition, the image of ascent is supplemented by parallelism: Christians should be assured that they are nourished spiritually by Christ just as food nourishes them bodily. Bearing in mind the close association between the Dutch-speaking Stranger Churches and the theology of Zürich (Pettegree 1986, p. 70), it seems reasonable to read this as a Bullingerian adaptation of the Calvinist theme.

The Reformed *sursum corda* in the 1555 published version of à Lasco's *Forma ac Ratio* departs even more significantly from Calvin's model:

Therefore now reflect upon all these things [the reasons for the Supper] yourselves and consider in your mind and rouse your hearts upwards, imploring the aid of the Holy Spirit, that you may understand the efficacious power and dignity of our blessed and entirely not to be interrupted communion with Christ Jesus in his body and blood.⁶ (Honders 1983a, pp. 442–43)

The injunction to lift up one's heart remains, but both the warning about undue focus on the material elements and the discussion of heaven as the location of Christ's body have disappeared. More importantly, the language of ascent no longer seems key to the meaning of the Supper, whether in the negative sense of ruling out Roman Catholic or Lutheran positions or in the positive sense of describing how believers receive Christ. Rather, this portion of the admonition enjoins communicants to engage in a variety of mental processes of which elevation is only one. Further, elevation is associated less with communion with Christ in the Supper *per se* than with the *understanding* of that communion.

The differences here are of sufficient import that one might reasonably ask whether the à Lasco version ought to be considered a 'Reformed *sursum corda*' at all. However, even if it lacks the theological thrust of the other versions we have examined, it is clearly derived from the Farel–Calvin Reformed *sursum corda*. à Lasco himself tells us that he relied on the example of Calvin's churches in developing the *Forma ac Ratio* (à Lasco 1866, p. 50).⁷ As we have seen, Micron's Reformed *sursum corda* is very close to that of Calvin's, and Micron's text was drawn from an early version of à Lasco's work. In fact, it is possible that in his *sursum corda*, Micron is faithfully recording an earlier version of the *Forma ac Ratio* later edited for the 1555 printing, although it may also represent Micron's own work. Without earlier manuscript versions of the *Forma ac Ratio*, we simply cannot know. Further, it is significant that the language of elevation in the final version of the *Forma ac Ratio* appears at the very end of the admonition, the typical location of the Reformed *sursum corda* from Farel onwards. Thus, even if a very odd member of the 'Reformed *sursum corda*' family, it nonetheless does find its basis in this Reformed liturgical tradition.

It was, however, the fuller Reformed *sursum corda* of *De christlicke Ordinancien*, rather than the more attenuated one of the *Forma ac Ratio*, which would prove most influential for the further development of Reformed liturgy in continental Europe. This is because *De christlicke Ordinancien* provided the basis for the Reformed *sursum corda* in the communion service of the 1563 Palatinate *Kirchenordnung*, the liturgy which, as Frieder Schulz notes, became the "classic Lord's Supper formula of the German and Dutch reformed churches" (Schulz 1983, p. 496). The placement of the Reformed *sursum corda* in the Palatinate order is rather different than in the preceding tradition. Rather than at the end of the admonition, it is inserted as a stand-alone short admonition following the eucharistic

prayer, Lord's Prayer, and confession of faith. However, the language is dependent on that of Micron's work:

That we may now be fed with Christ, the true bread of heaven, let us not cleave with our hearts to this external bread and wine, but lift up our hearts and faith into heaven, where Christ Jesus is our Intercessor at the right hand of His heavenly Father (where the articles of our Christian faith also direct us) and doubt not that through the action of the Holy Spirit our souls shall be fed and nourished with His body and blood, as truly we receive the holy bread and cup in remembrance of Him.⁸ (Spinks 2013, p. 297)

We see here two distinctive characteristics of Micron's *sursum corda*: the language of Christ as intercessor (*voorspraker/fürsprecher*) and the combination of the language of ascent with a parallelism between the external eating of the bread and wine and internal eating of Christ's body and blood. Of course, neither of these are unique to Micron as elements of Reformed eucharistic thought; what is unique is Micron's incorporation of them into his version of the Reformed *sursum corda*. Thus, although the 1563 Reformed *sursum corda* is not a direct translation of Micron's text, Micron's influence is nonetheless clear.

Because of the popularity of the 1563 Palatinate *Kirchenordnung*, this version of the Reformed *sursum corda* was widely used in Dutch and German Reformed Lord's Supper liturgies from the sixteenth to even the twentieth centuries. As far as the German reception goes, it shows up verbatim or with minor variations in the early modern church orders of Tecklenburg, Lippe, Hanau, Anhalt-Cöthen, Preußen, Nassau-Dillenburg, Wittgenstein, and Solingen (Schulz 1983, pp. 504–6). In 1566, Petrus Datheen (Dathenus) translated the 1563 Palatinate order for the use of the Dutch refugee community in Frankenthal, preserving the Palatinate version of the Reformed *sursum corda* almost exactly (Honders 1983b, p. 533). This liturgy, with minor variations, continued in use in the Netherlands even into the twentieth century (Honders 1983b, pp. 525–26).

The influence of the *Forma ac Ratio*'s version of the Reformed *sursum corda* was significantly more limited. While Spinks has argued for the importance of the *Forma ac Ratio* to Hungarian liturgies (2013, p. 300), the Reformed *sursum corda*, in à Lasco's form or otherwise, does not appear to play a significant role in the major Hungarian Reformed liturgies (Csaba 2020). In the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Polish translations of the *Forma ac Ratio* were widely used, presumably including à Lasco's version of the Reformed *sursum corda* (Bem 2020, pp. 53–56, 72), but only one further revision of the Polish liturgy incorporated the à Lasco Reformed *sursum corda*.⁹ The language of elevation does show up in later Polish liturgies but in a way distinct from the Reformed *sursum corda* tradition I have been tracing.

The first published revision of the *Forma ac Ratio* in Polish was the 1581 *Forma albo porządek*, published in Vilnius for the use of the Lithuanian Reformed church (Petkunas 2007, pp. 197–202; Bem 2020, p. 74). This text, alone of the liturgies of the Polish and Lithuanian churches, preserves à Lasco's version of the Reformed *sursum corda* in the admonition shortly before reception of the elements (*Forma albo porządek* 1581, sigs. B5v–6r).¹⁰ It also incorporates an additional reference to the elevation of the heart in the very beginning of the Lord's Supper order. After an opening prayer, the minister begins an address about the meaning of the Lord's Supper which leads to a confession of sins and declaration of pardon. This address includes the following: "Therefore, it is meet for us to lift our hearts to His [God's] most Holy Majesty, so that we can seal and confirm our faith and the faith of the whole congregation" (*Forma albo porządek* 1581, sig. B2v). This text associates the celebration of the Lord's Supper with the lifting up of the heart, although like à Lasco's version of the Reformed *sursum corda* used in the liturgy, it does not explicitly use the language of elevation to advance a Reformed understanding of the Supper. It is worth

noting, however, that a hymn included in the catechism bound with this liturgy does what the liturgy proper does not, linking the language of elevation very clearly to Reformed eucharistic teaching (*Kathechism albo krotkei w iedno mieysce zebranie* 1581, sig. D8v).¹¹

The other major post-*Forma ac Ratio* liturgies of the Polish and Lithuanian churches do not incorporate any version of à Lasco's Reformed sursum corda. Instead, they use language of elevation in ways not found in any of the other liturgies considered and largely disconnected from the theological purpose of teaching Reformed eucharistic piety. There are three major liturgies to be considered. The Lublin minister Krzysztof Kraiński drew up the *Porządek nabożeństwa Kościoła powszechnego apostolskiego słowem Bożym zbudowanego w Jezusie Chrystusie*, typically known as the *Forma* (Kraiński 1599; Bem 2020, pp. 57–61). This text then formed the basis of the 1602 *Porządek Nabożentwa Kosciola Powszechnego Apostolskiego* which was adopted as the first binding liturgy of the Lesser Polish church (*Porządek Nabożentwa Kosciola* 1614).¹² That 1602 text was then revised as the 1637 *Agenda albo Forma Porządku* or *Great Gdańsk Agenda*, which unified the worship of the Reformed churches of Greater and Lesser Poland and Lithuania; this text was further revised and then republished in 1644 as the *Akt usługi* to meet Lithuanian objections (Bem 2020, pp. 77–85; Petkunas 2007, pp. 128–43).

These liturgies include two deployments of the language of elevation of the heart. The *Forma*, the 1602 *Porządek Nabożentwa Kosciola Powszechnego Apostolskiego*, and the 1644 (but not the 1637) version of the *Great Gdańsk Agenda* all include a similar call to prayer which incorporates the language of elevation placed before the prayer asking God to consecrate the bread and wine, albeit in different places in the liturgy as a whole. It shows up after the recitation of the Words of Institution in the *Forma* but immediately after the Creed and before the Words of Institution in the 1602 and 1644 liturgies (Petkunas 2007, p. 215). The exhortation to prayer in the 1644 version begins as follows:

So now faithful people, coming to God's Table, and lifting our hearts to heaven, let us ask our highest bishop, Our Lord Jesus Christ, that by being present in this holy action by the power of his divine being, he would deign to sanctify this bread and wine and make us worthy to partake of His most holy body and Most precious blood.¹³ (Bem n.d., p. 7)

In addition, the post-reception thanksgiving in the 1602 order incorporates the language of elevation and links it to the Sanctus: "... and lifting our hearts to you, we call: holy, holy holy..." (*Porządek Nabożentwa Kosciola*, p. 53).

In these uses of the language of elevation of the heart in both the call to prayer and the post-reception thanksgiving, there is no clear textual or structural relationship to à Lasco's liturgy or other earlier examples of the Reformed sursum corda. The 1602 post-reception sursum corda and Sanctus seem most plausibly adapted from Roman Catholic or perhaps Lutheran usage. While it is possible that à Lasco's version of the Reformed sursum corda inspired Kraiński's exhortation to prayer or the 1602 post-reception sursum corda and Sanctus, such potential inspiration is not reflected in the specific words or their placement in the liturgy. The theological purpose of these elements is also different from the other liturgies we have examined; the language of elevation is not explicitly tied to Reformed eucharistic views or to the question of how Christ's body and blood are to be received. Instead, the elevation of the heart is associated with prayer, calling to mind to nothing so much as the 1537 Strassburg rite.¹⁴ Thus, in these Polish liturgies, we have a probably independent use of the language of elevation. But this use is not a 'Reformed sursum corda' in the sense of using the language of elevation to clearly inculcate Reformed eucharistic views; here the language of elevation has a different function.

To sum up, the dissemination of the Reformed sursum corda in continental Europe beyond French-speaking regions depended on the Stranger Churches of England. Mar-

tin Micron's adaptation of Calvin's language in his *De christlicke Ordinancien* influenced the version of the Reformed sursum corda in the 1563 Palatinate Lord's Supper liturgy, which then formed the basis of Reformed liturgies in Germany and the Netherlands. Additionally, à Lasco's rather attenuated version of the Reformed sursum corda in his *Forma ac Ratio*—derived from Calvin but missing the connection to Reformed eucharistic views which was its *raison d'être* in Calvin's rite—showed up in one Polish-language revision of his liturgy. However, later Polish eucharistic liturgies incorporated the language of elevation in a way seemingly independent of à Lasco's work and related to prayer rather than the reception of the eucharistic elements, placing these elements outside the Reformed sursum corda tradition proper.

4. The Reformed Sursum Corda from the Frankfurt and Geneva Exiles to the British Isles

We have thus far examined one of the two appropriations of the Farel–Calvin Reformed sursum corda, from Geneva via the English Stranger Churches to Germany, the Netherlands, and in a more attenuated way, Poland. I will now turn to the second—and, thankfully, rather simpler—appropriation of this liturgical feature, one which began with English-speaking refugees in Frankfurt and Geneva and then shaped Scottish and nonconformist English liturgy as well as the reception of the English Book of Common Prayer in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The origin of the text published in 1556 as *The Forme of Prayers and ministration of the Sacraments . . . used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneua* was a text produced by John Knox and other Geneva-aligned ministers of the congregation of English exiles which settled in Frankfurt after the accession of Mary I and restoration of Roman Catholicism in England (Louden and Tripp 1983, pp. 463–64). This text proved controversial and was never used in Frankfurt. However, after the congregation split over liturgical matters and Knox and his allies settled in Geneva, it was adapted and published as the liturgy of the exile congregation in Geneva. It is usually seen as derived from Calvin's 1542 Geneva liturgy (Louden and Tripp 1983, pp. 463–64), and specifically Huycke's 1550 translation of the same into English (Spinks 1984, pp. 46–47, 77), although Michael Springer has argued for significant influence of both the 1554 printing of Poullain's *Liturgia Sacra* and the *Forma ac Ratio* on this order (Springer 2007, pp. 123–32).¹⁵

Importantly for my purposes, the 1556 *Forme of Prayers* includes an exhortation which concludes with a Reformed sursum corda closely modelled upon Calvin's:

Then to the end that we may be worthy partakers of his merites, and moste comfortable benefits (which is the true eatinge of his fleshe, and drinkinge of his blood) let vs not suffer our mindes to wander aboute the consideration of these earthlie, and corruptible thinges (which we see present to our eies and fele with our handes) to seeke Christ bodely presente in them, as if he were inclosed in the breade or wyne, or as yf these elementes were tourned and chaunged into the substaunce, of his fleshe and blood.

For the only way to dispose our soules to receiue norishment, reliefe, and quiken- ing of his substance, is to lift vp our mindes by fayth aboue all thinges worldlye and sensible, and thereby to entre into heauen, that we may finde, and receiue Christ, where he dwelleth vndoubtedlye verie God, and verie man, in the incom- prehensible glorie of his father, to whome be all praise, honor and glorye now and euer. Amen. (Louden and Tripp 1983, pp. 475–76)

While the placement of this text is somewhat different than in Calvin's order—the service continues with a prayer of thanksgiving rather than immediately preceding to

the distribution—and the language is not identical to Calvin’s, nonetheless the textual dependence on Calvin is clear. Specifically, the text is dependent on William Huycke’s English translation of Calvin’s liturgy. Much of the language in the 1556 version of the *sursum corda*—including, crucially, nearly all of the departures from Calvin’s original—is identical to that 1550 translation (Huycke 1550, sig. F2v).¹⁶

This 1556 *Forme of prayers* was adopted in Scotland and also formed the basis of significant English Puritan liturgies, particularly the so-called Waldegrave Book of 1584 and Middleburg Book of 1586. The Scottish editions of 1562 and 1564 retained this version of the Reformed *sursum corda* verbatim (Louden and Tripp 1983, pp. 475–76). The English liturgies nearly did; the only difference is that while the 1556 version identified the “moste comfortable benefits” of the Supper with the true eating and drinking of Christ’s flesh and blood, the English liturgies made the eating of Christ’s flesh and drinking of his blood instead the means by which Christ’s benefits were received:

Then to the end that we may bee worthy partakers of his merites, and moste comfortable benefits, by the true and spirituall eating of his fleshe and drinking of his bloude. . . (Spinks 1984, pp. 113–21; *A Booke* 1585?, pp. 59–60; 1586, sigs. D3r-v)

However, Puritan attempts to legalize these liturgies failed (Spinks 1984, p. 113), and the communion service in the 1645 Westminster Directory did not include any version of the Reformed *sursum corda* (Louden and Tripp 1983, p. 488), meaning that this element was never present in a legal English liturgy and its mandated use in Scotland ended in the mid-seventeenth century.

There is one other major use of the *sursum corda* in Reformed liturgies of the British Isles to be considered: its retention in its traditional pre-Sanctus position in the various versions of the Book of Common Prayer beginning in 1549. The textual history of the prayer book’s *sursum corda* obviously has nothing to do with Farel or Calvin, à Lasco or Micron; it was retained from pre-Reformation liturgical practice. In that sense, it is clearly outside the ‘Reformed *sursum corda*’ tradition. However, there is some evidence that English divines sought to use the traditional *sursum corda* as a Reformed *sursum corda*, teaching that its inclusion in the prayer book liturgy was designed to lift worshippers’ hearts away from the material elements to Christ in heaven.

One can find the by-now-standard Reformed positions derived ultimately from Oecolampadius that worshippers receiving the eucharist must lift their hearts from the elements to Christ, and that the original purpose of the *sursum corda* language in the liturgy was to teach this, in official English theological and catechetical writing. Thus, for instance, Vermigli’s 1549 *Tractatio de sacramento Eucharistiae*, published along with the record of the Oxford eucharistic disputation, glosses the phrase “*sursum corda*” as referring to “when you lift up your mind from them [the elements of bread and wine] to the invisible things offered you” (Vermigli 2000, p. 78; 1549, sig. I4v). More significantly, the language of elevation appeared in the official Elizabethan homily on the Lord’s Supper, “An Homily of the Worthy Receiving and Reverent Esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ”:

It is well known that the meat we seek for in this supper is spiritual food, the nourishment of our soul, a heavenly refection and not earthly, an invisible meat and not bodily, a ghostly sustenance and not carnal, so that to think that without faith we may enjoy the eating and drinking thereof, or that that is the fruition of it, is but to dream a gross carnal feeding, basely abjecting and binding ourselves to the elements and creatures, whereas by the advice of the council of Nicaea, we ought to ‘lift up our minds by faith,’ and leaving these inferior and earthly things, there seek it where the Sun of righteousness ever shineth. (Bray 2015, p. 430)

While the Homily does not connect this explicitly to the retention of the phrase “Lift up your hearts” in the Book of Common Prayer, it is easy to imagine ordinary English Christians applying this homily to the words of the liturgy.

In fact, the earliest printed stand-alone commentary on the prayer book, Dean of Canterbury John Boys’ 1609 *An exposition of al the principall Scriptures used in our English liturgie*, does explicitly connect this Reformed reading of the sursum corda to its presence in the English liturgy. What is more, Boys does so by linking the English sursum corda with both the above-quoted official homily and the Reformed sursum corda in the Scottish liturgy. After an exposition of the history of the sursum corda, he argues for the appropriateness of its historic and continued use:

For (as the Church of Scotland truly) the onely way to receiue worthily the Lords Supper, is to lift vp our mindes by faith aboue all things worldly and sensible, and thereby to enter into heauen, that wee may finde and receiue Christ, where he dwelleth: a point well vrged also by our Church: Hom. concerning the worthy receiuing of the Sacrament: part the first. (Boys 1609, sig. Q3v)

The marginal note next to the reference to the Church of Scotland is “Ministers exhort. before the Com.”—that is, the version of the Reformed sursum corda originally from the 1556 *Forme of prayers* (Boys 1609, sig. Q3v).

Note well that Boys’ book is written in part against Puritan adversaries of the Book of Common Prayer, the successors of those who wished to replace the Elizabethan prayer book with the Waldegrave or Middelburg books similar to the Scottish liturgy he here approvingly cites. Yet Boys’ conformist stance is in no way compromised by his determination to read the text of the prayer book through the lens of the Reformed sursum corda tradition. If anything, the opposite is true. For Boys, when Church of England communicants hear “Lift up their hearts,” they should understand it as equivalent to the words the Scottish ministers—and before them, Calvin and Farel—use to inculcate a Reformed eucharistic piety of ascent in their people. The presence of the sursum corda is evidence for him not of a troubling similarity to Roman Catholic usage but rather of the prayer book’s faithful exposition of Reformed teaching. In fact, he notes that while “the Papists” retain the sursum corda in their liturgy, it actually “makes against their reall presence” (Boys 1609, sig. Q3v).

Thus, this second appropriation of Calvin’s version of the Reformed sursum corda began with English exile communities in Frankfurt and Geneva and their use of the 1550 Huycke translation of Calvin’s liturgy to draw up the 1556 *Forme of prayers*. This liturgy—including its version of the Reformed sursum corda—was then adopted by the Church of Scotland until its replacement by the 1645 *Directory*. It also formed the basis of two failed replacements for the prayer book proposed by Puritans, which reproduced the 1556 version of this liturgical element with minor changes. However, the Reformed sursum corda tradition is more significant for England than these two Puritan liturgies suggest, for Boys’ important early prayer book commentary taught its readers to understand the traditional sursum corda in the English liturgy along the lines of the Reformed sursum corda tradition, and with specific reference to the 1556 version of it.

5. Conclusions

When Johannes Oecolampadius first articulated the argument that the historic liturgical exhortation “sursum corda” supported Reformed views of the Lord’s Supper in his 1525 *De genuina verborum Domini . . . expositione liber*, he not only inaugurated a popular Reformed argument but provided the justification for a distinctive feature of Reformed liturgy, the Reformed sursum corda. Farel was the first to give this argument liturgical expression in his 1533 *La maniere et fasson*; epistolary evidence strongly suggests, I have argued, that Farel came to this view of the sursum corda via Oecolampadius’ work. Calvin

then further developed the Reformed sursum corda in his Lord's Supper liturgy, *La Forme des Prières*. Calvin's liturgy was not only broadly adopted by French-speaking Reformed churches, but it was also, I have shown, the means by which the Reformed sursum corda moved beyond the French-speaking world; the later versions of the Reformed sursum corda were ultimately derived from Calvin's work.

The first appropriation of Calvin's Reformed sursum corda I traced began in the Stranger Churches of French and Dutch refugees in England. Martin Micron's version of this liturgical element in *De christlicke Ordinancien* formed the basis of the version found in the 1563 Palatinate Lord's Supper liturgy, which was then widely adopted in the Netherlands and in German Reformed churches. The more attenuated version of à Lasco's *Forma ac Ratio*, then, had some influence on Polish-language liturgy, although the Polish-Lithuanian liturgical tradition came to use the language of ascent in ways disconnected from the goal of expressing Reformed eucharistic teaching. The second appropriation began in the liturgical work of English and Scottish exiles in Frankfurt and Geneva. The 1556 *Forme of prayers* of the English-speaking congregation in Geneva, with a Reformed sursum corda derived from the 1550 Huycke translation of Calvin's liturgy, was adopted by the Church of Scotland and formed the basis of several important Puritan liturgies. While the traditional sursum corda in the English prayer book tradition was not textually dependent upon the Reformed sursum corda, the Reformed understanding of the meaning of the sursum corda nevertheless came to influence how the prayer book communion rite was understood.

As we have seen, a wide variety of Reformed liturgies used the language of the elevation of the heart to teach Reformed communicants a eucharistic piety that moves upwards from the elements of bread and wine to heaven where Christ is bodily present. This study has established the sources for and relationships between each major version of this liturgical element in early modern Reformed liturgy. But scholarship remains to be done on how this distinctive upwards Reformed eucharistic piety was taught and practiced beyond the words of the liturgy. In this study, we have seen the language of eucharistic ascent from the materiality of bread and wine to Christ's presence in heaven appear in sources such as Calvin's catechism, a Polish hymnal, and an official English homily. This strongly suggests the value of a broader study that places the liturgical expression of the Reformed sursum corda alongside homiletical, catechetical, and devotional material aimed at that same piety. It is my hope that this present article will prove a useful beginning to that endeavor.

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Notes

- ¹ The French is as follows: "Pourtant levez vos cueurs en hault, cherchans les choses celestielles es cieulx ou Jesuchrist est assis en la dextre du pere, sans voux arrester aux choses visibles qui se corrompent par luisage" (Bürki 1983b, p. 345).

- 2 Calvin's first liturgy was not the 1542 Genevan one. Rather, he drew up a liturgy in Strassburg in 1540 for the use of the French congregation there, but it is lost. An additional Strassburg liturgy was published in 1545, but it is not entirely clear whether the differences between it and the 1542 Genevan reflect Calvin's original 1540 liturgy or revisions made after 1542. It is worth adding that Farel's liturgy would not have been Calvin's only example of the Reformed liturgical use of the language of elevation. Beginning in 1537, the (German language) Strassburg liturgy incorporates language of the elevation of the heart: "... vff das wir allerding als deine rechtartige kinder vnser hertz vnd gemüt inn recht kindtlichem vertrauen allweg zu dir erheben vnd dich jimmer anruffen..." (Drömann 1983, p. 320). However, this precedes the Lord's Prayer, and so the language of elevation is referred to prayer rather than the reception of the Lord's Supper. Thus, if this is Reformed use of the language of elevation in liturgy, it is not precisely a 'Reformed sursum corda' in the way that Farel's or Calvin's deployments of the theme are.
- 3 "Pour ce faire eslevons noz espritz et noz coeurs en hault, ou est JESUS Christ en la gloire de son Pere, et dont nous l'attendons en nostre redemption. Et ne nous amusons point à ces elemens terriens et corruptibles, que nous voyons à l'oeil, et touchons à la main, pour le chercher là, comme s'il estoit encloz au pain ou au vin. Car lors noz ames seront disposees à estre nourries et vivifiees de sa substance, quand elles seront ainsi eslevees, par dessus toutes choses terrestres, pour atteindre iusque au Ciel, et entrer au Royaulme de Dieu, ou il habite. Contentons nous donques, d'avoir le pain et le vin, pour signes et tesmoignages, cherchans spirituellement la verité, où la parolle de Dieu promet que nous la trouverons" (Bürki 1983c, p. 360).
- 4 The STC attributes *L'Ordre Des Prières* to à Lasco, but this is incorrect. Honders' critical edition lacks the second French text, although it is a lightly revised form of *L'Ordre Des Prières* (Springer 2007, p. 50). It is important to note that, as Bryan Spinks has argued, it is not clear that Poullain's liturgy was used by any French congregations in England other than his congregation in Glastonbury. Spinks judges it most likely that, once early versions of the *Forma ac Ratio* came into existence, the French church in London would have used it, and before that, the use of the Genevan (rather than Strassburg) rite would have been most likely (Spinks 1984, pp. 104–5).
- 5 The original Dutch reads as follows: "Ende op dat wij de soeticheit der verdiensten des doots Christi, in t'gebruyck des Nachmaels, in onse herten crachtelick smaken ende ghenieten: so moghen wy niet blyuen steken in dese wtwendighe oeffeninghen, oft in de elementen des Broots ende des Wyns: mer daer doer vermaent synde, moeten wy onse sinnen, herte ende verstandt inden hemel opheffen: daer Jesus Christus alleen, na den lichaem is, een ghetrouwe voorspraker voer ons: ontwyfelick versekert synde, dat wy vele sekerder doer de gheestelicke gemeinschap des lichaems ende bloets Christi toten ewighen leuen ghespijst werden, dan onse sterffelicke lichamen doer spyse ende dranck dagelickx onderhouden werden: ende dan wy in d'Nachtmæl des Heeren broote ende wyn, nae d'instellinghe Christi, nutten. God onse hemelsche Vader wille ons ghenade gheuen: dat wij nu dese warachtighe spijse der sielen, Jesum Christum, in onse conscientien warachtelick ten eewighen leuen smaken moghen. Amen." (Honders 1983a, p. 445).
- 6 The Latin for à Lasco's version of the sursum corda: "Haec igitur omnia vobiscum ipsi iam reputate atque animo revolvite et corda vestra sursum ope Spiritus sancti implorata erigite ad sentiendum vim efficaciam ac dignitatem nostrae huius cum Christo Domino beatae prorsus neque unquam interruptendae communionis in sacrosancto corpore et sanguine ipsius." (Honders 1983a, pp. 442–43).
- 7 Specifically, à Lasco writes in the preface to the *Forma ac Ratio*, "Nos id quidem in nostris Ecclesiis pro nostra virili conati sumus, sumpto exemplo a Genevensi et Argentinensi peregrinorum Ecclesia" (à Lasco 1866, p. 50). The refugee church in Strassburg is almost certainly the French church there, the church whose liturgy Poullain had just published; Pettegree (1986, p. 68) argues that the reference to the refugee church in Geneva simply refers to the Genevan church writ large. But note that in this discussion in the preface, it is specifically matters of discipline in which à Lasco says he took Geneva and Strassburg as models. Nonetheless, he is clearly claiming familiarity with the church orders of these churches, and Pettegree's suggestion of Calvin's liturgical influence is reasonable.
- 8 "Auf daß wir nun mit dem waren himmelbrodt Christo gespeiset werden, so laßt uns mit unsern hertzen nicht an dem eusserlichen brodt und wein haften, sonder unsere hertzen und glauben uber sich in den himel erheben, da Christus Jesus ist, under fürsprecher zur rechten seins himlischen vaters, dahin uns auch die artickle unsers christlichen glaubens weisen, und nicht zweifeln, daß wir so warhaftig durch die würckung des heiligen geists mit seinem leib und blut an unsern seelen gespeist und getrenckt werden, als wir das heilig brodt und track zu seiner gedechtnuß empfangen." (Schulz 1983, pp. 519–20).
- 9 In Poland, the *Forma ac Ratio* replaced the earlier occasional use of Francisco Stancaro's *Porządek naprawienia w kościołach naszych* and the use of the liturgy of the Czech Brethren following an agreement between the Reformed and the Czech Brethren called the Koźminek Union (Bem 2020, pp. 49–52).
- 10 In English translation, it reads as follows: "Therefore discern this yourselves, and lift up your hearts with the help of the Holy Spirit, so that you can understand the effect and dignity of this our blessed and never-changing communion with the Lord Christ in his holy body and his blood." I am thankful to Dr. Kazimierz Bem for providing this and the following translations from Polish.
- 11 "Therefore let us lift up our eyes to him/Where he sits on the right hand/There let us find him by faith/And thus receive him spiritually" (*Kathechism álbo krotkei w iedno miejsce zebranie* 1581, sig. D8v). This raises the question of the how hymns in those

Reformed traditions which adopted them (particularly the Polish, Lithuanian, and Hungarian churches) may have used the language of elevation to inculcate Reformed eucharistic doctrine.

- 12 The relationship between the 1602 order and the 1599 one is controverted in the literature (Petkunas 2007, pp. 115–25; Bem 2020, pp. 57–63).
- 13 The 1599 version is as follows: Let us, already now, people of God, coming to the Table of God, lifting our hearts to heaven, ask of our highest bishop Lord Jesus Christ to deign be present in this Holy Act by the power of his holy Godliness. . .” (Kraiński 1599, p. 167). Here is the 1602 version: “Already now, faithful people of God, coming to the Table of God, and lifting [our] hearts to heaven, let us ask of the highest bishop, Our Lord Jesus Christ, to deign to be present in this holy act by the power of his holy divinity. . .” (Porządek Nabożeństwa Kościoła Powszechnego Apostolskiego 1614, p. 40). The differences are slight ones of phrasing, but it is substantially the same text.
- 14 On the 1537 Strassburg rite, see note 2 above. Now, since the exhortation to prayer precedes the prayer of consecration, it is not implausible to see some connection between the language of elevation and sacramental teaching in these Polish liturgies. Certainly, the language of the exhortation suggests implicitly that Christ is to be sought in heaven, and it connects communicants’ coming to God’s table with their lifting their hearts to heaven. It is even possible that the placement of the language of elevation so near to the consecration would signal Reformed eucharistic views, especially if combined with the singing of hymns like the one discussed in note 11 which do explicitly link elevation to spiritual partaking in Christ. Nonetheless, I think the differences between this exhortation to prayer and the other reworkings of the sursum corda we have examined are significant enough to place it outside the Reformed sursum corda tradition proper, because lifting one’s heart is not explicitly connected to rightly receiving Christ’s body and blood in this exhortation.
- 15 Note that Loudon and Tripp argued against the use of the Huycke translation for the 1556 text, although as we will see, the evidence for its use is overwhelming. As far as the potential influence of à Lasco and Poullain goes, Springer notes in particular the threefold account of the marks of the church and the practice of sitting for receiving communion, both of which were characteristics of the Forma ac ratio but not Calvin.
- 16 Thus, the Huycke text instructs its hearers to “lyfte up our myndes by meanes of a ryght faythe” and references Christ dwelling in heaven “vndoubtedly very God and very manne, in the incomprehensible glory of hys Father” (Huycke 1550, sig. F2v). It is true that one of the variations from Calvin’s text present here was also found in Poullain’s *Liturgia Sacra*, specifically, the language of faith as the instrument by which we ascend to heaven. However, given that Huycke’s text also includes this language, the 1556 *Forme of prayers* is undoubtedly dependent on Huycke, and the other minor variation in the *Liturgia Sacra*’s version of the Reformed sursum corda are not found in the 1556 text, I think Huycke is almost certainly the source, rather than Poullain, for this language about faith.

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