

INVENTORIED AND SEALED.
TREASURES FROM UPPER LUSATIAN CHURCHES
AS AN OBJECT OF POLITICAL BARGAINING
IN THE REFORMATION PERIOD

Kai Wenzel

The churches in the margravate of Upper Lusatia once owned a wealth of gold articles forged in the late Middle Ages. Only few items have survived, most of them in the treasure vaults of the Cistercian female convent of St. Marienstern or the Bautzen cathedral of St. Peter. The overwhelming majority of the treasures held by the churches of the region was lost in the course of the reformation, at first because the councils of the so-called Six towns sold items or had them melted down with the aim of using the proceeds for creating an independent social system no longer linked to the church. In addition, items of high value aroused covetousness on the part of the sovereign, and some of them were impounded by King Ferdinand I. The climax of the sequestrations by the sovereign is marked by the punishment imposed against the Six towns of Upper Lusatia in 1547, an action caused by rivalries within the association of towns during the Schmalkaldic war: As part of the penalty, Ferdinand I had a considerable amount of valuable vessels and instruments which were used during service, and of valuable paraments, transported from Upper Lusatia to Prague. The items in question had already been inventoried and put under seal by a royal commission a few years previously.