

# Table of Contents

|                                                                                                     |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                                                                                  | 11 |
| 1. Easter Laughter as a Denominational Point of Contention .....                                    | 17 |
| 2. (Easter) Laughter as a Historical Point of Contention .....                                      | 20 |
| 3. A Note on the Outline of this Book .....                                                         | 25 |
| Chapter I: What Was Easter Laughter? .....                                                          | 27 |
| 1. Distinguishing Characteristics of Easter Laughter .....                                          | 27 |
| A Brief Excursus on Bakhtin and 'the Culture of<br>Laughter' .....                                  | 30 |
| 2. The Means Used to Stimulate Easter Laughter .....                                                | 34 |
| 3. How Old Is Easter Laughter? .....                                                                | 44 |
| 4. The Geographical Spread of Easter Laughter .....                                                 | 55 |
| Chapter II: The History of the Effects of Easter Laughter .....                                     | 57 |
| 1. Continuation of the Practice of Easter Laughter .....                                            | 58 |
| 2. Easter Laughter as a Denominational Point of Contention until<br>the Baroque Period .....        | 61 |
| i. The Beginning of Its Critique .....                                                              | 61 |
| ii. Lutheran Critique .....                                                                         | 69 |
| iii. Oecolampadius' Legacy .....                                                                    | 71 |
| 3. Brief Characterisation of the Critique of Easter Laughter After<br>the Baroque Period .....      | 78 |
| 4. Re-evaluation I: Nuances in Luther's and Mathesius' Critique .....                               | 80 |
| 5. Re-evaluation II: Theological Motives Behind the Protestant<br>Critique of Easter Laughter ..... | 86 |
| 6. The Scholarly Rediscovery of Easter Laughter in the First Half<br>of the 20th Century .....      | 95 |
| 7. The Scholarly Study of Easter Laughter during the Second Half<br>of the 20th Century .....       | 98 |

|                                                                                                                                                         |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 8. General Classification of the Way Easter Laughter Has Been Treated as a Literary Topos in Scholarly and Popular Literature of the 20th Century ..... | 100 |
| 9. Easter Laughter in the Scholarly Literature since 1990 .....                                                                                         | 104 |
| Chapter III: Arguments For and Against Easter Laughter .....                                                                                            | 107 |
| 1. Pragmatic Arguments .....                                                                                                                            | 108 |
| 2. Pedagogical Arguments .....                                                                                                                          | 111 |
| 3. Tradition as an Argument .....                                                                                                                       | 115 |
| 4. Anthropological Arguments .....                                                                                                                      | 117 |
| 5. Joy as an Argument .....                                                                                                                             | 120 |
| i. The Easter Hymn .....                                                                                                                                | 120 |
| Intermezzo: The Concept of Dignity in Child-Rearing .....                                                                                               | 125 |
| ii. Laughter of the Heart .....                                                                                                                         | 129 |
| iii. Scholasticism: .....                                                                                                                               | 136 |
| a. Silence – Humility .....                                                                                                                             | 136 |
| b. Aristotle and Aquinas .....                                                                                                                          | 138 |
| c. The Four Temperaments .....                                                                                                                          | 145 |
| d. Sin and Purgatory .....                                                                                                                              | 147 |
| iv. A Couple of Female Mystics – and a Male .....                                                                                                       | 151 |
| v. Summary .....                                                                                                                                        | 154 |
| 6. The Resurrection as an Argument .....                                                                                                                | 155 |
| i. Spring in Nature and Myth .....                                                                                                                      | 156 |
| A Brief Excursus on Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Laughter .....                                                                                           | 159 |
| ii. Sexuality and Fertility .....                                                                                                                       | 161 |
| iii. The Uroboric Powers of Laughter .....                                                                                                              | 165 |
| Chapter IV: Did Jesus Laugh? An Essay on the Cultural, Ecclesiastical, and Theological Transformation of Laughter .....                                 | 169 |
| 1. Did Jesus Laugh? Yes, <i>Naturally!</i> (He Could Easily Have Done So) .....                                                                         | 169 |
| i. How Literally Should We Understand the Incarnation? .....                                                                                            | 175 |

|                                                                                                        |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| ii. Can We Even Imagine a Human Being Not Laughing? .....                                              | 182 |
| 2. Did Jesus Laugh? Maybe! (Depending on What Is Meant by 'Laughter') .....                            | 189 |
| i. Different Forms of Modern Research Into Laughter .....                                              | 191 |
| ii. The Historical Break in the Concept of Laughter .....                                              | 193 |
| iii. The (Bodily) Context of Laughter .....                                                            | 195 |
| iv. Laughter as an Educational or Liberating Force .....                                               | 197 |
| v. And Then There Was Humour! .....                                                                    | 201 |
| vi. Humour and the Conception of the Human Being .....                                                 | 204 |
| vii. Humour in the Service of Critique of Religion .....                                               | 206 |
| viii. Humour as a Substitute for Religion .....                                                        | 211 |
| ix. Do Structural Similarities Between Christianity and Humour also Imply a Causal Relationship? ..... | 217 |
| x. Why Does Jesus Have No Sense of Humour? .....                                                       | 220 |
| 3. Did Jesus Laugh? Probably Not! (But He Began Doing So 150 Years Ago) .....                          | 222 |
| i. What Enabled Us to Start Hearing the Laughter of Jesus? .....                                       | 227 |
| ii. Will the Right Jesus be so Kind as to Step Forward? .....                                          | 231 |
| 4. Did Jesus Laugh? No! (And Is That Why We Can?) .....                                                | 237 |
| Chapter V: Johannes Oecolampadius: <i>De Risu Paschali</i> .....                                       | 247 |
| Wolfgang Capito's Preface, April 1518 .....                                                            | 247 |
| Johannes Oecolampadius' Letter, March 1518 .....                                                       | 252 |
| Afterword and Acknowledgements .....                                                                   | 307 |
| Bibliography .....                                                                                     | 311 |
| Index of Names .....                                                                                   | 369 |
| Index of Bible Texts .....                                                                             | 381 |
| A Note on the Author .....                                                                             | 385 |