The increasing number of scholarly editions of correspondences from the early modern period establishes a higher grade of scholarly criteria for historians and other academics working with related topics, particularly in relation to scholarship based upon unpublished documents. The publication of a critical edition of an extensive correspondence establishes a defined text that the scholarly community can use as a basis for further research. A new edition, particularly if it is a first edition, facilitates scholarly debate in that it enables a large group of individuals to conduct scholarly reviews of research based on the contents of such editions. Research based on unpublished materials, such as archival documents, can produce astounding results, but it is often not open to scholarly review. Simply getting to a single archive dissuades most scholars from reviewing the unpublished documents cited. This junction between scholarly research and an unedited document is where the historian and the philologist should meet; it is the ideal setting for interdisciplinary cooperation. A critical first edition of an extensive collection of documents or correspondence should, de facto, be welcomed as a harbinger of change for the scholarship related to the authors of the correspondence and the historic period encompassed by the documents edited. The first question should be, ‘How does this edition change what we know about the people and events involved?’ This is the natural flow from first edition to debate and from debate to revision.

This essay represents a part of that flow from publication to reassessment. The first critical edition of the first nine years of the Latin correspondence of Hermannus Samsonius (1579–1643) to Axel Oxenstierna (1583–1654) was recently published by me.\(^1\) The entire

\(^1\) J. Dobreff, *Hermannus Samsonius to Axel Oxenstierna: Latin Correspondence from 1621 to 1630 with Linguistic and Historical Commentaries* (Lund 2006). References to epistles published in this volume and in the remainder of the correspondence will be year-month-day (e.g. 1629-04-23), as used in my edition.
correspondence extends to 1643, presently including eighty-seven letters, among them several to King Gustavus Adolphus II of Sweden and a few other nobles. A careful reading of the entire correspondence provides a wealth of details that flesh out the evidence in a number of scholarly debates. These details will also, I hope, initiate a wider discussion of several aspects of scholarship related to Hermannus Samsonius.

During a research trip to the city of Riga in Latvia and Tartu in Estonia in the summer of 2006, I rarely met a scholar or librarian who did not immediately recognize the name Hermannus Samsonius as Riga’s and Livonia’s most famous churchman and Riga’s most prolific author in the seventeenth century. In fact, the Latvian hostess of the Bed & Breakfast where I stayed knew of Samsonius. His local fame, I believe, extends from four factors: a cinematic film comedy with Samsonius as a central character; a depiction in a huge stained-glass window in Riga’s St Peter’s church of Samsonius, as the dean of St Peter’s, welcoming Gustavus Adolphus into Riga; the large number of works published by Samsonius; and lastly the establishment of Samsonius in Lutheran circles as Riga’s greatest Lutheran hero. In Sweden, he is known to historians of the Swedish period in Livonia and theologians interested in the Lutheran response to the Counter-Reformation. Outside of Latvia, Estonia, and Sweden, Samsonius is known to a very limited number of historians and theologians. Research related to Samsonius is in either Swedish or German, while the primary sources are in Latin or German. Since Samsonius’s modern reputation is so

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2 I have prepared an initial draft of the remaining correspondence (1630–1643), and hope that the entire correspondence will be published as a volume in the series Riks kanslern Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brevväxling [abbreviated as AOSB = The Works and Correspondence of Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna]. In the Oxenstierna correspondence, the Samsonian epistles form the most extensive collection from Livonia and they came from the pen of Livonia’s then most prolific and influential author and church leader. In these respects, the extensive AOSB would be the ideal venue for a complete edition of the Samsonius-Oxenstierna correspondence. Some of the most recent editions in AOSB, such as Letters from Sir James Spens and Jan Rutgers, A. Jönsson (ed.) (Stockholm 2007), are also available online: www.ra.se/RA/Oxenstierna/oxenstierna1engelska.html.

3 This will be discussed with relevant citations in a subsequent section.

4 I have not examined sources published in Russian, Estonian, Latvian or Polish. There are probably a number of secondary works, though, oddly enough, none of them are mentioned in any of the earlier secondary works in German from Riga or Latvia.