

# LUTHER AS HERETIC

Ten Catholic Responses to Martin Luther, 1518-1541



Edited by  
M. Patrick Graham and David Bagchi



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Translations from the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection  
Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

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James Clarke & Co.

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P.O. Box 60  
Cambridge  
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## Contributors

**David V. N. Bagchi** is Senior Lecturer in Early Modern & Ecclesiastical History and Co-Director of the Andrew Marvell Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Hull.

**Geoffrey Dipple** is a Professor of History and the Chair of the Social Science Department in the Augustana Faculty of the University of Alberta.

**M. Patrick Graham** is Librarian and Margaret A. Pitts Professor Emeritus of Theological Bibliography, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

**Kurt K. Hendel** is the Bernard, Fischer, Westberg Distinguished Ministry Professor Emeritus of Reformation History, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

**Ralph Keen** is the Schmitt Chair of Catholic Studies, Professor of History, and Dean of the Honors College at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Dewey Weiss Kramer** is Professor Emerita of German and Humanities of Georgia Perimeter College/Georgia State University.

**Martin J. Lohrmann** is Assistant Professor of Lutheran Confessions and Heritage at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa.

**William R. Russell** is Pastor of Augustana Lutheran Church (a Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Armin Siedlecki** is Head of Cataloging and Rare Book Cataloger at the Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

**David Ryan Stevenson** is a Latin teacher and independent scholar.



# Preface

THE CATHOLIC RESPONSES TO Martin Luther project began in the shadow of Germany's Decade of Luther and the advance toward 2017 and the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses. Since 1987 the Pitts Theology Library (Candler School of Theology, Emory University) had been building the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection through the acquisition of original materials from the great reformer, his friends, and his opponents. As the collection neared 4,000 items—more than a thousand of which were by Luther himself—the Pitts Library was fully engaged in exhibits and other programs to mark the anniversary of Luther's emergence on the stage of world history. However, it had become increasingly clear that while the publications of Luther and other great reformers were readily available in English translation, the same could not be said for their Catholic opponents (with the notable exception of Erasmus). Therefore, in the interest of ensuring that both sides of the religious debates of Luther's day were accessible to contemporary English-speaking audiences, the current project was developed as a contribution that the Kessler Collection could make to teaching and scholarship.

Therefore, in 2015 with the assistance of Mathew Pinson, Associate Dean of Advancement and Alumni Engagement for the Candler School of Theology, and with the encouragement of Candler's Dean Jan Love and Richard Kessler, a proposal was developed to translate into English several Catholic pamphlets from the Kessler Collection. These had been issued in Latin or German, and most had never before been translated into English. The Halle Foundation (Atlanta) saw merit in the proposal and graciously agreed to fund it. Without the foundation's support and commitment to the project, it would not have moved forward, and so we are deeply grateful to W. Marshall Sanders (executive director), Eike Jordan (chair of the board of trustees) and members of the Halle Foundation board of trustees for their confidence in the Pitts Theology Library and commitment to this

initiative to help contemporary audiences better appreciate the complexity of sixteenth-century German debates sparked by Luther's reforms.

The editors are also grateful to the staff of the Pitts Theology Library—particularly to the director, Dr. Bo Adams, and to the curator of archives and manuscripts, Dr. Brandon Wason—for their ongoing encouragement and support in many details, ranging from budgetary matters to the scanning of pamphlets and mounting early drafts of the translations on the library's web site.

As for the course of the project, translators were invited to review a list of Catholic pamphlets from the Kessler Collection and proceed with a relatively free hand to develop their translations, providing each text with a brief introduction. In some cases the translators worked from a critical edition of the text, but in others the translators worked from a scan of the Pitts pamphlet. We are profoundly grateful to each of the translators for their careful and conscientious work with these difficult texts, for their collaborative spirit, and for their responsiveness to editorial inquiries.

The introductions and translations were edited and made publicly accessible on the Pitts website. Further editorial work on these texts was done in preparation for the current volume, and a general introduction to the collection has been added, along with indexes created with the assistance of Roy T. Wise, an energetic and generous supporter of the Kessler Collection since its founding. We are deeply grateful to Wipf and Stock and to its editorial staff for including this volume under its Pickwick Publications imprint and for their assistance in bringing the work to publication.

Our hope is that this collection of translations will prove useful for teaching and research and foster a deeper understanding of the sixteenth-century debates by allowing readers today to hear the voices that have been largely silent for the English speaking world for centuries. If such is the case, then the vision of Richard Kessler and his initial Emory partner, Prof. Channing Jeschke, director of the Pitts Theology Library, will be further vindicated and affirmed.

The Editors

# Abbreviations

- ADB* *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1898
- ARG* *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte / Archive for Reformation History*
- BHR* Bibliotheca Humanistica et Reformatorica
- CCath* Corpus catholicorum
- CSEL* Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
- EVV* English versions
- LW* *Luther's Works*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman. St. Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–1986
- NDB* *Neue Deutsche Biographie*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953
- NCE* *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. 2nd ed. Detroit: Thomson/Gale; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2003
- OER* *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. Edited by Hans J. Hillerbrand. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996
- PL* *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . Series Latina*. Edited by J.-P. Migne. Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1844–1891
- RGST* Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte
- SCJ* *Sixteenth Century Journal*
- SASRH* St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History
- SCH* Studies in Church History
- SMRT* Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions
- TP* *Theologie und Philosophie*
- WA* *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–present
- ZKG* *Zeitschriften für Kirchengeschichte*



## Timeline of Key Dates

- ca. 1465 Konrad Koch ('Wimpina') born in Bad Wimpfen, Swabia
- 1465 Johann Tetzel born in Pirna, Saxony
- 1466 Paul Bachmann ('Amnicola') born in Chemnitz, Saxony
- 1478 Hieronymus Emser born in Ulm, Swabia
- 1479 Johann Dobneck ('Cochlaeus') born near Nuremberg, Bavaria
- 1480 Augustin Alveldt born in Alfeld, near Hildesheim, NW Germany
- 1486 Johann Maier ('Eckius') born in Eck (now Egg) in Swabia
- 1509 Emser appointed chaplain to Duke George of Saxony's court at Dresden
- 1517 Tetzel promoted plenary indulgences for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. His sub-commissioners active in Brandenburg (neighboring Electoral Saxony) and other places  
Luther's Ninety-Five Theses on the power of indulgences
- 1518 Wimpina and Tetzel publish 106 Theses against Luther's theses  
Luther's *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*  
Tetzel's *Rebuttal . . . against a Presumptuous Sermon*
- 1519 The Leipzig Disputation between Luther, his colleague Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, and Eck. A pamphlet war ensues, including Eck's *Response of Behalf of Hieronymus Emser* (1519) and Emser's *To the Bull at Wittenberg* (1520)  
Wulffer appointed to Duke George of Saxony's chapel at Leipzig
- 1520 Alveldt appointed lector in Holy Scripture at the Franciscan house in Leipzig

#### XIV TIMELINE OF KEY DATES

- 1522 Luther's *A Sincere Admonition to All Christians to Guard against Insurrection and Rebellion*  
Wulffer's *Against the Unholy Rebellion of Martin Luder*
- 1523 Alveldt appointed guardian of the Franciscan house at Halle
- 1524 Duke George of Saxony's campaign for the canonization of the eleventh-century Saxon bishop Benno results in the solemn translation of his relics to the cathedral at Meissen. Luther attacks the event in his *Against the New Idol and Old Devil to be Translated in Meissen*. Alveldt responds with *Against the Wittenberg Idol Martin Luther*.
- 1529 Alveldt elected head of the Saxon province of the Franciscans
- 1530 The Diet of Augsburg. The Lutheran *Confession* is presented and is countered by the *Confutation* composed by the Emperor's theologians.  
Bachmann's *Response to Luther's Open Letter to Albert of Mainz*
- 1541 Colloquy of Catholic and Protestant theologians meets at the Diet of Regensburg. Eck's *Address to the Imperial Court*.

# 1

## Introduction

—DAVID BAGCHI

### READING THE “OTHER SIDE” OF THE REFORMATION

Our knowledge of the Reformation suffers from a one-sidedness, a degree of uncertainty, while we are incomparably better acquainted with the reformers and their colleagues than with their opponents.<sup>1</sup>

THESE WORDS WERE WRITTEN in 1889 by a German Protestant historian, welcoming the appearance of a 500-page biography of one of Luther’s Catholic opponents. One hundred and thirty years later, it can safely be said that this proviso no longer applies.<sup>2</sup> A succession of studies has both broadened and deepened our appreciation of the so-called “Catholic controversialists,” the collective name given to theologians who wrote against Luther and the other reformers. It is now widely acknowledged that their role was not purely

1. Wilhelm Walther in his review of Hermann Wedewer, *Johannes Dietenberger, 1475–1537: Sein Leben und Wirken* in *Historische Zeitschrift* 63 (1889) 311.

2. An indication that studies of Luther’s Catholic opponents are no longer considered marginal to the study of Luther himself can be seen from the inclusion of the late Heribert Smolinsky’s essay, “Luther’s Roman Catholic Critics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, edited by Robert Kolb, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 502–10; and also from the inclusion of Jared Wicks’s essay, “Martin Luther in the Eyes of His Roman Catholic Opponents,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther*, edited by Derek R. Nelson and Paul R. Hinlicky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

a reactive one of negating the claims of Luther and other reformers with polemic, but that it embraced more positive strategies as well. For instance, it is clear that some Catholic writers used the printing press to reach and to teach the public, in order both to buttress their faith and to provide them with ready-made arguments against the blandishments of whatever wolf in sheep's clothing they might encounter.<sup>3</sup> Others tried to show that Luther's teachings could be disproved on his own terms, on the basis of scripture alone, and did not merely confront him with reams of canon law and scholastic theology.<sup>4</sup> In addition, we are now much more knowledgeable than before of the differences within the ranks of the Catholic controversialists, who did not present a unified or uniform front against their opponent in their understanding of the papacy, for example.<sup>5</sup>

In short, the Catholic controversialists can no longer be dismissed as knee-jerk reactionaries and supporters of the *status quo*, or as undifferentiated representatives of a moribund late-medieval scholasticism. Rather, they appear to us now as writers who were as thoughtful and committed as their Protestant counterparts. Of course, they do sometimes seem deficient both in reasoning and in reasonableness, to say nothing of Christian charity; but their pig-headedness in this respect is no worse than their opponents.' Each

3. Augustin von Alveltdt made this intention very clear in his German-language *Eyn gar fruchtbar und nutzbarlich buchleyn von dem Babstlichen stul* [A Very Fruitful and Useful Little Book Concerning the Papal See] (Leipzig: Melchior Lotter the Elder, 1520). From its pastorally-minded preface one might not easily recognize this as an anti-Lutheran work at all. He wrote, "But so that everyone might follow safely the way to God, I have made a small booklet (*ein kleines buchlen*) for all people, which is no less fruitful than it is useful, concerning the right flock, which [alone] possesses the right way, means, and method to reach God, and by which it will undoubtedly reach him" (sig. Aiv).

4. This was especially true of Dietenberger and Schatzgeyer. See Ulrich Horst, "Das Verhältnis von Schrift und Kirche nach Johannes Dietenberger," *TP* 46 (1971) 223–47.

5. For example, Alveltdt, Thomas Murner, Thomas Illyricus, and Schatzgeyer all expressed in their defences of papal primacy against Luther a more or less muted conciliarism. They were all Franciscans, and Franciscans at this time were still wary of attributing too much power to the papacy. Schatzgeyer in particular expressly subordinated papal power to that of the church as embodied in a council. See *Ainn wahrhaftige Erklerung wie sich Sathanas Inn diesen hernach geschriben vieren materyenn vergewentet unnd erzaygt unnder der gestalt eynes Enngels des Liechts* (Munich: n.p., 1526), sig. Giv. The humanists Sir Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus held to an understanding of ecclesiastical consensus that tended towards a species of conciliarism. See Eduard H. L. Baumann, *Thomas More und der Konsens. Eine theologiegeschichtliche Analyse der 'Responsio ad Lutherum' von 1523* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1993), 46; Michael Becht, *Pium consensum tueri. Studien zum Begriff consensus im Werk von Erasmus von Rotterdam, Philipp Melanchthon und Johannes Calvin*, RGST 144 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2000).

saw in the other a threat to Christ's church equal to or greater than the threat posed by the Ottoman Empire. No wonder they fought dirty.

There is of course much work still to be done to understand the Catholic controversialists fully, both as individuals and as a cohort. But at least they are now understood in their own terms and judged by their own criteria, as an important part of the full picture of the Reformation. The time when they were valued by Protestant historians merely as foils to enable Luther's theological brilliance to shine more brightly, or by Roman Catholic historians for the degree of their loyalty to Tridentine orthodoxy, is long gone.

There is one respect, however, in which Walther's words of 130 years ago still hold good, at least for monolingual anglophones. While the writings of sixteenth-century Protestants are readily available in English, in print and online, it is still difficult for those who lack a working knowledge of sixteenth-century Latin and German to access the writings of the Catholic controversialists, despite the availability of some superb translations.<sup>6</sup> The present volume, using examples of Catholic controversial writing from the extensive Kessler Reformation Collection, therefore, meets a pressing need. Each translation, by an experienced translator, is prefaced by a detailed introduction, which sets both the writer and the writing in context. The purpose of this general introduction is to provide a wider perspective designed to contextualize and to characterize both the personalities involved and the nature of their literary response to Luther.

## THE AUTHORS

In contrast with the evangelical pamphleteering of the day, publishing against the Reformation was no free-for-all, and Catholic writers generally did not take up the pen unless commanded to do so by their secular or ecclesiastical superiors. Evangelical propagandists saw in the need to challenge abuses and in their duty as baptized Christians to proclaim the

6. Erika Rummel, ed., *Scheming Papists and Lutheran Fools: Five Reformation Satires* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993) includes selections from Murner's brilliant verse satire, *The Great Lutheran Fool*. Elizabeth Vandiver, Ralph Keen, and Thomas D. Frazel, eds., *Luther's Lives: Two Contemporary Accounts of Martin Luther* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) offers a translation of Cochlaeus's life of Luther. Particular mention should also be made of Johann Tetzels *Rebuttal against Luther's Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*, translated with an introduction by Dewey Weiss Kramer (Atlanta: Pitts Theology Library, 2012), which makes a contemporaneous Catholic response to Luther's critique of indulgence available for the first time and is included in the present volume.

gospel in season and out, sufficient reasons to publish a pamphlet or even a series of them. The only constraint was finding a printer prepared to handle the work. A famous example is that of Argula von Grumbach, who in her pamphlets called the authorities of the University of Ingolstadt out on the grounds that no one else was doing so. The requirement to defend God's word and the demands of natural justice (the authorities had imprisoned and kept incommunicado a Lutheran student), she explained, overrode even the biblical injunction on women to keep silent.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, with few exceptions, Catholics published only if they had direct authorization to do so. Even the indulgence preacher Johann Tetzel, who had the most personal score of all to settle with Luther, wrote his *Rebuttal* not in a private capacity but as "inquisitor of heretical depravity" for Saxony and ultimately as part of the legal process against Luther.<sup>8</sup> Duke George of Albertine Saxony used his authority as a prince, entrusted by God with the care of the souls of his duchy, to mobilize his bishops, his household, and the printing shops of Dresden and Leipzig to ban Luther's works and to publish refutations of them. The success of his scheme can be seen from the fact that the presses in his lands were responsible for nearly half of all vernacular Catholic controversial theology in German-speaking lands between 1518 and 1555, a still more impressive statistic when one considers that the campaign ended in 1539, with George's death.<sup>9</sup> Many of the writings represented in this selection (by Alvelde, Bachmann, Cochlaeus, Emsler, and Wulffer) were commissioned by Duke George, either directly or through his bishop, Adolf II (of Merseberg). While George was the most determined of the German princes to oppose the Reformation, he was not alone. The agency of Joachim, Margrave of Brandenburg, in commissioning

7. Peter Matheson points out that this was von Grumbach's initial position. She developed a more positive justification for women speaking out against false teaching in her later works. See Peter Matheson, ed., *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman's Voice in the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 43.

8. See Kramer, *Johann Tetzel's Rebuttal*.

9. Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Printing, Propaganda and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 36. Duke George's propaganda campaign is discussed in Mark U. Edwards, Jr., "Catholic Controversial Literature, 1518–1555: Some Statistics," *ARG* 79 (1988) 189–204; Christoph Volkmar, *Die Heiligenerhebung Benno von Meissen (1523–1524)*, *RGST* 146 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2002); Volkmar, *Catholic Reform in the Age of Luther: Duke George of Saxony and the Church, 1488–1525*, *SMRT* 209 (Leiden: Brill, 2018); David V. N. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents: Catholic Controversialists, 1518–1525*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 230–36. For Duke George's own literary activity, see Hans Becker, "Herzog Georg von Sachsen als kirchlicher und theologischer Schriftsteller," *ARG* 24 (1927) 161–269; Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–46* (Leiden: Brill, for Cornell University Press, 1983), 20–67.

Konrad Wimpina's controversial works is made clear in the introduction to the document *Against Martin Luther's Confession at Augsburg*, which is included in this collection.

There were important exceptions to this rule. Johann Eck first entered the lists against Luther in a private capacity when he circulated a manuscript of annotations on the *Ninety-Five Theses* among friends. Johannes Cochlaeus, who was to become a more prolific opponent of Luther than even Eck, and a far more influential one in the long term,<sup>10</sup> wrote his early works independently. But both these exceptions serve to establish the rule: on the strength of his performance against Luther at the Leipzig Disputation, Eck was conscripted as an expert adviser to Pope Leo X over the official condemnation and was instrumental in first drafting and then promulgating the bull *Exsurge Domine*;<sup>11</sup> Cochlaeus, having established a reputation as an energetic and effective freelance controversialist, was eventually appointed as Duke George's court-chaplain in order to concentrate on his writing and so contribute more effectively to the duke's campaign.<sup>12</sup>

This constraint goes some way to explaining who became controversialists and why. Those entrusted by the authorities with the responsible task of defending the church's faith and practice had to be theologically competent and able to communicate effectively in writing. It is, therefore, not surprising that their backgrounds were predominantly clerical and/or monastic. The so-called "pamphlet war" in Germany, which ran from 1518 to 1525, involved over fifty writers on the Catholic side. Of those whose status can be determined, almost half (48 percent) were secular clergy. Of these, about two-thirds were lower clergy and included men such as Emser, Cochlaeus, and Wulffer who held court chaplaincies, and those, like Eck whose principal employment was as an academic. The rest were of episcopal rank or above, and these tended to be non-German. 41 percent of these writers were members of religious orders, and by far most of these were Dominicans (like Wimpina and Tetzel) or Franciscans (like Alveltdt). The eleven Dominican friars outnumbered the five Franciscans active during the pamphlet war, but the Franciscans managed to publish more anti-Luther titles than the Dominicans. Only three writers can be assigned with confidence to other orders, among them the Cistercian Bachmann.

What is more surprising is the involvement in this campaign of Catholic laymen, who accounted for nearly 11 percent of identifiable writers

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10. See below in Ralph Keen's introduction to the *Seven Heads of Martin Luther*.

11. See Scott H. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy: Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 107.

12. See Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, 36.

between 1518 and 1525, and of women, both religious and in the world. At first sight this might seem to undermine the point we have already made about the need for authorization, as neither group was generally accorded any competence to discuss theological matters. But those laymen who entered the lists were either themselves personages of considerable authority whose role entailed the defence of the church (King Henry VIII of England and Duke George of Saxony, for example), or, as in the case of Sir Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus, they were acting at the behest of such personages. In contrast, lay people who wrote in support of the Reformation “represented the full spectrum of sixteenth-century urban society.”<sup>13</sup>

Assessing the volume of literary activity by Catholic women against the Reformation is more complicated. In 1523, a pamphlet was published consisting of the letters of the sibling-nuns Katharina and Veronika Rem to their brother, Bernhard, defending their decision to remain in their cloister in Augsburg.<sup>14</sup> This contribution to the traditionalist cause was, however, an unconscious one: Bernhard had had the sisters’ letters printed without their knowledge.<sup>15</sup> A more famous supporter of convent life in the midst of a Lutheran city was Caritas Pirckheimer, abbess of the Poor Clares in Nuremberg.<sup>16</sup> In 1523 she wrote a letter of support to Hieronymus Emser, which was intercepted and published, with barbed comments, by unfriendly hands.<sup>17</sup> But since this was done against her knowledge, in the service of the evangelical cause, it can hardly be considered part of the Catholic campaign in print. Only two women can be positively identified as Catholic polemicists. The first, Anna Bijns, was a Dutch poet who published scathing verses against Luther and the reformers, beginning in 1528. Because she also inveighed against married life, she is normally assumed to have been a nun or to have led a quasi-monastic life, though there is no other evidence for this assumption.<sup>18</sup> Although Bijns was clearly a woman not overly concerned

13. Miriam Usher Chrisman, “Lay Response to the Protestant Reformation in Germany, 1520–1528,” in *Reformation Principle and Practice. Essays in Honour of A. G. Dickens*, edited by Peter Newman Brooks (London: Scolar, 1980), 51.

14. *Antwort Zwayer Closter frauwen im Kathariner Closter zu Augspurg an Bernhart Rem* (Augsburg: Ulhart, 1523).

15. See Merry Wiesner-Hanks, ed., *Convents Confront the Reformation: Catholic and Protestant Nuns in Germany* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996).

16. See P. S. D. Barker, “Caritas Pirckheimer: A Female Humanist Confronts the Reformation,” *SCJ* 26 (1995) 259–72; Charlotte Woodford, *Nuns as Historians in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 78–105.

17. *Eyn missive oder sendbrieff so die Ebtissin von Nüremberg an den hochberümbten Bock Empser geschriben hat, fast künstlich und geistlich auch güet Nünnisch getichttet* (Nuremberg: Höltzel, 1523).

18. See Hermann Pleij, *Anna Bijns, van Antwerpen* (Amsterdam: Prometheus,

about offending conventional opinion, it is perhaps significant that her verses avoided the detailed discussion of theological matters, which she was not authorized to tackle. Instead, they addressed the baleful moral consequences of Lutheranism, in particular the slaughter of the Peasants' War. The other author was Elizabeth Gottgabs, abbess of a convent in Oberwesel, who published a polemical tract late on in the campaign, in 1550.<sup>19</sup> As an abbess, Gottgabs would fall into our category of "higher clergy," of episcopal rank or above, and like others in that category would have assumed that her status gave her authority enough to publish.

## THE WRITINGS

The selection contained in this volume gives the reader new to the study of the Catholic controversialists a good idea of the range of literary styles and genres adopted by them. Almost half their publications in the period to 1525 were written in the form of scholarly treatises or disputations.<sup>20</sup> This was a natural choice for the academics in their ranks, as the disputation was a routine means of both teaching and research at universities. Most famously, it was the form that Luther used to promulgate and then to defend his *Ninety-Five Theses*, and many of the contributions to the indulgence debate followed Luther's lead. (We see examples of the genre here in Tetzels *Rebuttal* and in *Against Martin Luther's Confession* by Wimpina et al., in which the Schwabach Articles are refuted in turn.) The disadvantages of the point-by-point approach were that the resulting refutations were often lengthy and repetitive (they had to be at least as long again as the original and often vastly exceeded this ratio) and that the debate inevitably remained within a framework set by one's opponent. But for the controversialists, these disadvantages were outweighed by the importance of ensuring that every statement made by one's opponent could be refuted in detail, and here the disputation genre had no equal.

The next commonest literary form adopted by the controversialists during the pamphlet war, though far behind the disputation, was the open letter, ostensibly addressed to an individual but meant of course to be read as widely as possible.<sup>21</sup> The form is represented in this collection by Eck's

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2011).

19. *Ein christlicher Bericht, Christum Jesum im Geyst zuerkennen, all altgleubigen und catholischen Christen zu nutz, trost unnd wolfart verfast* (Mainz: F. Behem, 1550).

20. See Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 195.

21. There is evidence that, over the longer term, after 1525, the open letter overtook the disputation as the literary genre most favored by Catholic controversial writers.

*Response on Behalf of Hieronymus Emser*, and by Bachmann's *Response to Luther's Open Letter Addressed to the Cardinal Archbishop of Mainz*. This was among the most flexible and adaptable of genres. It allowed a writer to address the issues raised by an opponent without being confined to a framework set by the foe and without the need for *ad hominem* attacks. In practice, however, personal vituperation in the second person remained a feature of these open letters.

Only 7 percent of Catholic controversial publications during the pamphlet war took the form of printed sermons. One reason for this was that not all these writers had parish responsibilities: Cochlaeus, who held a series of chaplaincies and canonries, could declare at the age of sixty-two that he had never preached in his life.<sup>22</sup> The idea of adopting the sermon genre was, therefore, not one that sprang readily to all members of the cohort. But for some it was a vital weapon in their armory. Alvelde, who as a Franciscan friar belonged to a preaching order, published several sermons besides the one in this anthology. The sermon allowed the preacher/writer to address the reader directly, often appealing to the emotions as well as to reason, and to stress the importance of right belief, not as an abstract good but as an urgent matter of salvation. Printed sermons also lent themselves readily to being read aloud in the hearing of others. After the pamphlet war, prompted by the success of Luther's postil collections, Catholic controversialists such as Eck began to publish their sermons in collections keyed to the liturgical year. These became important resources for parish priests and others looking for an arsenal of arguments with which to protect their flock from the influence of Protestantism and, as John Frymire has pointed out, they give us the clearest indication we have of the sort of ideas that would have been disseminated from Catholic pulpits in this period.<sup>23</sup>

Other literary genres were used by the Catholic controversialists, but not in large numbers. The dialogue, in which two or more fictitious figures present their worldviews, often in a semi-dramatized form, was used by a handful of Catholic polemicists before the Peasants' War. Johann Dietenberger and Sebastian Felbaum were notable for writing dialogues in

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See Thomas Brockmann, *Die Konzilsfrage in den Flug- und Streitschriften des deutschen Sprachraumes, 1518–1563* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 690.

22. Gotthelf Wiedermann, "Cochlaeus as a Polemicist" in *Seven-Headed Luther: Essays in Commemoration of a Quincentenary, 1483–1983*, edited by Peter Newman Brooks, 196–205 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 200.

23. John M. Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils. Catholics, Protestants and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany*, SMRT 147 (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Despite the title, Frymire's emphasis is on the role of Catholic preaching.

German.<sup>24</sup> An inventive development of the dialogue was Johannes Cochlaeus's series of books issued under the brand "Seven-Headed Luther," in which Luther was made to conduct a dialogue with himself, based on contradictions drawn from his writings. Finally, the "oration" was a short-lived form used by a number of Italian writers. Such *orationes* consisted of formal addresses to the Emperor Charles V and were designed to counter Luther's own address *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. (Johann Eck's *Oratio* at Regensburg, included in this collection, was not an oration of this sort but a sermon addressed to the Imperial court.)

The choice of literary genre in many cases determined the language in which a controversialist chose to write. Disputation-style writings and letters were far more likely to be written in Latin, while sermons were more likely to be in German.<sup>25</sup> As the debate developed, Catholic writers in the Holy Roman Empire adopted the vernacular in increasing numbers. Nonetheless, as Mark U. Edwards, Jr. points out, between 1518 and 1544 fewer than half the Catholic anti-Reformation works published in the empire were in German, compared with more than 80 percent of Luther's own writings over the same period.<sup>26</sup>

This imbalance might help to explain why Catholic controversial writings sold more poorly than those of their opponents. Of the ten titles translated in this collection, six were never printed again and two were reprinted only once. Only Wimpina's *Against Martin Luther's Confession*, with four reprints, and Eck's *Address*, with three (two in Antwerp, one in Paris), can be considered popular. This contrasts with Luther's works, each of which was reprinted four or five times on average.<sup>27</sup> The number of reprintings is a key indicator of demand because of the nature of sixteenth-century printing. Print runs were low by modern standards (most scholars guess that a handpress could make about 800–1,000 impressions before the soft metal type and/or any engraved woodblocks would begin to deteriorate beyond acceptable limits). Because the presses would run again only if an initial print run sold out, the number of reprints gives us a fair notion of the number of sales. The exception to this rule was where a publisher expected strong demand in other regions and so might commission an initial print run there: it was often cheaper to print locally than to haul such heavy items

24. See Ulman Weiß, "Sich 'der zeit vnd dem marckt vergleichen': altgläubige Dialoge der frühen Reformation," in *Flugschriften der Reformationszeit: Colloquium im Erfurter Augustinerkloster 1999*, edited by Ulman Weiß (Tübingen: Bibliotheca academica Verlag, 2001), 97–124.

25. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 195.

26. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, 40.

27. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, 18.

as books many miles. This might explain why Eck's work was reprinted in Antwerp and Paris.

It is possible of course that our impression that Catholic controversial writings sold poorly is due to the accidents of survival. Sixteenth-century pamphlets, which were sold unbound, were ephemeral publications not designed to last. Those that have, and so can be found in major libraries and research collections today, have been acquired and preserved. Past book collectors may well have had a bias in favor of collecting books by well-known authors, which might explain why the works of Luther and his lieutenants survive in large numbers, while those of Bachmann or Wulffer do not. This is a possibility, but even contemporaries were aware of the fact that writings critical of the church sold, while those which defended it did not. Catholic writers often had to subsidize the printing of their works: Cochlaeus could not afford to publish until the relatively late date of 1522 for this reason, and Alveldt's *Against the Wittenberg Idol* seems to have seen the light of day only because it was published by his fellow controversialist Emser. Even those Catholic printers who handled these publications out of conviction were obliged to print Evangelical works as well to make ends meet and suffered financially, when they were prevented from doing so.<sup>28</sup> Pope Adrian VI assumed that printers refused to handle Catholic authors, because they had been bribed not to, but the real reason was their poor sales.<sup>29</sup>

Several explanations have been offered to explain why Catholic controversial writings, on average, enjoyed lower sales than their Reformation rivals. We are aware from our own media culture that challenges to the establishment—be they satire or conspiracy theories—always make a bigger splash than defences of the *status quo*, no matter how reasonable or compelling. This phenomenon was recognized by the Catholic controversialists and their supporters and indeed had been noted long before. The highest-ranking of the early clerical literary opponents of the Reformation, Johann Fabri, the vicar-general of Constance, recalled biblical and patristic warnings that the people's ears will always itch after novelties and that the simple folk are always easily misled.<sup>30</sup> Another alleged factor is anticlericalism, a rather imprecise phenomenon that has been held to include anti-monasticism and anti-curialism. Although a consensus on the nature or degree of anticlerical sentiment in the early years of the Reformation is lacking, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that catalogues of clerical failings were

28. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 200, 231.

29. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 22.

30. Johann Fabri, *Opus adversus nova quaedam et a christiana religione prorsus aliena dogmata Martini Lutheri* (Rome: Silber, 1522), sig. Vivr.