

# LUTHER'S WORKS

VOLUME 59

## PREFACES

I

*Edited by*

CHRISTOPHER BOYD BROWN



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# CONTENTS

General Introduction	ix
Abbreviations	xi
Introduction to Volumes 59 and 60	xvii
Preface to [Ps.]-Ulrich of Augsburg, <i>Letter against the Constitution on Clerical Celibacy</i> (1520) <i>Translated by Eric G. Phillips. Edited by Kirsi Stjerna.</i>	1
Preface to Johannes Wessel Gansfort, <i>Letters</i> (1522) <i>Translated by Heath R. Curtis. Edited by Franz Posset.</i>	6
Preface to Johannes Pupper of Goch, <i>Fragments in Praise of God's Grace and of Christian Faith</i> (1522) <i>Translated by Eric G. Phillips. Edited by Franz Posset.</i>	12
Preface to Philip Melanchthon, <i>Annotations on Paul's Letters to the Romans and to the Corinthians</i> (1522) <i>Translated by Heath R. Curtis. Edited by Timothy J. Wengert.</i>	18
Preface to Johann Briesmann, <i>Response to the Convolutions of Caspar Schatzgeyer, in Defense of Luther's Book "On Monastic Vows"</i> (1523) <i>Translated by Heath R. Curtis. Edited by David V. N. Bagchi.</i>	23
Afterword to Francesco Chierigati and Pope Adrian VI, <i>Papal Breve against Luther, Sent to the City Council of Bamberg</i> (1523) <i>Translated and edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i>	37
Preface to Philip Melanchthon, <i>Annotations on the Gospel of John</i> (1523) <i>Translated by Heath R. Curtis. Edited by Timothy J. Wengert.</i>	43
Preface to Francis Lambert of Avignon, <i>Evangelical Commentary on the Rule of the Friars Minor</i> (1523) <i>Translated by Duane Ernest Peters. Edited by Christopher Boyd Brown.</i>	48
Against the Corrupters and Falsifiers of the Imperial Mandate (1523) <i>Translated and edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i>	53
Preface to Johann Apel, <i>Defense of His Marriage, to the Bishop of Würzburg</i> (1523) <i>Translated and edited by Robert Kolb.</i>	65

Letter accompanying Justus Jonas, <i>Defense of the Marriage of Priests, against Johann Fabri, Vicar of the Diocese of Constance and Patron of Fornication</i> (1523)	70
<i>Translated by Duane Ernest Peters. Edited by David V. N. Bagchi.</i>	
Preface to Girolamo Savonarola, <i>Pious and Learned Meditation on Psalms 51 and 31</i> (1523)	77
<i>Translated by Duane Ernest Peters. Edited by Bruce Gordon.</i>	
Preface to Johann Bugenhagen, <i>Interpretation of the Psalms</i> (1524)	82
<i>Translated by Duane Ernest Peters. Edited by Christopher Boyd Brown.</i>	
Preface and Afterword to <i>Two Discordant and Conflicting Imperial Mandates concerning Luther</i> (1524)	88
<i>Translated and edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i>	
Preface to the Second Volume of the Works of John Hus (1524)	97
<i>Translated and edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i>	
Preface and Glosses to <i>Two Bulls of Pope Clement VII on the Jubilee Indulgence</i> (1525, ca. 1545/1557)	102
<i>Translated and edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i>	
Preface and Afterword to <i>The Terrifying Story of Thomas Münzer and God's Judgment upon Him, in which God Manifestly Reproves and Condemns the Lies of That Spirit</i> (1525)	120
<i>Translated by Marion Salzmann. Edited by Carolyn Schneider.</i>	
Preface to Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, <i>Defense against the False Charge of Rebellion</i> (1525)	127
<i>Translated by O. Marc Tangner. Edited by Erik H. Herrmann.</i>	
Preface to Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, <i>Explanation of How Karlstadt Understands His Teaching concerning the Lord's Supper and Other Teachings, and How He Wants Them to Be Understood</i> (1525)	134
<i>Translated by O. Marc Tangner. Edited by Erik H. Herrmann.</i>	
Preface and Afterword to <i>The Papacy with Its Members, Depicted and Described</i> (1526)	138
<i>Translated by Marion Salzmann. Edited by David M. Whitford.</i>	
Prefaces to Johann Brenz, <i>Swabian Syngramma</i> (1526)	150
<i>Translated by Marion Salzmann. Edited by Amy Nelson Burnett.</i>	
Open Letter to Johann Herwagen and Preface to the Fourth Volume of Martin Bucer's Latin Translation of the <i>Church Postil</i> (1526/1527, 1528)	163
<i>Translated by Susan Mobley and Duane Ernest Peters.</i>	
<i>Edited by Susan Mobley and Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i>	
Preface to Johannes Lichtenberger, <i>The Prophecy of Johannes Lichtenberger in German, Carefully Edited</i> (1527)	175
<i>Translated by Marion Salzmann. Edited by Robin B. Barnes.</i>	

Prefaces for the Writings of Justus Menius against Conrad Kling in Erfurt (1527) <i>Translated by Mark E. DeGarmeaux and Thomas H. Trapp.</i> <i>Edited by Timothy H. Maschke.</i>	185
Preface, Letter accompanying, and Afterword to <i>A Blessed Account of Herr Leonhard Kaiser of Bavaria, Burned for the Sake of the Gospel</i> (1527) <i>Translated by Margaret Arnold and Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i> <i>Edited by Margaret Arnold.</i>	194
Preface to [Nicholas Hereford?], <i>Commentary on the Apocalypse, Published One Hundred Years Ago</i> [ca. 1400] (1528) <i>Translated by Duane Ernest Peters. Edited by Rady Roldán-Figueroa.</i>	203
Preface and Afterword to <i>A Vision of Brother Claus in Switzerland and Its Interpretation</i> (1528) <i>Translated by Benjamin T. G. Mayes. Edited by Christopher Boyd Brown.</i>	208
Preface to Johann Brenz, <i>Exposition of Ecclesiastes, Firmly Based in the Holy, Divine Scriptures</i> (1528) <i>Translated by Robert Rosin. Edited by Robert Rosin and Roland Ziegler.</i>	216
Preface to Stephan Klingebel, <i>On Clerical Marriage</i> (1528) <i>Translated by Thomas H. Trapp. Edited by Kirsi Stjerna.</i>	220
Afterword to Ursula of Münsterberg, <i>Christian Reasons for Leaving the Convent at Freiberg</i> (1528) <i>Translated and edited by Mary Jane Haemig.</i>	231
Preface to <i>On the Roguery of the False Beggars [The Book of Vagabonds]</i> (1528) <i>Translated and edited by Carter Lindberg.</i>	236
Preface to Justus Menius, <i>Oeconomia Christiana: On the Christian Household</i> (1529) <i>Translated and edited by Christopher Boyd Brown.</i>	240
Preface to Philip Melanchthon, <i>Exposition of Colossians, Translated into German by Justus Jonas</i> (1529) <i>Translated and edited by Timothy J. Wengert.</i>	248
Preface to Thomas Venatorius, <i>Brief Instruction for the Dying, Altogether Comforting and Salutary</i> (1529) <i>Translated and edited by Austra Reinis.</i>	251
Preface to [George of Hungary,] <i>Book on the Ceremonies and Customs of the Turks, Published Seventy Years Ago</i> (1530) <i>Translated and edited by Adam S. Francisco.</i>	255
Preface to Justus Menius, <i>The Doctrine and Secret of the Anabaptists, Refuted from Scripture</i> (1530) <i>Translated by Jacob Corzine. Edited by Carol Geisler.</i>	263
Preface to Lazarus Spengler, <i>Brief Excerpt from the Papal Laws</i> (1530) <i>Translated and edited by James M. Estes.</i>	272

Preface to <i>The Thirty-Eighth and Thirty-Ninth Chapters of Ezekiel, on Gog</i> (1530) <i>Translated by Mark E. DeGarmeaux. Edited by Gregory J. Miller.</i>	277
Preface to Johann Brenz, <i>Exposition of the Prophet Amos</i> (1530) <i>Translated by Duane Ernest Peters. Edited by Roland Ziegler.</i>	285
Preface, Marginal Glosses, and Commentary on [Hermann Rab], <i>Specimen of Papist Theology and Doctrine</i> (1531) <i>Translated by Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i> <i>Edited by Margaret Arnold and Christopher Boyd Brown.</i>	290
Preface to <i>Christian Order for the City of Göttingen</i> (1531) <i>Translated by Jacob Corzine. Edited by Roland Ziegler.</i>	313
Prefaces for the Sermons of Alexius Chrosner (1531) <i>Translated by Jacob Corzine. Edited by Jonathan W. Mumme.</i>	318
Preface to Aegidius Faber, <i>A German Exposition of the Psalm Miserere [Psalm 51]</i> (1531) <i>Translated by Jason D. Lane. Edited by Gerhard Bode.</i>	330
Preface to Johann Brenz, <i>On the Christian Conduct of Marriage Cases in Accord with Divine Law and Equity</i> (1531) <i>Translated by Christopher Boyd Brown. Edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes.</i>	335
Preface to Johann Bugenhagen's Edition of Athanasius, <i>Against the Idolatry of the Gentiles and On Faith in the Holy Trinity</i> (1532) <i>Translated by Eric G. Phillips. Edited by Carolyn Schneider.</i>	342
Indexes	349

# INTRODUCTION TO VOLUMES 59 AND 60

MARTIN Luther observed wryly in 1537 that he had become a “professional writer of prefaces”<sup>1</sup>—not the prefaces to his own works, which he wrote as well,<sup>2</sup> but scores of forewords, epistles, and prefaces commending and commenting on the works of others.<sup>3</sup> Although the historiography of the Reformation has sometimes placed Luther at center stage as a solitary, heroic figure, the collation of his prefaces to nearly a hundred works by other authors serves as a reminder that Luther himself saw the Reformation of the church as a work shared both with his contemporaries and with Christian witnesses from the past. It was within this collaboration that Evangelical theology and ecclesiastical structures took shape and were defended and fortified against opponents. Even the opponents themselves could be enlisted as unwitting contributors to the work of reformation as their works, from papal bulls to the Koran, were published under Luther’s auspices in order to set Evangelical Christianity in a clearer light.

## LUTHER AND THE PREFACE

Luther’s prefaces are interesting in no small part because they are such a varied lot, revealing not only his own wide personal connections with other reformers but also the many aspects of the Reformation program, including

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to Kymaeus, *Ancient Christian Council in Gangra* (1537), LW 60:136.

<sup>2</sup> On Luther’s prefaces to his own works, see Helmar Junghans, “Die Widmungsvorrede bei Martin Luther,” in *Lutheriana: Zum 500. Geburtstag Martin Luthers*, ed. Gerhard Hammer and Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen, WA Ar 5 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1984), pp. 39–65; Kevin Dunn, *Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 19–50.

<sup>3</sup> The most comprehensive study to date of Luther’s prefaces for others’ books is Philippe Büttgen, “Luther et les livres des autres: Fonction du paratexte et statut du livre dans la pensée du Réformateur,” in *Le pouvoir des livres à la Renaissance*, ed. Dominique de Courcelles, *Études et rencontres de l’école des chartes* 3 (Paris: École des chartes, 1998), pp. 115–42; see also the report on the seminar conducted by Helmar Junghans at the seventh International Congress for Luther Research (1988) in Theodor Dieter, “Die Interpretation von Vorreden Luthers,” *LJB* 57 (1990): 271–74.

biblical exegesis and preaching, devotion, and the reform of marriage, *inter alia*. They also give Luther opportunity to hold forth on a range of subjects that are beyond the usual scope of his theological writing, such as history, astrology, and law. Nonetheless, based on their common literary character, the editors of Luther's works have long presented his prefaces to the works of others together as a distinct genre within his literary production,<sup>4</sup> and that tradition is renewed here.<sup>5</sup>

The preface as a genre has a long history in literature going back to classical antiquity—though other than a few exceptions in Christian literature, ancient prefaces were almost always written by authors for their own works.<sup>6</sup> Prefaces written to accompany the work of another writer were chiefly a development of the Renaissance and of print culture, when for the first time an interested party might influence the dissemination and reception of another's work beyond the making or annotating of a single copy.<sup>7</sup> During the Reformation, such preface-writing became an important means for writers to express confessional unity or dissent, and Luther was a pioneer in exploring the possibilities of the form.<sup>8</sup>

According to the expectations of the genre, prefaces tended toward a high rhetorical style. Luther's vernacular prefaces showed his command of the German language and popular polemic. In his Latin prefaces, amid disclaimers of his own skill,<sup>9</sup> Luther displayed an elaborate (if at times

<sup>4</sup> Already the 1528/1533 catalog of Luther's works up to that date, prepared in anticipation of a collected edition, grouped together Luther's "Prefaces and Epistles Attached to the Works of Others" (WA 60:5 [Latin]; 60:11 [German]), a pattern followed by the Wittenberg (German vol. 12), Leipzig (vol. 22), Walch and St. Louis (vol. 14), and Erlangen editions (EA 63) as well. The WA, however, presents the prefaces scattered among Luther's other works in chronological arrangement. Some of Luther's prefaces in epistolary form have been transmitted in the editions among his correspondence. On prefaces included elsewhere in LW, see the volume introduction below, pp. xxxix–xl.

<sup>5</sup> Such a modern edition has been called for by the late Helmar Junghans and others: see Dieter, "Die Interpretation von Vorreden Luthers," p. 274.

<sup>6</sup> See Tore Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions*, Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 13 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964). For Christian exceptions, see, e.g., Jerome's (ca. 345–420) biblical prefaces: PL 28–29, included in most manuscripts and editions of the Vulgate; cf. also such examples as Rufinus (ca. 345–410), *Praefatio in Regulam S. Basilii* (PL 103:485), and the anonymous *Praefatio in Dialogos sancti Gregorii magni* (PL 77:147–49).

<sup>7</sup> On the Renaissance origins of "allographic" prefaces, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 263.

<sup>8</sup> See Richard Kopp, *Die Präfatō im lateinischem Schrifttum der Reformationszeit* (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, 1958).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., below, preface to Brenz, *Exposition of Amos* (1530), p. 287; Pupper, *Fragments* (1522), p. 15; Melanchthon, *Annotations on John* (1523), p. 46.

somewhat strained) Renaissance Latinity, establishing himself as a member of the humanist *respublica litterarum* as he gently criticized the Latin of his medieval predecessors or of contemporary opponents<sup>10</sup>—though he was master enough of the genre that he could defy humanist conventions as well, if he chose.<sup>11</sup>

## AUTHORS AND PRINTERS

Luther's first preface, published in 1516, was attached to a partial edition of the *German Theology*, a work of late medieval mysticism.<sup>12</sup> Appearing at a time when Luther himself was scarcely known outside the Augustinian order, the preface served less to commend the *German Theology* by association with Luther than to associate Luther's name with a venerable (if obscure) predecessor. That dynamic quickly changed, however, as Luther burst into prominence with the controversy over indulgences and the "Luther case" became the talk of Germany. Luther himself became by far the best-selling author in the German press, transforming the printing industry (and particularly the town of Wittenberg) with the popularity of his own works.<sup>13</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that Luther was often besought to supply others with a preface. Printers and authors expected that their works would sell better with Luther's name attached to them, and Luther often complains of the pressure brought to bear upon him to provide a foreword.<sup>14</sup> In virtually every case, the title pages of these books alerted the reader to the presence of Luther's preface<sup>15</sup>—something Luther compared (alluding to

<sup>10</sup> See below, preface to Gansfort, *Letters* (1522), p. 10; Pupper, *Fragments* (1522), pp. 16–17; Briesmann, *Response to Schatzgeyer* (1523), p. 29; afterword to Chierigati and Adrian VI, *Papal Breve against Luther* (1523), p. 42; *Open Letter to Johann Herwagen* (1526/1527), p. 168; and afterword to *Letter Censuring Cajetan* (1534), LW 60:50; preface to the *Donation of Constantine* (1537), LW 60:161; preface to *Letter on the Wretched Condition of Curates* (1540), LW 60:237; Brother Richard, *Refutation of the Koran* (1542), LW 60:254.

<sup>11</sup> Dunn, *Pretexes of Authority*, pp. 22–23, contrasts Luther's deliberate freedom in the use of humanist tropes with John Calvin's (1509–64) strict adherence to them.

<sup>12</sup> Preface to the partial edition of the *German Theology* (1516), WA 1:153 (LW 70).

<sup>13</sup> See Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 91–106, 107–29; Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> E.g., preface to Corvinus, *How Far Erasmus' "Mending the Peace" Should Be Followed* (1534), LW 60:60: "The printer has pried from me this preface that is supposed to be published under my name, so that this little book, marketable enough by itself, might be regarded with all the more favor on account of my endorsement."

<sup>15</sup> These annotations are so universal that they have generally been omitted in the shortened forms of the titles given with each piece in LW 59 and LW 60.

one of Erasmus' *Adages*) to the wreath of ivy used to advertise a wineshop.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, Luther could note ironically the offense caused to hostile readers by the presence of his name<sup>17</sup> or could observe that he was conferring fame on undeserving opponents by linking his name with theirs.<sup>18</sup>

Luther was well aware of the ways in which the printers made use of his "name and testimony the better to peddle their books—some of them deceitfully, some honestly."<sup>19</sup> But he was strategic in lending his cooperation. He refused to grant a monopoly on printing his works to the cartel of Wittenberg presses,<sup>20</sup> preferring to maintain his independence so that he could exercise a wider influence to ensure that works he particularly wished to see published would find their way into print. The exploitation between the reformer and the printers was thus mutual. In many of the prefaces below, Luther claims responsibility for seeing the work into the press.<sup>21</sup> He became a major patron of Evangelical literature, not through financial support but through his influence with printers and with the public.

Authors, too, were solicitous of Luther's endorsement, not only for its effect on their public but also for its theological weight. Although Luther disclaimed for himself the authority to act as an Evangelical censor, with power to determine what should and should not be printed,<sup>22</sup> it is clear that his supporters prized his judgment and attestation. For his part, Luther

<sup>16</sup> Preface to Menius, *Commentary on 1 Samuel* (1532), LW 60:8.

<sup>17</sup> Below, preface to Venatorius, *Brief Instruction for the Dying* (1529), p. 253; and Rhegius, *Refutation* (1535), LW 60:86–87; Güttel, *Sermon Delivered at the Cemetery in Eisleben* (1541), LW 60:247–48.

<sup>18</sup> Below, letter accompanying Jonas, *Defense of the Marriage of Priests* (1523), p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> Below, preface to Menius, *Oeconomia Christiana* (1529), p. 244.

<sup>20</sup> See Pettegree, *Book in the Renaissance*, p. 106.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., preface to Huberinus, *On the Wrath and Mercy of God* (1534), LW 60:69: "I have gladly seen this little book into print, as I have done before with several others." See also below, preface to Melanchthon, *Annotations on Romans and Corinthians* (1522), p. 20; Briesmann, *Response to Schatzgeyer* (1523), p. 27; Melanchthon, *Annotations on John* (1523), pp. 45–46; Savonarola, *Meditation on Psalms 51 and 31* (1523), p. 80; *Terrifying Story of Münzer* (1525), p. 123; Karlstadt, *Defense* (1525), p. 130; first and second prefaces to Brenz, *Swabian Syngamma* (1526), pp. 156, 162; preface to Lichtenberger, *Prophecy* (1527), p. 178; Menius, *Defense and Thorough Explanation* (1527), p. 190; [Hereford?], *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (1528), pp. 205–7; afterword to Ursula of Münsterberg, *Reasons for Leaving the Convent* (1528), p. 233; preface to Venatorius, *Brief Instruction for the Dying* (1529), p. 252; [George of Hungary], *On the Ceremonies and Customs of the Turks* (1530), p. 258; *Christian Order for Göttingen* (1531), p. 316; Chrosner's sermons (1531), pp. 326–27; and Adler, *Sermon on Almsgiving* (1533), LW 60:15; Faber, *On the False Blood and Idol in Schwerin* (1533), LW 60:32; Spengler, *Confession* (1535), LW 60:73; preface to Hus, *Three Letters* (1536/1537), LW 60:125.

<sup>22</sup> Below, preface to Menius, *Defense and Thorough Explanation* (1527), p. 190; Brenz, *Exposition of Amos* (1530), p. 287.

described himself as bound, not to serve as judge over others but to “[bear] witness to [the author’s] doctrine where it is correct.”<sup>23</sup> Although Luther was aware of the weight of the “confirmation of [his] testimony,”<sup>24</sup> in the prefaces he generally chose to speak of common witness rather than to emphasize—at least explicitly—his own unique authority as reformer.<sup>25</sup>

The contemporary writers for whom Luther composed prefaces were, for the most part, either his own Wittenberg colleagues or his friends and former students deployed across Germany. The Thuringian reformer Justus Menius (1499–1558) received seven prefaces from Luther<sup>26</sup> and the Swabian Johann Brenz (1499–1570) five;<sup>27</sup> Philip Melancthon’s (1497–1560) works received at least four.<sup>28</sup> Prefaces to works by more distant authors or groups served to solidify public connections between them and Wittenberg, especially in the case of Luther’s prefaces to the confessions by the *Unitas Fratrum* (the Bohemian Brethren)<sup>29</sup> or to the works of the English reformer Robert Barnes (1495–1540).<sup>30</sup> In a few cases, however, Luther was induced by strategic considerations to supply a preface for an author less well-known to him, sometimes with embarrassing results.<sup>31</sup> Overwhelmed with requests from

<sup>23</sup> Below, preface to Menius, *Defense and Thorough Explanation* (1527), p. 190.

<sup>24</sup> Preface to Rhegius, *Exposition of Psalm 52* (1541), LW 60:242.

<sup>25</sup> On the different contexts in which Luther claimed or denied special authority for himself, see Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

<sup>26</sup> Below, preface to Menius’ writings against Kling (1527), pp. 185–93; *Oeconomia Christiana* (1529), pp. 240–47; *Doctrine and Secret of the Anabaptists* (1530), pp. 263–71; and *Commentary on 1 Samuel* (1532), LW 60:7–10; *How Every Christian Should Conduct Himself* (1538), LW 60:209–13; *On the Spirit of the Anabaptists* (1544), LW 60:330–35.

<sup>27</sup> See below, prefaces to Swabian Syngramma (1526), pp. 150–62; *Exposition of Ecclesiastes* (1528), pp. 216–19; *Exposition of Amos* (1530), pp. 285–89; *On the Christian Conduct of Marriage Cases* (1531), pp. 335–41; and *Twenty-Two Sermons* (1532), LW 60:1–6.

<sup>28</sup> Below, preface to *Annotations on Romans and Corinthians* (1522), pp. 18–22; *Annotations on John* (1523), pp. 43–47; *Exposition of Colossians* (1529), pp. 248–50; and *Response to the Clergy of Cologne* (1543), LW 60:303–10; see also Luther’s preface to *Instructions for the Visitors* (1528), LW 40:269–73. Other authors whose works received more than two prefaces from Luther were the English reformer Robert Barnes (see below, n. 30), the Lüneburg theologian Urbanus Rhegius (see the volume introduction below, pp. xxiii, xxxii, xxxv), and the fifteenth-century Czech reformer John [Jan] Hus (see the volume introduction below, pp. xxxiii, xxxv), each with three.

<sup>29</sup> Preface to *Account of the Faith of the Brethren* (1533), LW 60:17–23; *Confession of the Barons and Nobles of Bohemia* (1538), LW 60:214–19.

<sup>30</sup> Preface to *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs* (1536), LW 60:111–16; *Confession* (1540), LW 60:228–33; *How Popes Adrian IV and Alexander III Showed Good Faith to Emperor Barbarossa* (1545), LW 60:347–51.

<sup>31</sup> See below, prefaces to Chrosner’s sermons (1531), pp. 318–29.

eager printers and authors alike, occasionally Luther admits that he had been unable to read or review the work in detail;<sup>32</sup> in a few other cases this may be suspected.<sup>33</sup> One must be cautious, therefore, in assuming Luther's endorsement of every sentence of every work for which he provided a foreword. On the other hand, Luther did not provide a preface for every work he highly esteemed—in particular the *Loci Communes* of Melancthon.<sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, Luther took seriously his opportunity to serve as advocate for the works of others for the good of the church. Writing for the Nürnberg theologian Thomas Venatorius (ca. 1488–1551), Luther drew on the Gospel accounts of the feeding of the five thousand to describe his preface as a “little basket” in which the “good crumb” of Venatorius' work, “left over from the gracious food of the holy Gospel . . . is to be held and preserved.”<sup>35</sup> Amid the outpouring of print in the wake of the Reformation, Luther—especially in the prefaces to his own works—sometimes expressed the wish that his own books might disappear and give place to the Bible alone.<sup>36</sup> In his prefaces to the works of others, however, Luther developed the opposite rhetorical strategy, hailing their books as faithful guides to the Scriptures<sup>37</sup> or as edifices that, because of their confession of Christ, would “surely stand secure on the Rock upon which they are built.”<sup>38</sup> Although he complained of the many “useless, harmful books” with which the Gospel's opponents flooded the world,<sup>39</sup> the multiplication of “good books” in print—of which there could never be too many—was a sign of God's present blessing on the church in restoring the light of the Gospel,<sup>40</sup> and Luther was pleased to encourage the works of faithful colleagues and friends. Many of the works for which he wrote prefaces he declared superior to his own for their insights, style, and

<sup>32</sup> Preface to Güttel, *Sermon Delivered at the Cemetery in Eisleben* (1541), LW 60:247.

<sup>33</sup> See below, e.g., introduction to the prefaces to Chrosner's sermons, p. 320.

<sup>34</sup> For Luther's high estimation of the *Loci*, see, e.g., *Preface to the Latin Writings* (1545), LW 34:327.

<sup>35</sup> Below, preface to *Brief Instruction for the Dying* (1529), p. 252.

<sup>36</sup> *Preface to the Catalog of Luther's Writings* (1533), WA 38:133–34 (LW 75); *Preface to the German Writings* (1539), LW 34:283–85. See Büttgen, “Luther et les livres des autres,” pp. 121–22.

<sup>37</sup> See below, preface to Melancthon, *Annotations on Romans and Corinthians* (1522), pp. 21–22; Melancthon, *Annotations on John* (1523), p. 46; and Spangenberg, *German Postil* (1543), LW 60:285; Linck, *Annotations to the Five Books of Moses* (1543), LW 60:300–301.

<sup>38</sup> Preface to Huberinus, *On the Wrath and Mercy of God* (1534), LW 60:69.

<sup>39</sup> Below, preface to Venatorius, *Brief Instruction for the Dying* (1529), p. 252; second preface to Brenz, *Swabian Syngamma* (1526), p. 162.

<sup>40</sup> See preface to Linck, *Annotations to the Five Books of Moses* (1543), LW 60:300; and below, Faber, *Exposition of the Psalm Miserere* (1531), p. 332.

more refined approach.<sup>41</sup> Luther was grateful for help in the shared work of Evangelical literary production in all its genres, in constructive work as well as in polemics, and his prefaces give a broad survey of this activity.

## THE LITERATURE OF THE REFORMATION IN LUTHER'S PREFACES

*Exegetical works.* In particular, Luther encouraged and endorsed the publication of biblical exegesis for learned as well as popular audiences, in effect overseeing the assembly of a Wittenberg commentary series.<sup>42</sup> Beginning with Melancthon's Latin commentaries on Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and John (which he saw into print against the will of their diffident author), as well as the later German version of Melancthon's commentary on Colossians,<sup>43</sup> Luther presented Johann Bugenhagen's (1485–1558) *Interpretation of the Psalms*, Brenz's expositions of Ecclesiastes and Amos, Aegidius Faber's (ca. 1490–1558) exposition of Psalm 51, Menius' commentary on 1 Samuel, Urbanus Rhegius' (1489–1541) catalog of Old Testament prophecies, and Wenceslaus Linck's (1482–1547) German notes on the Pentateuch.<sup>44</sup> In some cases, these works filled in gaps in Luther's own exegetical publications, replaced his early works, or addressed a different audience. In other cases, however, they paralleled Luther's works, demonstrating that neither Luther nor his colleagues and students regarded the reformer's exegesis as an ultimate word that left no more to be said.<sup>45</sup> This chorus of commentaries was precious, Luther said, because rather than drawing readers away from the Bible, they served to guide the reader into the

<sup>41</sup> E.g., below, preface to Melancthon, *Exposition of Colossians* (1529), p. 249; Brenz, *Exposition of Amos* (1530), p. 287; Brenz, *Exposition of Ecclesiastes* (1528), p. 219; and Corvinus, *How Far Erasmus' "Mending the Peace" Should Be Followed* (1534), LW 60:60–61; John Frederick II and John William of Saxony, *Declamations* (1543), LW 60:313.

<sup>42</sup> On the early phase of this work in the 1520s, see Timothy J. Wengert, *Philip Melancthon's "Annotationes in Johannem" of 1523 in Relation to Its Predecessors and Contemporaries*, *Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance* 220 (Geneva: Droz, 1987), pp. 31–42.

<sup>43</sup> Below, preface to *Annotations on Romans and Corinthians* (1522), pp. 18–22; *Annotations on John* (1523), pp. 43–47; *Exposition of Colossians* (1529), pp. 248–50.

<sup>44</sup> Below, preface to Bugenhagen, *Interpretation of the Psalms* (1524), pp. 82–87; Brenz, *Exposition of Ecclesiastes* (1528), pp. 216–19; Brenz, *Exposition of Amos* (1530), pp. 285–89; Faber, *Exposition of the Psalm Miserere* (1531), pp. 330–34; and Menius, *Commentary on 1 Samuel* (1532), LW 60:7–10; Rhegius, *Prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ* (1542), LW 60:267–73; Linck, *Annotations to the Five Books of Moses* (1543), LW 60:295–302.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Robert Kolb, "Sixteenth-century Lutheran Commentary on Genesis and the Genesis Commentary of Martin Luther," in *Théorie et pratique de l'exégèse*, ed. Irena Backus and François Higman, *Études de philologie et d'histoire* 43 (Geneva: Droz, 1990), pp. 243–58.

Scriptures.<sup>46</sup> They modeled an Evangelical hermeneutic in which Law and Gospel were distinguished,<sup>47</sup> the promise of Christ<sup>48</sup> and the righteousness of faith were kept at the fore,<sup>49</sup> and historical accounts were interpreted not as moralizing allegories but as examples of faith. In all this the new Lutheran commentaries were more helpful to believers, in Luther's judgment, even than the exegetical works of the church fathers themselves.<sup>50</sup>

*Preaching and pastoral care.* Closely allied with the production of a Lutheran exegetical corpus was the development of paradigms for Evangelical preaching. Luther had begun writing his own exemplary sermons in what became the *Church Postil*, extended and revised throughout his lifetime.<sup>51</sup> But he also encouraged the efforts of others, writing forewords for the postils of Antonius Corvinus (1501–53) and Johann Spangenberg (1484–1550), as well as for a number of individual sermons.<sup>52</sup> These models would help inspire and guide faithful pastors in their preaching, and might partly remedy the deficiencies of lazy or uneducated pastors,<sup>53</sup> helping to “bring the Scriptures into the pulpit fresh and pure.”<sup>54</sup>

Sound Evangelical preaching, God's own “light from the pulpit through the bodily voice,”<sup>55</sup> as Luther presented it, not only corrected papal and sectarian abuses but also, above all, offered the “pure doctrine of the holy Gospel” in a clear form that the common man would be able to remember,<sup>56</sup> “so that many are instructed, strengthened in faith, and admonished.”<sup>57</sup> At

<sup>46</sup> See above, p. xxii n. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Below, preface to Faber, *Exposition of the Psalm Miserere* (1531), pp. 330–34.

<sup>48</sup> Below, preface to Bugenhagen, *Interpretation of the Psalms* (1524), p. 87; and Rhegius, *Prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ* (1542), LW 60:272.

<sup>49</sup> Below, preface to Brenz, *Exposition of Amos* (1530), pp. 288–89.

<sup>50</sup> Below, preface to Melancthon, *Annotations on Romans and Corinthians* (1522), p. 21; Bugenhagen, *Interpretation of the Psalms* (1524), p. 87; Brenz, *Exposition of Amos* (1530), p. 289; preface to Menius, *Commentary on I Samuel* (1532), LW 60:8.

<sup>51</sup> See the introduction to the prefaces to Corvinus' *Postils*, LW 60:103–5.

<sup>52</sup> Below, preface to Menius, *Refutation* (1527), pp. 192–93; Chrosner's sermons (1531), pp. 318–29; and to Brenz, *Twenty-Two Sermons* (1532), LW 60:1–6; Adler, *Sermon on Almsgiving* (1533), LW 60:11–16; Corvinus' *Postils*, LW 60:103–10; Sutel, *Gospel on the Destruction of Jerusalem* (1539), LW 60:223–27; Güttel, *Sermon Delivered at the Cemetery in Eisleben* (1541), LW 60:245–50; Spangenberg, *German Postil* (1543), LW 60:281–85.

<sup>53</sup> See preface to Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Gospels* (1535), LW 60:106–7; Spangenberg, *German Postil* (1543), LW 60:285.

<sup>54</sup> Preface to Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Epistles* (1537), LW 60:109.

<sup>55</sup> Preface to Adler, *Sermon on Almsgiving* (1533), LW 60:14.

<sup>56</sup> Preface to Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Gospels* (1535), LW 60:106–7.

<sup>57</sup> Below, preface to Chrosner, *Sermon on the Holy Sacrament* (1531), p. 326.

the same time, Luther warned his readers not to take the preaching of the Gospel for granted, recalling both the famine of God's Word under the papacy, as he remembered it from his youth, and the threat of divine judgment for treating the Word with indifference.<sup>58</sup> The preached Word was God's own mouth and power, both for judgment and for consolation.<sup>59</sup>

The Gospel, Luther understood, needed not only to be preached from the pulpit but also to be taught and applied to individuals in the greatest variety of forms. In addition to his own 1529 *Small Catechism*, Luther introduced pastoral treatises by Venatorius, Friedrich Myconius (1490–1546), and Caspar Huberinus (1500–1553), all focused on the catechesis and spiritual care of the sick and dying.<sup>60</sup> Luther's prefaces to hymnals published in Wittenberg and Leipzig commended hymns written by Luther and others as forms of proclaiming the Gospel for individual Christians, schools, and congregations.<sup>61</sup>

*Church organization.* Compared with the importance of the pure preaching of the Gospel, the forms of organization of the church were secondary to Luther, though not inconsequential. Luther supported the efforts of associates (especially Melancthon and Bugenhagen) to make orderly arrangements for church life and its supervision, as his preface to the 1528 *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony* indicates,<sup>62</sup> but he warned against placing too much reliance on laws and institutions instead of on the preaching of the Word.<sup>63</sup> Luther showed more interest in certain of the practical details of reform. He set forth in his prefaces his concern with the regularization of poor relief as a communal responsibility and one of the chief fruits of the Gospel, rather than a private work of merit.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Preface to Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Gospels* (1535), LW 60:106–7; cf. preface to Menius, *Defense and Thorough Explanation* (1527), p. 190; Faber, *Exposition of the Psalm Miserere* (1531), p. 332; Linck, *Annotations to the Five Books of Moses* (1543), LW 60:301–2.

<sup>59</sup> Preface to Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Epistles* (1537), LW 60:109.

<sup>60</sup> Below, preface to Venatorius, *Brief Instruction for the Dying* (1529), pp. 251–54; and Huberinus, *On the Wrath and Mercy of God* (1534), LW 60:66–69; Myconius, *How Ordinary Folk Should Be Instructed* (1539), LW 60:220–22.

<sup>61</sup> *Preface to the Wittenberg Hymnal* (1524), LW 53:315–16; *Preface to the Burial Hymns* (1542), LW 53:325–31; *Preface to the Babst Hymnal* (1545), LW 53:332–34. See also *Preface for All Good Hymnals* (1538), LW 53:319–320; preface to Rhau, *Symphoniae Iucundae* (1538), LW 53:321–24.

<sup>62</sup> LW 40:269–73.

<sup>63</sup> Below, preface to *Christian Order for Göttingen* (1531), pp. 316–17.

<sup>64</sup> Preface to *Agreement of the Common Chest at Leisnig* (1523), LW 49:28–32; below, preface to *On the Roguery of the False Beggars* (1528), pp. 236–39; and Adler, *Sermon on Almsgiving* (1533), LW 60:11–16.

Luther was deeply interested in the reform of education as well, both as a public and as a parental responsibility. Thus he not only directed mothers and fathers to provide in general for the teaching of their children<sup>65</sup> but also prepared his own selected edition of Aesop's (ca. 620–564 BC) fables for household use.<sup>66</sup>

*The reform of marriage.* Above all, the reformation and praise of the estate of marriage attracted the attention of the reformers. Luther commended treatises attacking the abuses of monastic and clerical celibacy,<sup>67</sup> published medieval texts critical of clerical celibacy,<sup>68</sup> and wrote prefaces to several autobiographical defenses of clergy who had married and of nuns who had left their cloisters.<sup>69</sup> He praised models of family life among his contemporaries<sup>70</sup> and wrote a preface for Johann Freder's (1510–62) *Dialogue in Honor of the Estate of Matrimony* excoriating the spiritualist Sebastian Franck's (1499–1542) cynically urbane misogyny.<sup>71</sup> Luther's scattered and sometimes contradictory advice on handling conflicts and questions regarding marriages was organized into more serviceable form in Brenz's 1531 *On the Christian Conduct of Marriage Cases*, appearing with Luther's preface.<sup>72</sup> Menius gave advice to married couples themselves in his 1529 *Oeconomia Christiana*, a comprehensive guide to marriage and family life, which, again commended by Luther's preface, became the most popular work of its kind in Lutheran Germany.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See below, introduction to the preface to Menius, *Oeconomia Christiana* (1529), pp. 242–44.

<sup>66</sup> Preface to Aesop, *Fables* (1530/1557), WA 50:452–60 (LW 72).

<sup>67</sup> Below, preface to Briesmann, *Response to Schatzgeyer* (1523), pp. 23–36; letter accompanying Jonas, *Defense of the Marriage of Priests* (1523), pp. 70–76, where Luther identifies clerical marriage as the chief issue within Johann Fabri's (1478–1541) much broader treatise.

<sup>68</sup> See below, preface to [Ps.]-Ulrich of Augsburg, *Letter against Clerical Celibacy* (1520), pp. 1–5.

<sup>69</sup> See below, preface to Apel, *Defense of His Marriage* (1523), pp. 65–69; see also *How God Rescued an Honorable Nun* (1524), LW 43:81–96; and below, preface to Klingebiel, *On Clerical Marriage* (1528), pp. 220–30.

<sup>70</sup> Preface to Rhegius, *Prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ* (1542), LW 60:271–73; see the volume introduction below, pp. xxxiv–xxxvi.

<sup>71</sup> LW 60:336–46.

<sup>72</sup> Below, preface to Brenz, *On the Christian Conduct of Marriage Cases* (1531), pp. 335–41. Cf. Luther, *On Marriage Matters* (1530), LW 46:259–320.

<sup>73</sup> Below, preface to Brenz, *Oeconomia Christiana* (1529), pp. 240–47.

## PREFACES AND POLEMICS

Alongside, and often intermingled with, the efforts of Luther and his colleagues to shape the Reformation through publications that would guide Evangelical theology and practice, they produced polemics attacking or defending against theological errors and practical abuses. Here, too, Luther was glad to endorse the works of his friends or, in a polemical approach that he used with increasing frequency in his later years, to reprint texts by his opponents that were allowed to speak (almost) for themselves as patently offensive, framed by Luther's preface and marginal glosses. In yet another polemical variation, Luther also published works from the early or medieval church that decried abuses or errors now embraced or defended by the present Roman Church.<sup>74</sup>

Although in the early years of his public career Luther seems to have undertaken to reply to nearly every attack made upon him,<sup>75</sup> the project eventually became impossible, and his associates, as they grew in numbers, took up the job of responding.<sup>76</sup> In some cases, the prefaces allowed Luther to respond to antagonists whom he had otherwise chosen to ignore, such as the lapsed Lutheran and Roman Catholic apologist Georg Witzel (1501–73) and the spiritualist Franck.<sup>77</sup> Many of the works for which Luther supplied prefaces he seems to have regarded as worthy substitutes for books he himself was now not obliged to write.<sup>78</sup> In other cases, he used the preface as an initial foray to promise a more extensive work of his own—though these promises sometimes went unfulfilled.<sup>79</sup>

*Opponents within the Reformation.* Luther's prefaces to the translations of the *Swabian Syngamma* were thus, for example, his first public sortie

<sup>74</sup> See the volume introduction below, pp. xxxi–xxxvi.

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., the collection of works in LW 39.

<sup>76</sup> See below, preface to Briesmann, *Response to Schatzgeyer* (1523), pp. 23–36; letter accompanying Jonas, *Defense of the Marriage of Priests* (1523), pp. 70–76; preface to Menius, *Defense and Thorough Explanation* (1527), pp. 185–92; and Corvinus, *How Far Erasmus' "Mending the Peace" Should Be Followed* (1534), LW 60:60–65; Rhegius, *Refutation* (1535), LW 60:82–90; Melancthon, *Response to the Clergy of Cologne* (1543), LW 60:303–10.

<sup>77</sup> Preface to Raida, *Response to Witzel* (1533), LW 60:24–29; Freder, *Dialogue in Honor of Matrimony* (1545), LW 60:336–46.

<sup>78</sup> See below, e.g., preface to Briesmann, *Response to Schatzgeyer* (1523), p. 27; letter accompanying Jonas, *Defense of the Marriage of Priests* (1523), p. 74; first preface to Brenz, *Swabian Syngamma* (1526), p. 156; preface to Brenz, *Exposition of Ecclesiastes* (1528), pp. 218–19; Spengler, *Brief Excerpt from the Papal Laws* (1530), pp. 275–76.

<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., preface to Corvinus, *How Far Erasmus' "Mending the Peace" Should Be Followed* (1534), LW 60:65; Kymaeus, *Ancient Christian Council in Gangra* (1537), LW 60:137–38; Bibliander's edition of the Koran (1543), LW 60:291; Barnes, *How Popes Adrian IV and Alexander III Showed Good Faith to Emperor Barbarossa* (1545), LW 60:351.

in opposition to the Swiss and south German reformers' denial of Christ's bodily presence in the Sacrament, to be followed by lengthier treatises.<sup>80</sup> In confirmation of the case he had made against the radical Thomas M nzer (ca. 1489–1525),<sup>81</sup> Luther published a selection of the defeated M nzer's own letters, with preface, glosses, and an afterword.<sup>82</sup> The Lutheran theological and political dossier against the Anabaptist movement was compiled in large part by Menius<sup>83</sup> and (at the time of the 1534 coup in M nster) by Rhegius.<sup>84</sup> Luther's own decision not to write another major treatise on the Anabaptists after his 1528 *Concerning Rebaptism*<sup>85</sup> is almost certainly the result of his endorsement of these works.

In his prefaces, Luther grouped the Anabaptists with the Sacramentarians together as "Enthusiasts," who shared "one and the same spirit" in their contempt for the external Word and Sacraments.<sup>86</sup> As Luther wrote in his preface to Ambrosius Moibanus' (1494–1554) treatise defending the "glorious commission" to preach the Gospel against the spiritualizing followers of Caspar von Schwenkfeld (1489–1561): "God has no dealings with humans except through His Word."<sup>87</sup> Although Luther recognized that the addition of his name and support to his allies' treatises would increase the ire of their adversaries,<sup>88</sup> his public authority and influence even among those who bitterly disagreed with him were acknowledged when the fleeing theologian Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541), having run afoul of the Saxon authorities both for his opposition to Luther's teaching and for his suspected involvement in the insurrection of the 1525 Peasants' War, begged Luther to provide a preface for his defense and partial retraction.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Below, prefaces to Brenz, *Swabian Syngramma* (1526), pp. 150–62; cf. below, Luther's *Open Letter to Johann Herwagen* (1526/1527), pp. 168–72. For Luther's later treatises, see *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ* (1526), LW 36:329–61; *This Is My Body* (1527), LW 37:3–150; *Confession concerning Christ's Supper* (1528), LW 37:151–372.

<sup>81</sup> See *Letter to the Princes of Saxony* (1524), LW 40:45–59.

<sup>82</sup> Below, preface and afterword to *Terrifying Story of M nzer* (1525), pp. 120–26.

<sup>83</sup> Below, preface to *Doctrine and Secret of the Anabaptists* (1530), pp. 263–71; and *How Every Christian Should Conduct Himself* (1538), LW 60:209–13; *On the Spirit of the Anabaptists* (1544), LW 60:330–35.

<sup>84</sup> Preface to *Refutation* (1535), LW 60:82–90. See also preface to *New Report on the Anabaptists at M nster* (1535), LW 60:91–98.

<sup>85</sup> LW 40:225–62.

<sup>86</sup> Preface to Menius, *On the Spirit of the Anabaptists* (1544), LW 60:334.

<sup>87</sup> Preface to Moibanus, *Glorious Commission of Jesus Christ* (1537), LW 60:150.

<sup>88</sup> Preface to Rhegius, *Refutation* (1535), LW 60:86–87.

<sup>89</sup> Below, prefaces to *Defense* (1525), pp. 127–33; *Explanation* (1525), pp. 134–37.

*The Turks and Islam.* Luther's prefaces were also the chief means, in the absence of an extended independent work of theological polemic, by which he addressed the challenge posed to Christendom by Islam. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire into eastern Europe since the fall of Hungary in 1526 brought the threat of conquest and devastation to the borders of Germany. Luther published his own treatises defining the conditions for Christian military resistance, calling for prayer and repentance in the face of this threat,<sup>90</sup> and also commended the sermons of others.<sup>91</sup> So far as the theological content of Islam was concerned, however, Luther recognized his want of resources for a fair and detailed appraisal. Without a translation of the Koran to read for himself, he relied on the works of others, publishing in 1530 his own edition of the fifteenth-century *Book on the Ceremonies and Customs of the Turks* written by a Christian captive under Ottoman rule.<sup>92</sup> In 1542, however, Luther obtained a Latin manuscript of the Koran, and in its light he issued his own translation of the fourteenth-century *Refutation of the Koran*.<sup>93</sup> He also lent his personal support to the publication in Basel of the first printed Latin Koran,<sup>94</sup> wishing Christians to be able to evaluate Islamic theology for themselves and to understand the gulf that separated it from Christianity, lest they be tempted by the military and moral achievements of Islamic civilization.

*The Roman Church.* The most prominent object by far of Lutheran polemic, however, was the Roman Catholic Church: its entanglement with German politics, the abuses of its piety, the claims of the religious orders, and, above all, the institution of the papacy itself. In several cases, Luther's prefaces were his public endorsement of the Evangelical side in local conflicts with adherents of Rome: as Menius sought to establish the Reformation in Erfurt,<sup>95</sup> as Aegidius Faber fought the cathedral chapter in Schwerin,<sup>96</sup> or as the clergy of Cologne resisted the efforts of Archbishop Hermann von Wied (1477–1552) to introduce an Evangelical church order.<sup>97</sup> Occasionally,

<sup>90</sup> See *On War Against the Turk* (1529), LW 46:155–205; *Muster-Sermon Against the Turks* (1529), WA 30/2:160–97 (LW 56); *Appeal for Prayer against the Turks* (1541), LW 43:213–41.

<sup>91</sup> Preface to Brenz, *Twenty-Two Sermons* (1532), LW 60:1–6; Sutel, *Gospel on the Destruction of Jerusalem* (1539), LW 60:223–27.

<sup>92</sup> Below, preface to [George of Hungary], *On the Ceremonies and Customs of the Turks* (1530), pp. 255–62.

<sup>93</sup> Preface and afterword to Brother Richard, *Refutation of the Koran* (1542), LW 60:251–66.

<sup>94</sup> Preface to Bibliander's edition of the Koran (1543), LW 60:286–94.

<sup>95</sup> Below, preface to *Defense and Thorough Explanation* (1527), pp. 189–92; *Refutation* (1527), pp. 192–93.

<sup>96</sup> Preface to *On the False Blood and Idol in Schwerin* (1533), LW 60:30–34.

<sup>97</sup> Preface to Melancthon, *Response to the Clergy of Cologne* (1543), LW 60:303–10.

would-be Roman Catholic reformers were endorsed, as in the case of the sermons that Alexius Chrosner (ca. 1490–1535) had supposedly preached in the presence of the solidly Catholic Duke George of Saxony (r. 1500–1539),<sup>98</sup> but more typically moderate Catholics were ridiculed as temporizers: the formerly Lutheran Witzel, the so-called *Expectanten* who were waiting for a church council to decide theological matters, or the humanist Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1467–1536).<sup>99</sup>

The publication of contemporary documents from the Roman Catholic side along with Luther's preface became an important mode of polemic in its own right. Luther's old opponent Cardinal Cajetan (1469–1534) was eventually condemned by the Paris theologians for his biblical scholarship in the original languages, and Luther republished the condemnation, noting not only the personal irony but also the sheer presumption of condemning the Bible itself.<sup>100</sup> Reform proposals developed by a committee within the papal Curia were leaked and then published by Luther in 1538 with his own preface and glosses as a confirmation that some abuses were so glaring that they could not be denied, even as still more urgent matters of theology continued to be ignored.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, Pope Adrian VI's (r. 1522–23) instructions to his legate at the 1522–23 Diet of Nürnberg were published a decade and a half later to show that the pope himself had recognized the culpability of the clergy for the poor state of the church.<sup>102</sup> The machinations of the Roman Catholic clergy to suppress the Reformation through episcopal mandate or alliance with the princes were exposed by publishing their own edicts and correspondence for public review.<sup>103</sup> Papal bulls and correspondence were reissued from the Wittenberg presses, ridiculing ongoing papal claims for indulgences and exposing the delay of the long-promised general council.<sup>104</sup> This campaign against the papacy intensified in the late 1530s, as

<sup>98</sup> Below, prefaces to Chrosner's sermons (1531), pp. 318–29.

<sup>99</sup> Preface to Raida, *Response to Witzel* (1533), LW 60:24–29; Corvinus, *How Far Erasmus' "Mending the Peace" Should Be Followed* (1534), LW 60:57–65; Güttel, *Sermon Delivered at the Cemetery in Eisleben* (1541), LW 60:245–50.

<sup>100</sup> Afterword to *Letter Censuring Cajetan* (1534), LW 60:45–56.

<sup>101</sup> Preface to *Counsel of a Committee of Several Cardinals* (1538), LW 34:231–67.

<sup>102</sup> Preface, glosses, and afterword to *Legation of Adrian VI* (1538), LW 60:185–201.

<sup>103</sup> Preface to *Duo episcopales bullae super doctrina Lutherana et Romana* (1524), WA 15:146–154; preface and afterword to *Instruction and Warning against the Counsel of the Clergy at Mainz* (1526), WA 19:260–81 (LW 72); and below, afterword to Chieregati and Adrian VI, *Papal Breve against Luther* (1523), pp. 37–42.

<sup>104</sup> See below, preface and glosses to *Two Bulls of Clement VII* (1525, ca. 1545/1557), pp. 102–19; and preface and glosses to Paul III's bull prorogating a general council (1537), WA 50:92–95 (LW 72); afterword and glosses to Paul III's bull on indulgences against the Turk (1537), WA 50:113–16.

papal recalcitrance in the face of demands for a council and reform seemed to grow.<sup>105</sup> Among Luther's very last published works was a mocking afterword to a Wittenberg printing of a false report, circulated among Italian Catholics, of his own death.<sup>106</sup>

## HISTORY AS POLEMIC

Still more important in this campaign against the papacy than the exposé of contemporary texts, however, was the publication of historical works either casting light on the enduring corruption within the papal church or revealing the ancient roots of opposition to suspect teaching and practices. The airing of old abuses was also meant to confirm a new generation in its Evangelical faith by demonstrating that the situation under the papacy really had been as bad as Luther's generation described it.

*Monasticism.* In particular, the monastic orders were attacked for their valorization of celibacy over marriage,<sup>107</sup> but also for their mutual antagonism amid seemingly infinite multiplication, belying Roman Catholic claims to a special gift of unity.<sup>108</sup> The Franciscan movement, with its public asceticism, many divisions, and extravagant claims for the Christlike holiness of its founder, was especially singled out for criticism with an edition of St. Francis' (ca. 1181–1226) own *Rule* and one of the *Liber Conformitatum*, a reminder that the Reformation called into question not merely the commonly acknowledged failings of late medieval church life but also medieval Christianity at its self-proclaimed best.<sup>109</sup> Luther wrote in his preface to the *Liber*: "I suspect that if this little book is read at the present time by those who never lived under the abominations of the papacy, or by those who are no longer accustomed to it and have forgotten it, they will regard it as unbelievable. That is why I wanted to give testimony with this preface that this certainly is what was preached and believed throughout the whole world."<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> See Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–46* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 68–96.

<sup>106</sup> Afterword to *Italian Lie concerning Luther's Death* (1545), LW 34:361–66.

<sup>107</sup> See the volume introduction above, p. xxvi. Cf. below, preface, glosses, and commentary on [Rab], *Specimen of Papist Theology* (1531), pp. 290–312.

<sup>108</sup> See below, preface and afterword to *Papacy with Its Members* (1526), pp. 138–49.

<sup>109</sup> Below, preface to Lambert, *Commentary on the Rule of the Friars Minor* (1523), pp. 48–52; and Alber, *The "Eulenspiegel" and Koran of the Barefoot Monks* (1542), LW 60:274–80.

<sup>110</sup> Preface to Alber, *The "Eulenspiegel" and Koran of the Barefoot Monks* (1541), LW 60:277; cf. preface and afterword to *Letter on the Wretched Condition of Curates* (1540), LW 60:238; and below, preface to [Rab], *Specimen of Papist Theology* (1531), pp. 293–94; Savonarola, *Meditation on Psalms 51 and 31* (1523), pp. 77–81; and Corvinus, *How Far Erasmus' "Mending*

*Papacy.* The papacy itself was attacked on historical grounds with the scathing *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs* by the English reformer Robert Barnes,<sup>111</sup> as well as with a new Wittenberg edition of the famous *Donation of Constantine*, the purported fourth-century grant of temporal power to the papacy that had been exposed as a medieval fabrication by the humanist Lorenzo Valla (1405–57).<sup>112</sup> Luther also held up the triumphalist pro-papal fifteenth-century prophecies of Johannes Annius of Viterbo (1432–1502) for ridicule.<sup>113</sup> These stood alongside Luther's important ecclesiological treatises of the same period—*On the Councils and the Church* of 1539 and *Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil* of 1545—as stones in the antipapal edifice that Luther sought to construct in his last years.<sup>114</sup> The historical critique of the papacy reinforced Luther's long-standing theological objections. As Luther wrote in his preface to Barnes' *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs*: “As for me, in the beginning when I had little familiarity or experience with the histories, I attacked the papacy *a priori* (as it is said), that is, from the Holy Scriptures. Now I rejoice exceedingly that others are doing the same thing *a posteriori*, that is, from the histories.”<sup>115</sup>

*Emperor and princes.* Compared with the pope, the emperor received relatively mild treatment. Although Luther could mock contradictions in the imperial edicts about his case,<sup>116</sup> the literature he published and introduced tended to depict the emperors as historical victims of an overreaching papacy.<sup>117</sup> However, lesser princes who set themselves against the Reformation were not spared, as attested by Luther's preface to Rhegius' 1541 *Exposition of Psalm 52, against the Godless*—that is, Duke Henry of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (r. 1514–68).<sup>118</sup> Godly, Evangelical rulers, on the other hand, received encouragement to uphold and defend the preaching of the pure Gospel in the exercise of their office.<sup>119</sup>

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*the Peace*” Should Be Followed (1534), LW 60:64–65; afterword to Annius, *Disputation on the Papal Monarchy* (1537), LW 60:146.

<sup>111</sup> LW 60:111–16.

<sup>112</sup> Preface, glosses, and afterword to the *Donation of Constantine* (1537), LW 60:158–84.

<sup>113</sup> Afterword to *Disputation on the Papal Monarchy* (1537), LW 60:139–46.

<sup>114</sup> LW 41:3–178, 257–376. Cf. Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, pp. 68–96, 163–202.

<sup>115</sup> LW 60:116.

<sup>116</sup> Below, preface to *Two Discordant and Conflicting Imperial Mandates* (1524), pp. 88–96.

<sup>117</sup> Preface to Barnes, *How Popes Adrian IV and Alexander III Showed Good Faith to Emperor Barbarossa* (1545), LW 60:347–51. This text was an excerpt from Barnes' *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs*.

<sup>118</sup> LW 60:239–44.

<sup>119</sup> Preface to John Frederick II and John William of Saxony, *Declamations* (1543), LW 60:311–14; Menius, *How Every Christian Should Conduct Himself* (1538), LW 60:209–13.

*Pre-Reformation dissent.* Much of Luther's dissemination of historical texts was intended to illuminate an alternate tradition to that invoked by the defenders of the papal church in order to demonstrate that papal abuses in theology and practice had always been challenged. Early in his career, Luther found elements of a sounder late medieval theology not only in the *German Theology*<sup>120</sup> but also in the works of the Netherlandish theologians Johannes Wessel Gansfort (ca. 1419–89) and Johannes Pupper of Goch (ca. 1400–1475).<sup>121</sup> A letter attributed to the tenth-century Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg (890–973) (in fact, a somewhat later production) showed opposition to papal mandates for clerical celibacy.<sup>122</sup> Luther continued to identify and publish medieval voices in opposition to the papacy: a medieval commentary on the Apocalypse that labeled the pope as the Antichrist<sup>123</sup> and laments by medieval parish clergy who, in Luther's judgment, had sought to serve God's people faithfully under the oppression of the papal "dragon."<sup>124</sup> Even papal canon law itself could prove a critic of contemporary papal practice, as the Nürnberg town secretary Lazarus Spengler (1479–1534) demonstrated in his 1529–30 *Brief Excerpt from the Papal Laws*, published on the eve of the Diet of Augsburg.<sup>125</sup>

A special place in Luther's catalog of medieval dissent was held by the Czech reformer John Hus (1369–1415). Over the course of his career, Luther named Hus, with increasingly mild qualification, as a holy Evangelical martyr and witness to the truth.<sup>126</sup> In the polemical context of the late 1530s, the Council of Constance (1414–18), which had declared Hus a heretic and handed him over for execution, was a warning to sixteenth-century Christians not to place too much hope in any forthcoming papal council.<sup>127</sup>

*Church fathers.* Luther also found collaborators in the fathers of the ancient church, not because he believed that they had lived in a pristine

<sup>120</sup> Preface to the partial edition of the *German Theology* (1516), WA 1:153 (LW 70); preface to the complete edition of the *German Theology* (1518), LW 31:71–76.

<sup>121</sup> Below, preface to Gansfort, *Letters* (1522), pp. 6–11; Pupper, *Fragments* (1522), pp. 12–17.

<sup>122</sup> Below, preface to [Ps.]-Ulrich of Augsburg, *Letter against Clerical Celibacy* (1520), pp. 1–5.

<sup>123</sup> Below, preface to [Hereford?], *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (1528), pp. 203–7.

<sup>124</sup> Preface to *Complaint concerning Good Faith* (1535), LW 60:99–102; *Letter on the Wretched Condition of Curates* (1540), LW 60:234–38.

<sup>125</sup> Below, pp. 272–76.

<sup>126</sup> See below, introduction to preface to the second volume of the works of Hus (1524), pp. 98–99.

<sup>127</sup> Preface and afterword to Hus, *Three Letters* (1536/1537), LW 60:122–33; preface to Hus, *Some Very Godly and Erudite Letters* (1537), LW 60:152–57.

golden age but because they exemplified the need for continuous valiant protest against heresy.<sup>128</sup> Even the writings of the fathers were to be “read . . . with judgment.”<sup>129</sup> Nonetheless, with that need for discrimination in mind, the fourth-century Council of Gangra served both as evidence that a serious Christian council could testify to the truth and as a warning that a new papal council was unlikely to do so.<sup>130</sup> Jerome’s letter to Evagrius on the equality of bishops demonstrated that the fathers had not supported the Roman bishop’s claim of supremacy.<sup>131</sup> The works of Athanasius (ca. 296–373), edited (along with some spurious pieces) by Bugenhagen, were a superlative example of the steadfast confession of trinitarian faith against not only the explicit denials of sixteenth-century Antitrinitarians but also in rebuke of the moderate skepticism of Roman Catholic humanists such as Erasmus.<sup>132</sup> Especially significant for Luther’s own theological stance is his preface for a planned Wittenberg edition of works by Augustine (354–430), in which Luther sets Augustine’s radical confession of God’s grace and human sinfulness against the qualifications of nearly the entire scholastic theological tradition.<sup>133</sup>

*Saints and witnesses.* Among both the specimens of abuse and the models of true Christianity that Luther found in the ancient and medieval church, the saints and their legends played a recurring role. He judged the stories conveyed in such medieval collections as the *Golden Legend* to be largely fictionalized accounts<sup>134</sup> and published a mocking edition of one of the most extravagant of these stories in 1537 under the title *The L(i)egend of St. Chrysostom*, intended to embarrass the papacy for its defense of hagiographic fables and of the theology underlying them.<sup>135</sup> Luther frequently and emphatically criticized the “works-saints” of the papacy, those who imitated the saints’ asceticism and celebrated their miraculous deeds. Yet he praised

<sup>128</sup> Preface to Menius, *How Every Christian Should Conduct Himself* (1538), LW 60:212.

<sup>129</sup> Below, preface to Brenz, *Exposition of Amos* (1530), p. 289.

<sup>130</sup> Preface to Kymaeus, *Ancient Christian Council in Gangra* (1537), LW 60:134–38.

<sup>131</sup> Preface to Jerome, *Letter to Evagrius* (1538), LW 60:202–8.

<sup>132</sup> Below, preface to Bugenhagen’s edition of Athanasius, *Against the Idolatry of the Gentiles* (1532), pp. 342–47.

<sup>133</sup> Preface to Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* (1533?), LW 60:35–44.

<sup>134</sup> Preface to Hus, *Some Very Godly and Erudite Letters* (1537), LW 60:156; see also *Sermons on John 14–16* (1533–34/1538–39), LW 24:369; *Preface to the Psalter* (1528, 1545), LW 35:253; *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–45/1544–54), LW 6:222.

<sup>135</sup> Afterword to *L(i)egend of St. Chrysostom* (1537), WA 50:52–64 (LW 72). See Edwards, *Luther’s Last Battles*, pp. 81–83.

the testimonies of faith found in authentic lives of the saints.<sup>136</sup> Having for some time urged the project of reclaiming the faithful lives of the saints as examples for Christians,<sup>137</sup> he supplied prefaces in 1544 for works by Georg Major (1502–74) and Georg Spalatin (1484–1545) presenting lives of the ancient saints, selected and purified of false theological and historical accretions, for the edification of Evangelical Christians.<sup>138</sup>

Luther also found models of Christian holiness in late medieval and contemporary figures not recognized by the Roman Church. In addition to Hus, whom he praised as “truly a martyr of Christ,” who was at last being “fully canonized” by the appearance of his works in print,<sup>139</sup> Luther also identified (though far less prominently) the Florentine Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98) as a newly “canonized” example “of believing, trusting, and hoping in the mercy of God, but of distrusting and despairing in ourselves and our own powers.”<sup>140</sup> Among Luther’s own contemporaries, he identified the late Spengler as a confessor whose story would be more fruitful for Evangelical Christians than those of the dubious saints of the legends.<sup>141</sup> Barnes was hailed as a saint and martyr for the Gospel,<sup>142</sup> and Rhégius, now surely blessed with the joys of heaven, was set forth as a pious model of Christian domestic life.<sup>143</sup> In all these cases—ancient, medieval, and modern—Luther was confident that the example of the saints’ faith would reinforce the promises of the Scriptures, assuring believers that they

<sup>136</sup> Below, preface to Chrosner, *Sermon on the Holy Christian Church* (1531), pp. 322–25. See especially LW 60:156 n. 12; cf. preface to Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Epistles* (1537), LW 60:108–10; Barnes, *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs* (1536), LW 60:114; afterword to Brother Richard, *Refutation of the Koran* (1542), LW 60:261; preface to Spengler, *Confession* (1535), LW 60:72–73. Cf. *Judgment on Monastic Vows* (1521), LW 44:272, see also pp. 268–72, 291–92.

<sup>137</sup> See preface to Spengler, *Confession* (1535), LW 60:72; cf. introduction to the preface to Spalatin, *Marvelously Comforting Examples and Sayings* (1544), LW 60:324–26.

<sup>138</sup> Preface to Major, *Lives of the Fathers* (1544), LW 60:315–23; Spalatin, *Marvelously Comforting Examples and Sayings* (1544), LW 60:324–29.

<sup>139</sup> Below, preface to the second volume of the works of Hus (1524), p. 101; for other identifications of Hus as a saint, see preface to Hus, *Three Letters* (1536/1537), LW 60:133; Hus, *Some Very Godly and Erudite Letters* (1537), LW 60:157. For a survey of Luther’s positive references to Hus, see below, p. 100 n. 19; and LW 69:25 n. 53.

<sup>140</sup> Below, preface to Savonarola, *Meditation on Psalms 51 and 31* (1523), p. 81.

<sup>141</sup> Preface to Spengler, *Confession* (1535), LW 60:72–73.

<sup>142</sup> Preface to Barnes, *Confession* (1540), LW 60:230–31.

<sup>143</sup> Preface to Rhégius, *Prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ* (1542), LW 60:271–73.

were not alone and illuminating the sometimes-hidden historical continuity of the "one Church, existing perpetually ever since the time of Adam."<sup>144</sup>

## HISTORY AND THE REFORMATION

In their entirety, Luther's prefaces are among the most important sources for examining the reformer's view not only of individual historical events but also of history itself, especially the history of the church.<sup>145</sup> Luther offered the most concentrated single treatment of the theme in his 1538 preface to a rather minor work, Galeatius Capella's (1487–1537) *History of the Restoration of Francesco II, Duke of Milan, 1521–30*, which had been translated into German by Luther's friend Wenceslaus Linck.<sup>146</sup> There Luther praised historians as "the most useful people and the best teachers." Truthful histories reported God's own work in the world, and to that extent their accounts should be believed "as though they were in the Bible."<sup>147</sup> The historical narratives of Scripture were uniquely valuable, however, because, unlike other histories, the Bible not only narrated events but also related them to faith, which, Luther says, "is the chief thing and main point in the sacred histories."<sup>148</sup>

Nonetheless, Luther prized other histories as manifestations both of God's wrath and of His mercy, though, apart from Scripture, human judgment could not readily discern which. Luther lamented the lacunae in the historical records that had come down to his own age, particularly regarding the history of the early church. In the absence of true histories, falsehoods had sprung up, and the lack of sound historical knowledge left Christians vulnerable to the predations of the papacy.<sup>149</sup> Luther's call for the renewed cultivation of historical study as a bulwark against papal claims<sup>150</sup> found ambitious systematic fulfillment in the following generation with Matthias Flacius' (1520–75) *Catalog of Witnesses to the Truth* and the most

<sup>144</sup> Preface to Bibliander's edition of the Koran (1543), LW 60:292; Spengler, *Confession* (1535), LW 60:72–73.

<sup>145</sup> See John M. Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

<sup>146</sup> LW 34:269–78.

<sup>147</sup> LW 34:277–78.

<sup>148</sup> Preface to Menius, *Commentary on 1 Samuel* (1532), LW 60:8. The biblical histories were also, of course, uniquely reliable: see Luther's *Supputatio annorum mundi* (1541, 1545), WA 53:27.

<sup>149</sup> Preface to Barnes, *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs* (1536), LW 60:114–16; cf. preface to Major, *Lives of the Fathers* (1544), LW 60:317–23.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. preface to Jerome, *Letter to Evagrius* (1538), LW 60:205–6; Barnes, *How Popes Adrian IV and Alexander III Showed Good Faith to Emperor Barbarossa* (1545), LW 60:349.

monumental work of Protestant historiography, the *Magdeburg Centuries*.<sup>151</sup> For his own part, Luther was both less concerned with construction of an unbroken succession of “forerunners” than were his immediate successors and less restrictive in acknowledging his sympathies with earlier theologians than some modern historians have been.<sup>152</sup>

In the events of contemporary history, also, Luther saw the signs of God’s judgment, especially in the advance of the Turk,<sup>153</sup> but also in modern prodigies,<sup>154</sup> pointing above all to the ultimate manifestation of God’s wrath in the papal Antichrist.<sup>155</sup> Luther was skeptical about any human ability to exploit astrological prognostications, seeing that divine signs and diabolical ones were “mixed up in chaos” in the world.<sup>156</sup> Nonetheless, in light of Scripture, Luther could identify extraordinary phenomena as demonic efforts to subvert the preaching of the Word or as signs of God’s judgment on the papacy,<sup>157</sup> though his conclusions on these matters were sometimes tongue-in-cheek.<sup>158</sup>

*Luther and the Reformation.* In Luther’s view, the chief sign of the age and of God’s working in history was the renewed preaching of God’s Word, marked by the successful spread of the Word and also by resistance to it.<sup>159</sup> One day, he predicted, the “miracles of our Gospel” from Luther’s own day would be recorded and received by future generations, providing “no small volume of church history.”<sup>160</sup> Luther’s prefaces, scattered throughout

<sup>151</sup> Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Catalogus testium veritatis* (Basel: Michael Martin Stella, 1556) [VD16 F1293]; *Ecclesiastica Historia . . . secundum singulas Centurias . . . Per aliquot studiosos & pios viros in urbe Magdeburgicâ* (Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1559) [VD16 E218].

<sup>152</sup> See Heiko A. Oberman, “The Case of the Forerunner,” in *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

<sup>153</sup> Preface to Brenz, *Twenty-Two Sermons* (1532), LW 60:1–6; preface to Sutel, *Gospel on the Destruction of Jerusalem* (1539), LW 60:223–27.

<sup>154</sup> Preface to Moibanus, *Twenty-Ninth Psalm* (1536), LW 60:117–21.

<sup>155</sup> See, e.g., preface to Barnes, *Lives of the Roman Pontiffs* (1536), LW 60:114–15; afterword to Annius, *Disputation on the Papal Monarchy* (1537), LW 60:144–45; afterword to Brother Richard, *Refutation of the Koran* (1542), LW 60:261, 264.

<sup>156</sup> Below, preface to Lichtenberger, *Prophecy* (1527), p. 184.

<sup>157</sup> See *Interpretation of Two Horrible Figures* (1523), WA 11:369–85 (LW 72); and below, preface and afterword to *Vision of Brother Claus* (1528), pp. 213–15.

<sup>158</sup> Preface to *True Account of What Took Place at Stassfurt* (1535), LW 60:74–81.

<sup>159</sup> See below, preface to Karlstadt, *Defense* (1525), p. 132; Menius, *Doctrine and Secret of the Anabaptists* (1530), p. 267; and Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Gospels* (1535), LW 60:106–7; Rhegius, *Exposition of Psalm 52* (1541), LW 60:243–44.

<sup>160</sup> Below, afterword to Ursula of Münsterberg, *Reasons for Leaving the Convent* (1528), p. 235; cf. preface to Moibanus, *Twenty-Ninth Psalm* (1536), LW 60:120.

his career, contain numerous important autobiographical reflections on his own emergence out of darkness in the accounts of his early experience as a student and monk.<sup>161</sup> Most significantly, the prefaces convey a clear sense of how Luther saw the maturing Reformation movement itself. In his 1528 preface to Stephan Klingebiel's (fl. 1503–39) *On Clerical Marriage*, Luther paused to reflect on the character of "Luther's reformation": not only the abolition of abuses but also the establishment of preaching, instruction in the catechism, and a proper doctrine of Christian vocation based on Scripture, even as a howling menagerie of opponents objected.<sup>162</sup> "At the present time," Luther wrote in 1531, "through the rich grace and mercy of God, the holy Gospel has sprung up abundantly and is shining brightly everywhere, especially among us Germans. By its light, countless abominations, errors, and abuses have been cleared away and many scandals in the kingdom of Christ have been removed."<sup>163</sup> Even within the papacy, he claimed, its effects were felt, and things that had been openly taught and practiced "before Luther's time" were now passed over in silence.<sup>164</sup>

To be sure, the pure preaching of the Gospel was inevitably met not only with resistance from its open enemies but also with ingratitude and indifference from false friends. "Oh, what a blessed time [in which to live]," Luther wrote, "if only our accursed ungratefulness permitted us to recognize it!"<sup>165</sup> Yet Luther's answer was to "keep right on preaching, chastising, and admonishing"—and publishing.<sup>166</sup> "Since . . . Satan does not sleep or rest from ever casting in the way one new abomination after another and setting up new scandals to impede the course of the Gospel and sap its strength, it is highly necessary that we, too, do not sleep, become complacent, or fall silent."<sup>167</sup>

In this effort, Luther was sometimes portrayed, even by his contemporaries, as a solo voice: the "nightingale of Wittenberg" or the swan who

<sup>161</sup> See below, prefaces to Menius, *Defense and Thorough Explanation* (1527), pp. 189–92; Bugenhagen's edition of Athanasius, *Against the Idolatry of the Gentiles* (1532), p. 346; and afterword to Hus, *Three Letters* (1536/1537), LW 60:130–31. Among his autobiographical reminiscences, Luther also recalls a "little song" sung by his mother: preface to Rhegius, *Refutation* (1535), LW 60:86.

<sup>162</sup> Below, preface to Klingebiel, *On Clerical Marriage* (1528), pp. 223–27.

<sup>163</sup> Below, preface to Faber, *Exposition of the Psalm Miserere* (1531), p. 322.

<sup>164</sup> Preface to Corvinus, *Brief Exposition of the Sunday Epistles* (1537), LW 60:108–10.

<sup>165</sup> Below, preface to Melanchthon, *Exposition of Colossians* (1529), p. 250.

<sup>166</sup> Preface to Spangenberg, *German Postil* (1543), LW 60:284.

<sup>167</sup> Below, preface to Faber, *Exposition of the Psalm Miserere* (1531), p. 332. See also below, letter accompanying Jonas, *Defense of the Marriage of Priests* (1523), pp. 75–76; second preface to Brenz, *Swabian Syngramma* (1526), p. 162; preface to Menius, *Defense and Thorough Explanation* (1527), pp. 191–92; Venatorius, *Brief Instruction for the Dying* (1529), pp. 252–54; and Spangenberg, *German Postil* (1543), LW 60:285.

would come to sing after Hus' goose. The prefaces show him as the conductor of a joyous symphony of voices, contemporary and ancient, in concerted witness to Jesus Christ. As Luther exhorted his readers: "Rejoice with me, be glad, and give thanks to Christ our Savior, who in place of one poor and insignificant Luther has now given you the hope—or, rather, the abundant reality—of clearly and openly seeing, hearing, and touching His David, Isaiah, Paul, John, and even Himself, not with the pen or the tongue of one man only, but with a great host."<sup>168</sup>

Although the vast majority of Luther's prefaces are gathered here in the present volume, the reader should be aware of several groups of prefaces that are to be found elsewhere. Luther's prefaces to his own works appear in the American edition along with the works themselves or as supplements in the new volumes, arranged by the genre of the works.<sup>169</sup> His prefaces to the books of the Bible are presented in LW 35, with additional texts in LW 62–66. His prefaces to hymnals and musical works are translated in LW 53. Luther's earliest prefaces, from 1516 to 1519, are included in LW 70–71.<sup>170</sup> Several of Luther's hostile editions of the works of his opponents or of medieval texts presented to document past abuses, usually including Luther's glosses on the text as well as his own preface or afterword, have been reserved for other volumes,<sup>171</sup> as has his preface to Aesop and retelling of several fables.<sup>172</sup> Luther's 1538 preface to Capella's *History* is translated in LW 34; his preface to the 1523 Leisnig *Ordinance of a Common Chest* is in LW 45; his preface to the 1528 *Instructions for the Visitors* is in LW 40.<sup>173</sup>

The primary basis for the translations of Luther's prefaces presented here is the text of the Weimar edition of Luther's works. The translators and editors have consulted original exemplars of the works where this has been desirable or necessary, in print, digitalization, or microfilm. Where modern editions or English translations of the works for which Luther wrote his prefaces are available, the editors have made every effort to indicate this in the notes. In every case, the catalog number of the works under discussion has been given according to the *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich*

<sup>168</sup> Below, preface to Bugenhagen, *Interpretation of the Psalms* (1524), p. 87.

<sup>169</sup> On Luther's dedicatory prefaces, see Junghans, "Die Widmungsvorrede bei Martin Luther," WA Ar 5:39–65.

<sup>170</sup> See also Luther's preface to the complete edition of the *German Theology* (1518), LW 31:71–76.

<sup>171</sup> See LW 72; also preface to the *Counsel of a Committee of Several Cardinals* (1538), LW 34:231–67; afterword to *Italian Lie concerning Luther's Death* (1545), LW 34:361–66.

<sup>172</sup> Preface to Aesop, *Fables* (1530/1557), WA 50:452–60 (LW 72).

<sup>173</sup> See the full list of "Supplements to the Publication of the Writings of Others" [*Beigaben zur Veröffentlichung fremder Schriften*], WA 61:15–22.

*erschienenen Drucke des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts* [VD16]<sup>174</sup> or (when referring to fifteenth-century works) the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* [GW].<sup>175</sup> These will serve as a key to locating the works in consolidated library catalogs as well as to finding digitalized presentations as these become increasingly available.

The editor of these two volumes is deeply grateful (as the reader will be) to the small army of scholars who contributed to presenting eighty-one of Luther's prefaces, embracing the challenging task not only of orienting the reader to Luther's writing translated thereafter but also of introducing an author and work who are otherwise absent. The editor's thanks are also extended to the Boston University School of Theology for its continuing support of this project; to ChaoLuan Kao, who assisted in the library; and to Margaret Arnold, who as editorial and research assistant applied her talents to every facet of this work. The managing editor, Benjamin T. G. Mayes, reviewed translations and coordinated the labors of the many contributors, and Dawn Weinstock again undertook the Herculean task of copyediting. The volume editor is responsible for the final state of the translations (except where the editor of the individual piece is also the translator) and has been privileged to collaborate with the individual editors in reviewing, consolidating, and annotating the introductions; the individual editors are primarily responsible for the work they have undersigned.

C. B. B.

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<sup>174</sup> *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Irmgard Bezzel, 25 vols. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1983–2000). <http://vd16.de>

<sup>175</sup> *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, ed. Erich V. Rath et al. (Leipzig: K. W. Hiersemann, 1925–). <http://gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de>

PREFACE TO  
THE SECOND VOLUME  
OF THE WORKS OF JOHN HUS

1524<sup>1</sup>

*Translated and edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes*

*John [Jan] Hus, the Czech rector of the University of Prague, applied and developed the theology of the Oxford theologian John Wyclif (ca. 1320–84) to denounce clerical (and papal) immorality in the midst of the last years of the Great Schism of the Western Church, provoking a reaction that brought him into excommunication, condemnation, and execution.<sup>2</sup> Excommunicated already by the archbishop of Prague in 1410, Hus was promised safe conduct to the Council of Constance by Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund (r. 1433–37). The council, however, which had been summoned to assert its authority over three competing papal claimants—and was eager to establish its credentials as an effective guardian of orthodoxy, able to judge the church in “both head and members”—instead had Hus imprisoned shortly after his arrival in November 1414. On July 6, 1415, the council condemned Hus and delivered him to the secular authority to be burned at the stake. Hus’ trial revolved around his affirmation of Wyclif (who was himself condemned posthumously by the council),<sup>3</sup> as well as his insistence that the Church consisted strictly*

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<sup>1</sup> *Ioannis Hvss Locorum aliquot ex Osee, & Ezechiele prophetis, cap. v. & viij. De abhorrenda Sacerdotum & Monachorum Papisticorum, in Ecclesia Christi abominatione, eorumque impietate detestanda, Vita item, & regno Antichristi, Tomvs Secvndvs. Commendatitia breuis M. Lvtheri ad Othonem Brunnfelsium, de uitae candore, doctrina & martyrio Io. Hvss.* ([Strassburg: Johann Schott, 1524]) [VD16 H6162]. 78 leaves in quarto. Luther’s letter is edited in WA Br 3:359, no. 783.

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew Spinka, *John Hus at the Council of Constance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); bibliography in Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, “Hus (Huß), Johann,” *BBKL* 2:1194–98, with updates online at [bbkl.de](http://bbkl.de).

<sup>3</sup> See Denzinger, nos. 581–625, 651.

of the number of the elect, with Christ as its sole Head, so that not only was the pope not head of the Church, but a morally corrupt pope was not even a member of the Church and exercised no divinely instituted authority whatsoever.<sup>4</sup>

Although the persecution of Hus' supporters continued with the execution of Jerome of Prague the following year, his ideas and his cause had found wide support among the Czech people and the Bohemian nobility. The watchword of their party was the call for lay Communion in both kinds [sub utraque specie], the eucharistic cup as well as the host, which gave them the name Utraquist. Hus himself had endorsed this request only at the end of his life, during his imprisonment. The Council of Constance decreed the medieval custom of lay Communion in one kind [sub una specie], the host alone, as a matter of church law.<sup>5</sup> The ensuing social and military conflict between the supporters and opponents of Hus, the Hussite Wars of 1420–34, left a bitter memory, particularly in neighboring Albertine Saxony, which suffered at the hands of Hussite forces.<sup>6</sup>

Already in 1518, Johann Tetzel (1465–1519) had attacked Luther by portraying him as a sympathizer with Hus and Wyclif. Although Luther at first rejected the association, finding even the name of the heretical Hus repugnant,<sup>7</sup> at the Leipzig debate (1519) against Johann Eck, Luther found himself drawn into defending Hus' condemned statement that papal power derived from the emperor and not from God.<sup>8</sup> Upon reading Hus' great treatise *On the Church*, given to him by a Bohemian observer of the debate, Luther became convinced of Hus' orthodoxy and of the injustice of his condemnation. "We are all

<sup>4</sup> For an account of Hus' trial, the proceedings of the Council of Constance, and English translations of relevant documents, see Spinka, *John Hus at the Council of Constance*, pp. 73–79, 89–298. For the condemned propositions, see Denzinger, nos. 627–56. For Luther's assessment of Hus' trial, see preface and afterword to Hus, *Three Letters* (1536/1537), LW 60:122–33.

<sup>5</sup> Denzinger, no. 626. Cf. introduction to the preface and afterword to Hus, *Three Letters* (1536/1537), LW 60:124.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Leipzig Disputation* (1519), LW 31:321.

<sup>7</sup> See *Lectures on Galatians* (1531/1535), LW 26:70, and preface to *Confession of the Barons and Nobels of Bohemia* (1538), LW 60:216.

<sup>8</sup> *Leipzig Disputation* (1519), LW 31:321–22; *Disputatio . . . Eccii et . . . ML Lipsiae habita* (1519), WA 59:461–81; Brecht 1:209, 319–21; Scott H. Hendrix, "We Are All Hussites? Hus and Luther Revisited," ARG 65 (1974): 134–61, here at pp. 138–41.

Hussites and did not know it," he wrote to Georg Spalatin in 1520,<sup>9</sup> though he was still at first hesitant to praise Hus too extravagantly in his public writings or to "make John Hus a saint or a martyr, as some of the Bohemians do."<sup>10</sup> It was not long, however, before Luther's support for Hus was public. In his *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (1521), Luther responded to the accusation that he had called some of Hus' condemned articles "true and evangelical" by insisting that "not only certain articles, but all the articles of John Huss, condemned at Constance, are altogether Christian." In the same place he refers to Hus as "St. John," yet he also says that Hus did not go far enough in discrediting the papacy and the pope's decretals.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1520s, Protestant publication of Hussite works was on the rise, promoted by Luther and other reformers.<sup>12</sup> The late Ulrich von Hutten had collected manuscripts of works attributed to Hus, which after Hutten's death in 1523 passed into the possession of the Strassburg humanist Otto Brunfels (1488–1534), who saw them into print in three volumes. Brunfels had been a Carthusian priest and monk but later fled from his monastery. At the time his edition of Hus appeared, he was a schoolmaster in Strassburg. Later, he would study medicine, becoming the city physician of Bern and a noted botanist.<sup>13</sup> Although in fact not all the works Brunfels published under Hus' name are to be attributed to him,<sup>14</sup> the publication demonstrates the esteem in which early Protestants held the Czech theologian.

Brunfels prefaced the first volume of his Hus edition with a dedicatory letter addressed to Luther, describing both Hus and Luther as apostles of Christ and alluding to 2 Tim. 4:8 in speaking of the rewards Luther would receive from God for the afflictions he had suffered for the sake of the Gospel. Luther's letter translated here is evidently a

<sup>9</sup> Letter of ca. February 14, 1520, LW 48:153. Cf. Brecht 1:331–32.

<sup>10</sup> *To the Christian Nobility* (1520), LW 44:196.

<sup>11</sup> *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (1521), LW 32:82–83.

<sup>12</sup> For a survey of Protestant printing of Hussite works, see Lubomír Batka, "Jan Hus' Theology in a Lutheran Context," *LQ* 23, no. 1 (2009): 7–8.

<sup>13</sup> Heinrich Grimm, "Brunfels, Otto," in *NDB*.

<sup>14</sup> See Erich Beyreuther and Werner-Friedrich-Aloys Jakobsmeier, eds., *Opera: Matthias Janov, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf: Materialien und Dokumente: Reihe 1, Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte der böhmischen Brüder-Unität 1* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1975), which excerpts from Brunfels' edition works to be ascribed to the earlier Czech theologian Matthias Janov (ca. 1355–95).

response to Brunfels' dedication, and it was printed as the preface for the second volume of the Hus edition.<sup>15</sup> Luther protests his unworthiness of Brunfels' praise, encourages Brunfels to continue his publication of Hus, and describes Hus as a true saint. By saying that Hus should be "canonized," Luther indicates that Hus is a holy martyr, as the title page to volume 2 of Brunfels' Hus edition makes clear.<sup>16</sup> By the time the second volume of Brunfels' Hus edition appeared, Brunfels seemed to have cooled in his attitude toward Luther because of the dispute between Luther and Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt over eucharistic theology.<sup>17</sup> Brunfels again dedicated his third volume to Luther, however, expressing his wish for peace between Luther and Karlstadt and defending his positive attitude toward the latter.

Although recognizing theological differences between himself and Hus,<sup>18</sup> Luther's interest in Hus both as an exemplar of martyrdom and as a theological critic of the papacy endured throughout his career, and he continued to encourage the publication of the Czech reformer's works.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Printed in WA Br 3:333–35, no. 770.

<sup>16</sup> See below, p. 101. Cf. Robert Kolb, "‘Saint John Hus’ and ‘Jerome Savonarola, Confessor of God’: The Lutheran ‘Canonization’ of Late Medieval Martyrs," *Concordia Journal* 17 (1991): 404–18.

<sup>17</sup> After Karlstadt and Luther had broken over their sacramental theologies, Karlstadt's writings on the Eucharist were favorably received by the leaders of the religious reform in Strassburg. Luther was upset with the Strassburgers, and here Brunfels attempted to mediate. Letter printed in WA Br 3:476–77, no. 858; see also Brecht 2:170 and E. Gordon Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), especially pp. 131–48. On Luther's relation with Karlstadt, see below, prefaces to Karlstadt, *Defense* (1525) and *Explanation* (1525), pp. 127–37.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to the observation that Hus did not go far enough in his critique of the papacy (see above, p. 99 n. 11), Luther notes that Hus did not reject the sacrifice of the Mass, merits, and other abuses: *Commentary on Psalm 2* (1532/1546), LW 12:10; Batka, "Hus' Theology in a Lutheran Context," pp. 1–28, here at p. 20; Hendrix, "'We Are All Hussites?'" pp. 157–60; Heiko Oberman, "Hus and Luther," in *The Contentious Triangle: Church, State, and University: A Festschrift in Honor of Professor George Huntston Williams*, ed. Rodney L. Petersen and Calvin Augustine Pater (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), pp. 135–66.

<sup>19</sup> For Luther's ongoing appreciation of Hus, see, e.g., *Bondage of the Will* (1525), LW 33:87; *To the Christians at Halle* (1527), LW 43:146, 154; *Concerning Rebaptism* (1528), LW 40:256; *Warning to His Dear German People* (1531), LW 47:17; *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–45/1544–54), LW 2:87–88; 8:266; *Against the Roman Papacy* (1545), LW 41:265; preface and afterword to Hus, *Three Letters* (1536/1537), LW 60:122–33; and preface to Hus, *Some Very Godly and Erudite Letters* (1537), LW 60:152–57.

*The translation here is made from Luther's Latin as edited in WA Br 3:359, no. 783.<sup>20</sup>*

B. T. G. M.

BRIEF COMMENDATION  
OF THE GLORIOUS LIFE, TEACHING, AND MARTYRDOM  
OF JOHN HUS<sup>21</sup>

**M**[ARTIN] Luther to his dearly beloved brother in the Lord, Otto Brunfels, a servant of Christ.

Grace and peace in Christ! There is nothing, my dear Otto, to your suspicion that I do not acknowledge your courtesy and affection toward me. I do acknowledge them, but I am unworthy of such flattery.

I am glad that John Hus, who was truly a martyr of Christ, is coming forth in our own generation, that is, that he is being properly canonized,<sup>22</sup> even if the Papists burst apart [with indignation]. Would that my name were worthy of having a man's writings dedicated to it and published under it! But I would prefer to be spared such praise of myself. In any case, by God's grace, I have now come to the point that, by long experience with hearing curses, I consider blessings and curses in this life to amount to about the same thing.

Therefore, gird yourself, and bring to light what is left, that he may be fully canonized. I have no advice to give. One thing I ask of you: that you would commend me, a wretched man, to Christ in your prayers. Farewell, indeed, in Him! I have not been at liberty to write more, I am so distracted. Farewell, and greet all our people!

October 17, 1524.

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<sup>20</sup> Aland 103.

<sup>21</sup> This description of Luther's prefatory letter is given on the title page of the second volume of Brunfels' Hus edition, with Luther's letter printed on the reverse.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Luther's words about Girolamo Savonarola, above, preface to Savonarola, *Meditation on Psalms 51 and 31* (1523), pp. 80–81.

PREFACE TO  
JUSTUS MENIUS,  
*THE DOCTRINE AND SECRET*  
OF THE ANABAPTISTS, REFUTED FROM SCRIPTURE

1530<sup>1</sup>

Translated by Jacob Corzine  
Edited by Carol Geisler

*The sixteenth-century movements characterized together by their opponents as “Anabaptist” on the basis of their shared rejection of infant Baptism were in fact quite various in their origins and their theology. They continued traditions of late medieval mysticism and protest and appropriated humanist moral emphases, as well as drawing upon and reacting against the teaching of both “magisterial” reformers and their dissenters in a complex web of interrelationships. Amid a range of theological options and social attitudes, however—from Nicene orthodoxy to docetic spiritualism and from pacifism to advocacy of godly revolution—early Anabaptists shared a common insistence on moral perfectionism and inner transformation that set them in opposition to the magisterial reformers whom they regarded as lax, hesitant, and preoccupied with external things.<sup>2</sup>*

*Among the foremost Lutheran critics of Anabaptist theology and practice was the Thuringian reformer Justus Menius.<sup>3</sup> Already as pastor in Erfurt from 1525 to 1528 Menius had met and disputed with the Anabaptist leader Melchior Rinck (ca. 1493–1553?), a follower of Thomas Münzer and exponent of the mystical theology of*

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<sup>1</sup> Justus Menius, *Der Widdertauffer lere und geheimnis, aus heiliger schrifft widerlegt* (Wittenberg: Nickel Schirlentz, 1530) [VD16 M4603]. 100 leaves in quarto.

<sup>2</sup> See Williams, *Radical Reformation* (3rd ed.). See also Luther’s preface to Rhegius, *Refutation* (1535), LW 60:82–90; preface to *New Report on the Anabaptists at Münster* (1535), LW 60:91–98.

<sup>3</sup> On Menius, see above, introduction to the prefaces to Menius’ writings against Kling (1527), pp. 185–89.

the Bavarian Anabaptist Hans Denck (ca. 1500–1527).<sup>4</sup> But it was when Menius moved from Erfurt to begin work in Thuringia—first as a teacher and assistant to Friedrich Myconius in Gotha in 1528 and then as superintendent in Eisenach from 1529 to 1547—that he found himself in the midst of intensive Anabaptist activity.<sup>5</sup> As Menius traveled on church visitations in Thuringia from October 1528 to January 1529 with Melancthon and Myconius, he was exposed to the infiltration (as he regarded it) of Anabaptist teachings into the parishes. As superintendent at Eisenach, Menius questioned Anabaptist captives and supported the strict policies of electoral Saxony against the movement. Beginning with this first work in 1530, he published four books against the Anabaptists.<sup>6</sup>

In the area around Eisenach, the Saxon elector and Landgrave Philip of Hesse shared jurisdiction but held to divergent policies with regard to the treatment of Anabaptists, Philip hesitating to impose capital punishment.<sup>7</sup> In 1529, a number of Anabaptists in Thuringia had been imprisoned and others had fled. The captives recanted, were released, and returned to their radical teachings. After causing a riot in an attempt to stone one of their members who wished to renounce his beliefs, nine Anabaptists were imprisoned and questioned by Myconius, the superintendent of Gotha. Six of the prisoners refused to recant and were executed in January 1530. Menius composed *The Doctrine and Secret of the Anabaptists to catalog and*

<sup>4</sup> See above, introduction to the prefaces to Menius' writings against Kling, pp. 185–86. On Rinck, see John S. Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists: Luther, Melancthon, and Menius and the Anabaptists of Central Germany* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), especially pp. 53–64, 92–112, and Williams, *Radical Reformation* (3rd ed.), pp. 660–68.

<sup>5</sup> See Williams, *Radical Reformation* (3rd ed.), pp. 660–68; Paul Wappler, *Die Täuferbewegung in Thüringen von 1526–1584*, Beiträge zur neueren Geschichte Thüringens 2 (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1913).

<sup>6</sup> See Luther's preface to Menius, *How Every Christian Should Conduct Himself* (1538), LW 60:209–13; Menius, *On the Spirit of the Anabaptists* (1544), LW 60:330–35. After Luther's death, Menius wrote *Von den Blutfreunden aus der Widertauff* [On the Anabaptist blood brothers] (Erfurt: G. Stürmer, 1551) [VD16 M4588]. For a detailed survey of Menius' polemic against the Anabaptists, see Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists*, chapter 6, pp. 179–210.

<sup>7</sup> In a letter of 1532 to the elector of Saxony concerning the prisoner Melchior Rinck, Philip said: "We cannot at present find it in our conscience to have anyone executed with the sword when we do not have sufficient other grounds to deprive him of his life. Otherwise Jews and Catholics would have to be punished first of all, because they blaspheme Christ the most" (quoted in Erich Geldbach, "Toward a More Ample Biography of the Hessian Anabaptist Leader Melchior Rinck," trans. Elizabeth Bender, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 48, no. 3 [July 1974]: 381).

refute Anabaptist teachings and also, by so doing, to justify the executions.<sup>8</sup> Both Melancthon and Luther approved the writing of the book, which Menius dedicated to Philip of Hesse, likely in an effort to encourage the landgrave to favor the stricter laws against Anabaptism enforced in electoral Saxony.<sup>9</sup>

In his book, Menius exposes the “secret” of Anabaptist beliefs and practice—not only the content and danger of their teaching but also the secrecy of their activity, a sure sign, as he repeatedly alleges, of its diabolical source. The satanic origins of Anabaptist doctrine are further shown by their lack of a regular, public call and confirmed by the absence of miracles that might substantiate an extraordinary vocation. Turning a stock Anabaptist argument against Lutherans on its head—the charge that Lutherans taught faith but neglected works—Menius cites Anabaptist baptismal interrogations to accuse the sectarians themselves of undervaluing the good works of Christians.<sup>10</sup> He also denounces the Anabaptist rejection of infant Baptism, their denial of Christ’s bodily presence in the Sacrament of the Altar,<sup>11</sup> their false teachings regarding Jesus’ divinity, and the universalist claim that the damned and even the devil would ultimately be saved.<sup>12</sup> Finally, Menius accuses the Anabaptists of confusing spiritual and civil orders with their insistence on external reform of Christians and society, expressed most radically in their communism, abuse of marriage, and chiliastic expectation of the return of Christ to

<sup>8</sup> Myconius (see preface to Myconius, *How Ordinary Folk Should Be Instructed* [1539], LW 60:220–22) is thought by some scholars to have helped with the writing of the treatise, but the work was published under Menius’ name alone. See Horst, *Theology of Justus Menius*, p. 50; Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists*, p. 182 n. 1.

<sup>9</sup> See also preface to Menius, *How Every Christian Should Conduct Himself* (1538), LW 60:209–13.

<sup>10</sup> Menius’ concern for good works was used against him, in turn, by Nicolaus von Amsdorf in the Majoristic Controversy. See above, introduction to the prefaces to Menius’ writings against Kling, p. 189; cf. Kolb, *Nikolaus von Amsdorf*, p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> Menius had begun to write against Anabaptist sacramental understanding during his Erfurt pastorate: see above, introduction to the prefaces to Menius’ writings against Kling, p. 188; cf. Horst, *Theology of Justus Menius*, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Universalism was characteristic of Hans Denck’s spiritualism: see Williams, *Radical Reformation* (3rd ed.), pp. 254, 258. Christological heresy (but in the direction of docetism) was more typical of Melchior Hoffman’s (d. 1543) teaching, but seems to have been echoed by Denck and his disciple Hans Hut as well: see Williams, *Radical Reformation* (3rd ed.), pp. 492–95, 252, 256; cf. preface to Rhegius, *Refutation* (1535), LW 60:82–90; preface to *New Report on the Anabaptists at Münster* (1535), LW 60:91–98.

set up a worldly kingdom. Menius concludes that the devil has made the sectarians so godless and stubborn “that there appears to be no possibility of improvement or repentance.”<sup>13</sup>

In his preface, Luther assures the reader that factions such as the Anabaptists must be present so that genuine teaching might be made known. The presence of the Gospel will be matched by the presence of the “gates of hell” (Matt. 16:18); Christians should not expect the one without the other. Now that the papacy has been overthrown, the devil must have new avenues for his troublemaking. Luther also sees a sure sign of the devil’s work in that the Anabaptists operate in secret and have no call to preach. Finally, Luther takes up Menius’ concern about the Anabaptist treatment of works. The sectarians misinterpret the Evangelical teaching that works do not make one righteous before God. Indeed, only Christ can make a person righteous, but that does not mean works should not be done. Luther prizes his works because it is God who does those good works through him. A Christian’s good works, Luther concludes, are done in praise of God and for the welfare of one’s neighbor.

Although Luther had begun to write against Anabaptists in 1528 with his *Concerning Rebaptism*,<sup>14</sup> he there lamented a lack of systematic information about Anabaptist teaching. Menius’ works supplied him with such a source, as he noted in his 1532 open letter *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers*, addressed to the nobleman Eberhard von der Tannen (1495–1574), the elector’s officer in the Wartburg castle overlooking Eisenach and Menius’ fellow ecclesiastical visitor.<sup>15</sup> A number of that work’s arguments are anticipated, in briefer form, in Luther’s preface here.

The translation is made from Luther’s 1530 German text as edited in WA 30/2:211–14.<sup>16</sup>

C. G.

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<sup>13</sup> Menius, *Der Widdertauffer*, fol. X2r, in Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists*, p. 197. Such an expected outcome would also serve to justify the execution of unrepentant prisoners. For a more extensive summary of Menius’ book, see Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists*, pp. 181–97.

<sup>14</sup> LW 40:225–62.

<sup>15</sup> *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers* (1532), LW 40:379–94; on Menius, see LW 40:383.

<sup>16</sup> Aland 498.

## MARTIN LUTHER'S PREFACE

OUR Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed quite clearly in Matthew 18 [:7] that His beloved Church would always have to suffer sects and factions when He said, "For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes!" Also St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 [:19], "There must be factions or heresy in order that those who are genuine may be manifest." And 2 Peter 2 [:1], "There will be false teachers among you, just as there were also false prophets among them." That is exactly how things have happened since the beginning of Christendom, even at the time of the apostles and ever since, and thus it will be until the end of the world. For Christ is a King and Lord, and therefore He must also do battle and make war. But He battles spiritually with the truth against the lies, and so the lies take up arms and refuse to submit. That is how the sects come about and such riot and clamor arise in Christendom.

Therefore, no one should wonder or be appalled when he sees sectarian spirits and heretics rise up among the Christians and bluster so abominably against the truth. If you are a Christian and believe Christ and His apostles, then you must also believe and expect this, for they say, "Factions and scandal must come." You cannot consider these words of theirs as lies or as idle, frivolous talk, but rather as speaking of honorable, important, terrible things, as it is fitting for God's Word to speak; and you must not think it strange when they come, but learn to expect it, so that you can say: "Very well, let whatever is coming come. I have long known that factions would have to come. If it were not these, it would have to be others; if these were to cease, others would start." If you want to have the precious Gospel, then you must also have the gates of hell and the devil [Matt. 16:18], so that you do not possess that Gospel along with love or with peace, as Christ says, "My peace I give you, not as the world gives" [John 14:27].

And, in sum, the devil is a blustering, rattling, and rumbling spirit;<sup>17</sup> he cannot refrain from blustering and rumbling. Up till now, under the pope, he has blustered and rattled about in houses, in churches, in the field, and in the forest and has opened a soul-market there. He has hawked his wares and sold them in exchange for human souls, and thereby has dragged the Mass and all Christian works into purgatory—indeed, even into hell—and has stuffed all the world's goods into lazy and gluttonous stomachs, indeed, he has buried them in the toilets and latrines of the cloisters and foundations

<sup>17</sup> *polter geist und rumpel geist*, often used of a noisy, troublesome ghost; cf. English "poltergeist" and Luther's reference to "rattling ghosts" below, p. 268.

of clergy.<sup>18</sup> But now that this soul-market of his has been suppressed, he is beginning to rattle and rumble anew through the sectarian spirits. So, just as no one fears the rattling ghosts in their houses anymore, neither should we any longer be dismayed by rattling among the sects. There must be such rattling and rumbling so long as the world stands!

But everything must turn out for our good [Rom. 8:28]—and not by producing only a single kind of benefit. First of all, through it we become practiced in handling and keeping God's Word all the more carefully, and thus we become more and more certain of the truth. For if there were no such sects through which the devil awakened us, we would become too lazy and would sleep and snore ourselves to death. Further, both faith and the Word would become dull and rusty among us until everything were destroyed. But instead such sects are our whetting stone and burnisher that sharpen and hone our faith and doctrine, so that they shine bright and pure like a mirror; and [we] also become acquainted thereby with the devil and his intentions and become ready and skilled for battle against him. None of this would happen if the sects left us in peace.

In the second place, the Word itself will also in this way be brought to light before the world all the better and more brightly, so that many, who would not otherwise come to it, will learn of the truth through such controversy, or else will be strengthened in it. For the Word of God is an active thing [Heb. 4:12], and so God gives it its work to do, hanging and harrowing both the world and the devil upon it, that His power and might may be revealed and the lies be put to shame. If some may perhaps be led astray by them, that, too, is just and happens as a punishment and recompense for the godless, proud scorners and ungrateful men who persecute, slander, and scorn our teaching. For if any pious and simple hearts are led astray, there is hope that they may come back to the right way. But the proud and those who think themselves wise shall remain obdurate therein, and receive in themselves the wages of their ingratitude and their own presumptuous cleverness.

All of this you will find in abundance in this fine book: how God exercises and strengthens our faith through the idle and lame japes of the Anabaptists; and, on the other hand, how He rightly rebukes their proud thoughts and ingratitude, as they, in their blindness and hardness of heart, speak such foolish things that accordingly they do not want them to be exposed but prefer to hide their poison in the dark. And though all of their lies are clearly and powerfully defeated in this book, I still want to offer a bit of instruction of my own, so it may be understood that the devil has

<sup>18</sup> *stift*, an association of clergy (such as the canons of a cathedral chapter) endowed with corporate identity, property, and rights under church law.

sent them forth and [they] traffic in nothing but lies, even though all this is already contained in this book.

First of all, it is a certain sign of the devil that they slink through the houses and run around in the countryside and do not appear publicly as the apostles did and as all proper<sup>19</sup> preachers do each day.<sup>20</sup> Rather, they are nothing but clandestine preachers; they come even into others' houses and to foreign places, where no one has called them or sent them; and for such skulking<sup>1</sup> and running about they can produce neither any defense nor any proof of permission. This proposition is infallible and certain: that they come from the devil, as Christ says in John 10 [:8]: "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers." Thus I have previously, [writing on] Psalm 82,<sup>21</sup> admonished both government and subjects that such skulkers, clandestine teachers, and corner-preachers<sup>22</sup> are simply not to be tolerated, for God is not present there, but certainly the devil himself, no matter how it may glisten.

In the second place, their teaching is nothing but worldly goods and temporal, fleshly, earthly promises that the mob gladly hears—namely, that they, like the Jews and Turks, dream up a kingdom on earth in which they will slay all the godless and they alone will have good days.<sup>23</sup> Who would not want that? But that is a manifest, palpable lie, for Christ has not prepared for His own people a worldly kingdom, but a heavenly one, and He says: "In the world you will have tribulation" [John 16:33] and "My kingdom is not of this world" [John 18:36]. He commands us to renounce this world and await the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise, the former saints and martyrs, Christ and all the apostles would have been wrong to conclude that they were to lack such a worldly kingdom. Therefore, this article [of their teaching] is a certain sign that the devil is riding them.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *ordenliche*

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers* (1532), LW 40:384; sermon of March 30, 1529, LW 69:360–66.

<sup>21</sup> *Commentary on Psalm 82* (1530), LW 13:39–72, especially, e.g., pp. 63–66. Cf. James M. Estes, *Peace, Order, and the Glory of God: Secular Authority and the Church in the Thought of Luther and Melancthon, 1518–1559*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 111 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 184–85.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers* (1532), LW 40:386.

<sup>23</sup> Not all Anabaptists advocated violence, but followers of the Anabaptist leader Melchior Hoffman (some of whom also became active in Thuringia: see Williams, *Radical Reformation* [3rd ed.], pp. 668–72) attempted to bring this earthly kingdom to reality in 1534 in the northwest German city of Münster. Luther saw here, too, a connection with Münzer and the Zwickau prophets: cf. *Letter to the Princes of Saxony* (1524), LW 40:51. See Sigrun Haude, *In the Shadow of "Savage Wolves": Anabaptist Münster and the German Reformation during the 1530s* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), and Luther's preface to Rhegius, *Refutation* (1535), LW 60:82–90; preface to *New Report on the Anabaptists at Münster* (1535), LW 60:91–98.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Bondage of the Will* (1525), LW 33:65.

In the third place, they teach that Christ will slay the godless with the sword and will entrust the sword to brethren of the covenant<sup>25</sup> like these. In this, you can manifestly perceive the murderous, mutinous, bloodthirsty spirit, whose breath stinks of the sword. And what is even finer, they themselves preach that they want to be the fellows to wield the sword. And if they had just cleaned the lie up a bit so that it was not they themselves but others who were to do it, as the prophets prophesy about the future Christians, then it would at least have a shade of plausibility. But in the eyes of these fellows, their neighbors are not well suited, and so they must preach themselves and not Christ or His work—instead, preaching what they want to do and their own murderous work. But we know that Christ did not give His people a sword, but forbade it, when He said, “But you should not be or act like that” [Luke 22:26]. He did not take back these words, and will not accuse Himself of lying, and He will kill the godless not with the sword but with the breath or spirit of His mouth, and He will destroy them through the appearance of His coming [2 Thess. 2:8]. Therefore, this is a certain, palpable sign that it is the devil himself.

In the fourth place, look at how nicely they teach about good works, saying that they give their good works for a groschen!<sup>26</sup> In this they want to ape us and imitate our teaching, because they have heard that we teach that good works do not make one righteous, do not wipe away sin, and do not reconcile God. And beyond this, the devil here contributes something of his own and so utterly despises good works that he is willing to sell them all for a groschen. So I praise God, my Lord, that the devil in his cleverness must so shamefully befoul and befool himself. We teach that reconciling God, making righteous, and wiping away sin is such a lofty, great, glorious work that Christ, God’s Son, alone must do it, and that it is properly, purely, simply, and uniquely a work of the one true God and of His grace, in relation to which our work is and can do nothing. But to say that, because of this, good works should be nothing or be worth only a groschen—who has ever taught or heard this, except now, from the lying mouth of the devil?

I would not give a single one of my sermons, one of my lectures, one of my writings, one of my Our Fathers—indeed, whatever small work I have ever done or will do—in exchange for all the goods of the world. In fact,

<sup>25</sup> Hans Denck was the first to use the description “Brethren of the Covenant” (*bundsgenossen*) to refer to Anabaptist groups; it became “a major constitutional-eschatological term, fraught with significance for the whole Anabaptist movement” (Williams, *Radical Reformation* [3rd ed.], p. 262). The term was readily associated with memories of the Peasants’ War, and for Menius the origins of Anabaptist thought were linked to Münzer, a leading figure in the rebellion: Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists*, p. 202. On Münzer, see above, preface and afterword to *Terrifying Story of Münzer* (1525), pp. 120–26.

<sup>26</sup> A groschen was worth 12 pennies, a relatively small sum.

I hold one of these to be of more worth than my bodily life, which is and should be of more worth to each person than the whole world. For if it is a good work, then God has done it through and in me. If God has done it and it is God's work, what is the whole world in comparison with God and His work? Even though I do not become righteous through such a work (for this must already have happened through Christ's blood and grace, without works), it has still been done to the praise and honor of God, for the help and well-being of my neighbor. None of these things can be paid for or compared with the world's goods. And these fine sects take a groschen for them! Oh, what a job the devil has done of hiding himself here! How could anyone fail to perceive him here? Against faith they teach a worldly kingdom; against good works they teach temporal goods and money and consider [good works] to be worth less than a groschen; against the cross they teach the sword and vengeance. Ah me! What gentle and fine Christians those must be indeed! Therefore, whoever believes such manifest, palpable lies and blasphemies of the devil is rightly condemned. But you will also find and see for yourself in this book how Christ attacks, overthrows, and obliterates this lying spirit. To Him be praise and thanks in eternity, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, true God and Lord. Amen.