



REFORMATION NOTES

News for Partners of the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection
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Old Books and Modern Scholarship

—Bob de Graaf

During my career of nearly half a century as a rare book dealer, different people have asked me the same question, “Why should one collect old and rare books?” While a private collector might simply answer, “Because it gives me pleasure,” there are other, far more important reasons for libraries to collect such materials, and it is to this matter that I turn.

The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection is a repository of rare and valuable documents produced in connection with the Protestant Reformation. The collection now contains more than 1,800 pieces written by Martin Luther, his colleagues, and opponents and printed during their lifetimes.

Supported by the vision and resources of Lutheran laypeople Richard and Martha Kessler and partners throughout the Southeast, the collection is housed in the Pitts Theology Library of Candler School of Theology. It provides a rich resource for scholars of the Reformation and for clergy and laity who seek to understand the history of the Christian faith.

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Some would argue, “Why collect early printed editions of the Protestant reformers, when modern critical editions of their works are available?” To this I would reply that it is the obligation of every serious scholar to go back *ad fontes* (“to the sources”). In the case of Luther or Melanchthon, for example, it is important to consult the very earliest version of a certain text. Ideally this would be the author’s manuscript, but in over 95% of the cases, this was the printer’s copy and was simply discarded after the production of a given edition. Consequently, the first printed edition is a document of the greatest importance: it is the form in which the work was seen and read not only by the reformer himself but also by his contemporaries, colleagues and adversaries alike. Moreover, in many cases in subsequent editions the author himself made substantial changes, corrections, and/or additions to this original version of the text. To study these illuminates the writer’s thinking, development as a theologian, and how he was influenced by sympathizers and critics. Therefore, it is essential for scholars to study subse-

quent contemporary editions as well, whether they were issued by the reformer himself or by others after his death.

While I have already mentioned by name two of the greatest Lutheran reformers, we must not forget that there were literally hundreds of other sixteenth-century reformers, who were active and published books and pamphlets on a wide variety of theological topics. Many were eminent theologians who made substantial contributions to the cause of the Protestant Reformation. The vast majority of their publications (certainly over 90%), though, have been reproduced in no modern critical edition. Therefore, copies of the early editions are the only sources available for the study of their works.

It also should be noted that while reproductions of early editions, whether by photograph, microform, or digital image, serve a useful purpose, none of these methods can fully capture and represent the original. There are the subtleties of paper and ink, the extraordinary variety of bindings, and the addi-

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tions of marginal notations by sixteenth-century and later readers—all of which converge to distinguish the various copies of a single edition from one another.

So in my view there is good reason for the libraries of the world to collaborate in the collection and preservation of the early editions of the Protestant reformers' works. This is a task that looms more important as the years pass and the supply of these materials diminishes, but it is absolutely critical for the advance of scholarship and the discharge of our responsibility to future generations.

Bob de Graaf is a rare book dealer in Nieuwkoop, The Netherlands. He is past-President of the Dutch Association of Antiquarian Booksellers, as well as past-President and now President of Honour of the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers.

Kessler Collection Update

M. Patrick Graham

The first half of the 1996–97 year has gone well for the Kessler Reformation Collection, with nearly 130 new pieces added to the collection, an excellent fall concert and series of lectures, and the publication of the first edition of Bugenhagen's funeral sermon for Luther. Plans are moving along well for the 1997 concert, rare materials exhibit, and lectures, which will celebrate the 500th anniversary of Philipp Melanchthon's birth (see Dr. Rettberg's article on page 4). Internationally reknown Melanchthon specialist Prof. Timothy J. Wengert of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia will be the guest lecturer.

I am also pleased to announce that Dr. Kurt K. Hendel, Professor of Reformation History at the Lutheran

Theological Seminary at Chicago, has accepted our invitation to join the Scholars Advisory Committee of the Kessler Collection. His professional expertise and wisdom will be a great asset to the Collection as it moves into the twenty-first century.

Finally, I take great pride in introducing the author of our lead article, Bob De Graaf, to the friends of the Kessler Reformation Collection. He is a scholar, editor, and publisher of learned books, as well as an expert of international stature in the rare book trade. He has been of invaluable service to the library for many years, and I am delighted to include his article in this issue of *Reformation Notes*.

Dr. M. Patrick Graham is Librarian and Margaret A. Pitts Associate Professor of Theological Bibliography.

Reformation 'orphans' in need of adoption

The following Reformation "orphans" are in need of adoption by a Kessler Partner. Partners sponsor the purchase of a document by making a gift of at least \$1,500, which may be divided into monthly or quarterly payments. A bookplate listing the donor's name is placed in the "adopted" book or document. Gifts also may be made in honor or memory of persons. Those persons honored will be notified of the gift, and the bookplate will list both the giver and honoree.

All the "orphans" listed below come from the hand of Luther himself.

An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation : von des Christlichen standes besserung: D. Martinus Luther. Vuittenberg [i.e., Wittenberg: Melchior Lotter d.J. 1520].

One of Luther's most famous early Reformation tracts. In it he urges the

lay nobility to take responsibility for carrying out reform within both church and society.

Anntwurt deutsch Mar. Luthers auff Könning Heinrichs vo[n] Engeland buch. [Stuttgart: Hans von Erfurt 1522]

In 1521 no less than King Henry VIII wrote a defense of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church against Luther. Luther wrote a sharp rebuttal in Latin and then released this piece, which is not just a German translation, but in fact a revision of the Latin work. He spares the king in nothing, even referring to him as "Hainricus vo[n] gottes vngnade[n] könig von Engellandt" (i.e., Henry, by God's disfavor ["ungrace"] King of England).

Auslegung der Episteln vnd Euangelien vom Aduent an bis auff Ostern. Durch Doctorem Martinum Luther. Auff's new corrigirt mit einem nützlichen Register.

Gedruckt zu Wittemberg. Durch Hans Lufft. M.D.XL. [1540].

This large volume presents Luther's sermon studies on the Epistles and Gospels as they were read in the churches in his time. The title page depicts the figures of Moses with the stone tablets and then Abraham and Isaac on their way to Mount Moriah, where God has commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son.

Auslegung deutsch des Vater unnsrer fuer dye einfeltigen leyen Doctori Martini Luther Augustiner tzu Witte[n]bergk. Nicht fur die gelerten. Aus Melchiar Lotters druckerey tzu Leyptzk. [1519].

Luther first preached this exposition of the Lord's Prayer at Lent in 1517. A student of his, without his knowledge, had the work printed. Dissatisfied with the results, Luther now releases his own version to the press. The brief preface

presents a surprised and somewhat embarrassed Luther, who says that he considered releasing the work only after consulting with friends and being assured of its worth.

Ein brieff an die Fürsten zu Sachsen von dem auffrührischen geyst. M. Luther. Wittenberg [i.e., Wittenberg]. M.D.XXiiiij. [1524]. [Strasbourg: Johann Knoblauch].

On the eve of the Peasants' War, Luther writes to his princes and warns them against the rebellious spirit that sets aside word and sacrament, looks for direct revelations, and hears voices urging the destruction of images in churches.

Chronica des Ehrwirdigen Herrn D. Mart. Luth. Deutsch. Mit einem Anhang der folgenden jaren. Witteberg [i.e., Wittenberg]. Gedruckt durch Hans Lufft. 1559.

In this little book Martin Luther, the teacher, offers his readers a timeline of events from the creation of the world down to his own time. The reckoning is executed both according to traditional biblical chronology and according to the western calendar. This German translation was made by Johannes Aurifaber, a Lutheran and student of Melancthon.

Doctoris Martini Luther Appellation od' beruffung an eyn Christlich frey Conciliu[m] von dem Bapst Leo vnd seinem vnrechtem freuel vorneweret vnd repetiret. Wittenberg. M.D.XX. [1520]. [Strasbourg: Johann Prüss, 1520].

In these pages Luther outlines his relationship with the church from the time that he challenged the practice of selling indulgences and presents an appeal to Pope Leo X to call a free and ecumenical council, where he and his followers may have the opportunity to make their case against church practice.

Das Elltern die kinder zur Ehe nicht zwingen noch hyndern/ Vnd die kinder on der elltern willen sich nicht verloben sollen. Martinus Luther. [Wittenberg: Cranach and Döring, 1524]

A treatise of Martin Luther arguing for tolerance on the part of both parents and children in the matter of marriage. Parents should neither force their children to marry, nor should they hinder them from doing so. Children should respect and obey their parents and should not become engaged without their parents' permission.

Der hundert vnd sibem vnd zwaintzigest Psalm/ aussgelegt/ an die Christen zu Rigen in Liffland. Martinus Luther. Wittenberg [i.e., Wittenberg]. MD.XXIII. [i.e., 1524]. [Konstanz: Johann Schöffler, 1524].

In these pages we have Luther's devotional exposition of Psalm 127, written in the form of an open letter to Christians in Riga, Latvia.

De instituendis ministris Ecclesiae, ad Clarissimum Senatam Pragensem Bohemiae, Martinus Luther. Eiusdem formula Missae & communionis pro Ecclesia Vuittembergensi. [Strasbourg: Johann Herwagen, 1523].

In this open "letter" to the senate of the city of Prague, Luther offers his views on selecting and installing ministers.

Von den newen Eckischenn Bullen vnd lügen D. Martini Luther. Vuittemberg. [i.e., Wittenberg: Melchior Lotter d.J., 1520]

In this tract Luther answers those who accuse him of heresy and questions the authenticity of the pope's bull of excommunication, attributing it to his critic, Johann Eck. Luther does not spare his opponent. To Eck he writes, "You know, my dear Romanist, that you know about as much about the Holy Scriptures as an ass does about playing the lyre!"



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Marginalia

Daniel J. Rettberg



Reproduction of woodcut from the title page of the second volume of Melanchthon's collected works (*Omnium operum . . .*, 1562). The inscription cites the Latin translation of Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who is against us?" From the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection.

Perhaps the most famous and important of formal Lutheran doctrinal statements is the Augsburg Confession. Originally designed as the personal confession of faith of Luther's prince, Elector John the Constant, to be presented by him to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, it was also signed by four other princes and the representatives of two of the empire's free cities. It soon found its way into the minds and hearts of many others as well, and it is today the basic statement of faith of every Lutheran church.

Philipp Melanchthon composed the Augsburg Confession, basing it on similar statements of faith by Luther and his followers. Melanchthon himself looked upon the Augsburg Confession as much as his own personal theological work as he did his prince's statement of faith. Throughout his life, he continued to edit and polish the document. Perhaps the most radical of these changes were those incorporated into the 1540 edition. It is in this edition that he altered the article on the Lord's Supper, so as to accommodate the less literal views of the Strasbourg and Swiss Reformers, who had parted company with Luther on this doctrine. This change eventually led to dissention

within the ranks of Luther's followers as well, dissention that would not be resolved until the composing of the last of the great sixteenth century Lutheran confessions, the Formula of Concord.

Emperor Charles, after hearing the German text read in public session at the Diet of Augsburg, and formally receiving the Confession in both German and Latin, forbade its publication, but the public reading had created such demand for the text, that no less than six printings of the German text and one of the Latin appeared within several months of the closing of the diet. These early printings being full of mistakes, Melanchthon himself felt compelled to issue his own official texts, which he did at the end of 1530. The Kessler Collection includes these two first editions, as well as the 1535 and 1568 Latin printings, which follow the 1530 text. It also includes one 1565 printing, which contains both the pre- and the post-1540 versions of the article on the Lord's Supper. All these printed copies will be on display in the Pitts Theology Library on October 28, when we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of Melanchthon's birth with a book exhibit and concert.

Dr. Daniel J. Rettberg is Rare Book Librarian at the Pitts Theology Library.



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