

CLASSICS
OF THE
RADICAL
REFORMATION

The Essential Carlstadt



The Essential Carlstadt

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Andreas Bodenstein (Carlstadt) in Professional Garb.

The Essential Carlstadt

Fifteen Tracts by
Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt

Translated and edited by
E. J. Furcha



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*To my students, 1968-1994,
with gratitude and affection*

Classics of the Radical Reformation

Classics of the Radical Reformation is an English-language series of Anabaptist and Free Church documents translated and annotated under the direction of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, which is the research agency of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and published by Plough Publishing House.

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Preface to the New Edition

Most accounts of the Radical Reformation begin with Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt (alternately Karlstadt), the first individual to challenge Martin Luther's interpretation of scripture and promote a form of reformation that differed from Luther's. While Luther was in hiding after the 1521 Diet of Worms, Karlstadt became the leader of a group that introduced practical reforms in Wittenberg in accordance with Luther's understanding of the gospel. Upon his return to Wittenberg in March 1522, Luther rolled back most of these reforms and denounced those who had tried to impose them on people who were not yet ready for such changes. Two years later Karlstadt would break decisively with Luther over the understanding of both baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹ In his enormously influential work *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1525), Luther mocked and vilified his former colleague, creating a caricature that has endured to the present. Although Karlstadt rejected Thomas Müntzer's advocacy of violence, Luther criticized both men for claiming guidance from the Spirit rather than from the written Word of God. Heinrich Bullinger would repeat the association of Karlstadt with Müntzer in order to place the origins of Anabaptism in distant Saxony rather than in his own church in Zurich. Karlstadt spent his final years as a Reformed theologian teaching at the university of Basel, but his reputation as a Radical Reformer, nascent Spiritualist, and associate of Müntzer has continued into the twenty-first century.²

Luther's condemnations had such a deep and abiding influence on the historical interpretation of Karlstadt that Hermann Barge's favorable biography of Karlstadt caused a storm of protest when it

was published in 1905.³ The longevity of this negative image was due in part to the difficulty scholars had in finding and reading Karlstadt's own writings. Alejandro Zorzin has highlighted Karlstadt's importance as a pamphlet author,⁴ yet until relatively recently only a few of his works were readily available to modern readers. Ironically, the easiest works to find were those included in Johann Georg Walch's edition of Luther's writings.⁵ In the mid-1950s, Erich Hertzsch published eight of Karlstadt's vernacular pamphlets, although he contributed to further misunderstanding by transposing a page of Karlstadt's most influential work, his *Dialogue . . . on the Infamous and Idolatrous Abuse of the Most Blessed Sacrament*.⁶ Over the final quarter of the twentieth century, individual pamphlets and sermons by Karlstadt were published within journal articles or included in edited collections of Reformation-era pamphlets.⁷ Only recently, however, have long-standing efforts to produce a critical edition of Karlstadt's works and correspondence borne fruit, with the publication both in print and online of a first volume covering the period up through 1518.⁸

Until the publication of *The Essential Carlstadt*, Anglophone readers' access to Karlstadt's ideas was even more limited. Only a few of his pamphlets were available in translation. Ronald Sider included four tracts on the Lord's Supper and the pace of reform in *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther: Documents in a Liberal-Radical Debate*.⁹ Karlstadt's pamphlet urging the removal of images was included in *A Reformation Debate: Karlstadt, Emser and Eck on Sacred Images*,¹⁰ while Carter Lindberg published a translation of Karlstadt's *Dialogue on the Lord's Supper*, based on the faulty edition of Hertzsch.¹¹ The treatises translated by Edward Furcha in this volume therefore provided important new material for the study of Karlstadt's thought and influence.

Edward J. Furcha (1935–97) belonged to a circle of North American scholars, many of them from a dissenting church background, who contributed to the rapid growth of research on the Radical Reformation in the last third of the twentieth century. Born in Transylvania, Furcha immigrated to Canada with his parents, studied in Switzerland and the United States, and eventually became professor of religious studies at McGill University in Montreal.¹² Furcha's

academic career was largely devoted to Reformation dissenters, beginning with his dissertation on Kaspar Schwenckfeld. Over the next thirty years he published translations of works by Schwenckfeld, Sebastian Franck, Hans Denck, and Huldrych Zwingli, in addition to this volume of Karlstadt's pamphlets. Furcha thus played an important role in exposing English readers to a range of voices critical of what became the established Protestant churches.

Like Lindberg, Furcha used Hertzsch's edition of Karlstadt's Dialogue, and he closely followed Lindberg's translation, which means that the version in this volume reproduces the transposed pages.¹³ Although both *On the Removal of Images* and *Whether We Should Go Slowly* were already available in English, Furcha made his own translations of these tracts. The remaining twelve treatises were all new to English readers, and for five of these there is still no modern edition of their original German.¹⁴ Furcha included two of Karlstadt's pamphlets concerning the Lord's Supper in this volume, and, as he announces in the introduction, he planned to publish the remaining pamphlets in a second volume produced together with Calvin Pater. Furcha's unexpected death in 1997 meant that this volume was never published, and it would be another fifteen years before Karlstadt's pamphlets on the Eucharist appeared in English translation.¹⁵

Furcha's selection of Karlstadt's writings stands out for its breadth of coverage. He chose pamphlets from every stage of Karlstadt's career, beginning with an early treatise on *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness) from 1520 and extending to an unpublished sermon preached in Zurich in 1534. His translations of Karlstadt's sometimes convoluted German is both colloquial and clear. Furcha did not give the German titles of the pamphlets because he intended the translations for a general audience. To make them easier to identify, I here provide a bibliography of the original German titles of Karlstadt's pamphlets:¹⁶

1. *Missive von der allerhöchsten Tugend Gelassenheit* (no. 24)
2. *Von Anbetung und Ehrerbietung der Zeichen des Neuen Testaments* (no. 40)
3. *Von Gelübten Unterrichtung* (no. 39)
4. *Von Abtun der Bilder* (no. 48)
5. *Sendbrief D. Andreas B. von Karlstadt meldend seiner Wirtschaft* (no. 47)

6. *Was gesagt ist: Sich gelassen* (no. 54)
7. *Ursachen, daß Andreas Karlstadt eine Zeit stillschwieg* (no. 56)
8. *Von Mannigfaltigkeit des einfältigen einigen Willen Gottes* (no. 53)
9. *Von den zwei höchsten Geboten* (no. 61)
10. *Ob Man gemach fahren* (no. 70)
11. *Dialogus . . . Von dem greulichen, abgöttischen Mißbrauch des hochwürdigsten Sakraments* (no. 67)
12. *Von dem Sabbat und [den] gebotenen Feiertagen* (no. 60)
13. *Anzeige etlicher Hauptartikel christlicher Lehre* (no 73)
14. *Entschuldigung [von wegen] des falschen Namens der Aufruhr* (no. 76)
15. Unprinted in the sixteenth century

Research on Karlstadt has continued to grow since the publication of Furcha's translations. Alejandro Zorzin's brief biographical essay introduces Anglophone readers to the reformer's life,¹⁷ and the published papers of two different conferences held in the 1990s provide a broad sampling of recent research on this "Reformation maverick."¹⁸ Karlstadt's place within the early Wittenberg Reformation continues to draw the attention of German historians.¹⁹ In contrast, English-language scholarship has looked at Karlstadt as a contributor to Reformation radicalism more broadly. Furcha himself contributed to the literature on Karlstadt with two short essays, the first comparing Karlstadt with Zwingli and the second highlighting the concern for internalized worship that underlay both Karlstadt's early advocacy of iconoclasm and his later emphasis on regeneration.²⁰ Recent studies have also examined Karlstadt's use of rhetoric²¹ and highlighted the influence of both German mysticism and Erasmus's biblical scholarship on his thought.²²

This republication of Furcha's translation is intended to familiarize a new generation of scholars with Karlstadt's life and thought, and it should spur further study of the first Reformer who dared to disagree with Luther.

Amy Nelson Burnett

Notes

1. Amy Nelson Burnett, *Karlstadt and the Origins of the Eucharistic Controversy: A Study in the Circulation of Ideas*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). The importance of baptism became clear after Karlstadt was identified as the author of an anonymous pamphlet critical of infant baptism; see Alejandro Zorzin, "Zur Wirkungsgeschichte einer Schrift aus Karlstadts Orlamünder Tätigkeit. Der 1527 in Worms gedruckte 'Dialog vom fremden Glauben, Glauben der Kirche, Taufe der Kinder.' Fortsetzung einer Diskussion," in *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541): Ein Theologe der frühen Reformation*, edited by Sigrid Looss and Markus Matthias (Lutherstadt Wittenberg: Drei Kastanien Verlag, 1998), 143–58.
2. A recent example of this pairing is Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Karlstadt, Müntzer and the Reformation of the Commoners, 1521–1525," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 152–1700*, edited by John D. Roth and James M. Stayer, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1–44.
3. Hermann Barge, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Brandstetter, 1905). For a survey of scholarship on Karlstadt that centers on Barge and his opponents, see Martin Kessler, *Das Karlstadt-Bild in der Forschung*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 174 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).
4. Alejandro Zorzin, *Karlstadt als Flugschriftenautor*, Göttinger theologische Arbeiten 48 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990). Zorzin provides a useful chronological list of Karlstadt's printed works (273ff), which updates the standard Karlstadt bibliography, E. Freys and H. Barge, eds., *Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften des Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1965 [1904]).
5. Johann Georg Walch, ed., *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1881–1910); three of Karlstadt's eucharistic pamphlets are included in vol. 20. Walch's edition was first published in the eighteenth century.
6. Erich Hertzsch, ed., *Karlstads Schriften aus den Jahren 1523–25*, Neudrucke deutscher Literaturwerke des 16 und 17. Jahrhunderts 325, 2 vols. (Halle: Niemeyer, 1956–57). The mistake makes it appear that Victus, who dropped out of the conversation earlier in the *Dialogue*, suddenly reenters the discussion, when in fact his contribution belongs to an earlier stage of the conversation. On the transposition error, see note 13 below.
7. Robert Stupperich, "Karlstads Sabbat-Traktat von 1524," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 1 (1959): 349–75; Calvin Pater, "Karlstads Zürcher Abschiedspredigt über die Menschwerdung Christi," *Zwingliana* 14 (1974): 1–16; Hans-Peter Hasse, "Karlstads Predigt am 29. September 1522 in Joachimsthal: Ein unbekannter Text aus Stephan Roths Sammlung von Predigten des Johannes Sylvius Egranus," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 81 (1990): 97–119; Hans-Peter Hasse, "Karlstads Traktat 'De usura,'" *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, kanonistische Abteilung* 76, 107 (1990): 308–28; Adolf Laube, et al., eds., *Flugschriften der frühen Reformationsbewegung (1518–1524)* (Vaduz: Topos, 1983); Adolf Laube et al., eds., *Flugschriften vom Bauernkrieg zum Täuferreich (1526–1535)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992).
8. Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Schriften und Briefe Andreas Bodensteins von Karlstadt*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 90/1–2 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2017–); <http://diglib.hab.de/edoc/ed000216/start.htm>.
9. Ronald J. Sider, ed., *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther: Documents in a Liberal-Radical Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).
10. Bryan D. Mangrum and Giuseppe Scavizzi, eds., *A Reformation Debate: Karlstadt, Emser and Eck on Sacred Images* (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1991), 19–39.

11. Carter Lindberg, "Karlstadt's Dialogue on the Lord's Supper," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 53 (1979): 35–77. The letter from Orlamünde to Allstedt, by Karlstadt, is translated in Michael G. Baylor, ed., *The Radical Reformation*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 33–35.
12. See Furcha's obituary by Joseph C. McLelland, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997): 825–26.
13. The dialogue between Victus and Gemser from the middle of p. 614 through the middle of p. 616 belongs earlier in the dialogue and should be inserted near the bottom of p. 544, after Victus's statement ending with "for God is in hell as well as in heaven and fills all of creation."
14. Those five are the "Tract on . . . Gelassenheit" (chap. 1), "Regarding Vows" (chap. 3), "Circular Letter" (chap. 5), "The Meaning of the Term Gelassen" (chap. 6), and "The Manifold, Singular Will of God" (chap. 8).
15. Amy Nelson Burnett, ed., *The Eucharistic Pamphlets of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*, Early Modern Studies 6 (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2011).
16. The number in parentheses refers to the chronological checklist of Karlstadt's pamphlets in Zorzin, *Karlstadt als Flugschriftenautor*.
17. Zorzin, "Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt," in *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Carter Lindberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 327–37.
18. Sigrid Looß and Markus Matthias, eds., *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541): Ein Theologe der frühen Reformation. Beiträge eines Arbeitsgesprächs vom 24.–25. November 1995 in Wittenberg* (Wittenberg: Drei Kastanien Verlag, 1998); and Ulrich Bubenheimer and Stefan Oehmig, eds., *Querdenker der Reformation: Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt und seine frühe Wirkung* (Würzburg: Religion & Kultur Verlag, 2001).
19. Jens-Martin Kruse, *Universitätstheologie und Kirchenreform: die Anfänge der Reformation in Wittenberg, 1516–1522*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte Mainz 187 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2002); Natalie Krentz, *Ritualwandel und Deutungshoheit. Die frühe Reformation in der Residenzstadt Wittenberg (1500–1533)*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 74 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); see also Stefan Oehmig, "Die Wittenberger Bewegung 1521/22 und ihre Folgen im Lichte alter und neuer Fragestellungen. Ein Beitrag zum Thema (Territorial-) Stadt und Reformation," in *700 Jahre Wittenberg. Stadt, Universität, Reformation*, ed. Stefan Oehmig (Weimar: Herman Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1995), 97–130.
20. E. J. Furcha, "Zwingli and the Radicals: Zwingli and Carlstadt," *Fides et Historia* 25 (1993): 3–11; E. J. Furcha, "Iconoclast or Regenerator: the Work of Andreas Bodenstein in Reforming the Church of the Sixteenth Century," in *The Three Loves, Philosophy, Theology, and World Religions: Essays in Honour of Joseph C. McLelland*, edited by Robert C. Culley and William Klempa (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 159–69.
21. Neil R. Leroux, "Karlstadt's 'Christag Predig': Prophetic Rhetoric in an 'evangelical' Mass," *Church History* 72 (2003): 102–37; Neil R. Leroux, "In the Christian City of Wittenberg: Karlstadt's Tract on Images and Begging," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34 (2003): 73–105; Neil R. Leroux, "Why not now?: Karlstadt's 'Whether we should proceed slowly and avoid offending the weak in matters that concern God's will,'" *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 13 (2011): 33–62; see also the discussion of Karlstadt in Peter Matheson, *The Rhetoric of the Reformation*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 59–80.
22. Vincent Evenier, "Divine Pedagogy and Self-accusation: Reassessing the Theology of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 87 (2013): 335–67, building on the earlier work of Hans-Peter Hasse, *Karlstadt und Tauler. Untersuchungen zur Kreuzestheologie, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte* 58 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 1993); Amy Nelson Burnett, *Debating the Sacraments: Print and Authority in the Early Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

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Abbreviations

- ADB *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. Leipzig: 1875ff.
- Barge I and II *Hermann Barge, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*. Leipzig: 1905.
- Bubenheimer Ulrich Bubenheimer, *Consonantia Theologiae et Jurisprudentiae: Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt als Theologe und Jurist auf dem Weg von der Scholastik zur Reformation 1515-1522*. 1974.
- CIC *Corpus Juris Canonici*. Rome: 1918.
- Barge/Freys H. Barge and E. Freys, *Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften des Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*. Zentralblatt fürs Bibliothekswesen XXI (1904), pp. 153ff., 209ff., 305ff.
- Grimm Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. dtv 1968ff.
- Müntzer Peter Matheson, ed. and trans. *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988.
- NCE *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1967.
- Pater Calvin A. Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movement*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- Sider Ronald Sider, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*. Leiden: Brill, 1974.
- Williams George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd edition. Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1993.
- WA *D. Martin Luther's Werke*. Weimar 1883ff.; reprint: Graz, 1964ff.
- Z *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke*. Berlin/Leipzig/Zurich, 1905ff.
- ZW E. J. Furcha and H. Wayne Pipkin, ed. and trans. *Huldrych Zwingli Writings*. Volumes I and II. Allison Park: Pickwick Publications, 1984.

Abbreviations of Biblical Books¹

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis	2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Dan	Daniel
Ex	Exodus	Ezra	Ezra	Hos	Hosea
Lev	Leviticus	Neh	Nehemiah	Joel	Joel
Num	Numbers	Esth	Esther	Am	Amos
Deut	Deuteronomy	Job	Job	Ob	Obadiah
Josh	Joshua	Ps	Psalms	Jon	Jonah
Judg	Judges	Prov	Proverbs	Mic	Micah
Ruth	Ruth	Ecc1	Ecclesiastès	Nah	Nahum
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Song	Song of Solomon	Hab	Habakkuk
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Isa	Isaiah	Zeph	Zephaniah
1 Kings	1 Kings	Jer	Jeremiah	Hag	Haggai
2 Kings	2 Kings	Lam	Lamentations	Zech	Zechariah
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Ezek	Ezekiel	Mal	Malachi

Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books

Tob	Tobit	Song of Thr	Prayer of Azariah and
Jdt	Judith		Song of the Three Jews
Add Esth	Additions to Esther	Sus	Suzanna
Wis	Wisdom	Bel	Bel and the Dragon
Bar	Baruch	1 Macc	1 Maccabees
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)		
1 Esd	1 Esdras	2 Macc	2 Maccabees
2 Esd	2 Esdras	3 Macc	3 Maccabees
Let Jer	Letter of Jeremiah	4 Macc	4 Maccabees
		Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh

New Testament

Mt	Matthew	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Mk	Mark	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
Lk	Luke	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
Jn	John	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Acts	Acts of the Apostles	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 Jn	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 Jn	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 Jn	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal	Galatians	Philem	Philemon	Rev	Revelation

General Editor's Preface

The last three decades have witnessed a change in the understanding of the origins, nature, and development of the radical Reformation in general and the Anabaptists in particular. A growing awareness of the diversity and variety of the radical Reformers has emerged.

Essential to a grasp of the divergences and convergences of the early Anabaptists is the availability of the primary source materials of these Reformers. It has been the vision of the Institute of Mennonite Studies to make such sources available in English in the series *Classics of the Radical Reformation (CRR)*.

The editions of CRR, though scholarly and critical, are intended also for the wider audience of those interested in the Anabaptist and free church writers of the late fifteenth, sixteenth, and early seventeenth centuries. The translations are intended to be true and polished, yet not excessively literal or wooden.

With this eighth volume in the series, we encounter a radical Reformer who was not an Anabaptist, but who has been widely credited with significantly influencing the early generations of the Anabaptists. Many themes that came to be distinctive among the Anabaptists were found first in the varied writings of Carlstadt.

We are grateful to Professor E. J. Furcha of McGill University for introducing this early radical Reformer to a larger reading public. These documents, most of which are translated into English for the first time, demonstrate that many of the concerns of the Anabaptists were shared widely during the early years of the Reformation.

—*H. Wayne Pipkin, Editor, CRR*
Institute of Mennonite Studies

Editor's Preface

To present Carlstadt's tracts we chose to render his German in as contemporary an English text as a translator's license permits without, we hope, having violated the original text or unduly misreading the author's intended meaning in the process of translating. In places where his intended meaning was not readily apparent, we have retained a key phrase of the original text and/or attempted a brief explanation in a note. However, we have kept explanatory notes to a minimum, primarily to avoid making the volume inordinately extensive and costly. To orient the reader, a brief explanatory note precedes each tract. Page references to the document from which each translation was prepared are included in square brackets [], indicating the end of a page in the original. Where the original has no pagination, the end of a page is indicated thus [//]. More seasoned specialists may want to skip these notes.

Work on this project has been enhanced by research grants from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, McGill University, and by the helpful and willing cooperation of Dr. Heinz Peter Stucki of the Institut für schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte, Zurich, the Zentralbibliothek, Zurich and the Universitätsbibliothek, Basel. The translator is greatly indebted to his friend and colleague in scholarship, professor Calvin Pater of Knox College, Toronto, for willingly making his own translations of three of the tracts available as a reference point¹ and to Leszek Wysocki, lecturer at Concordia University, Montreal, for providing most of the Latin translations. I am grateful to Michael A. King, Herald Press book editor, for fine work in seeing the volume through to publication. Last, but by no means least, I wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the Institute for Mennonite Studies and its associate director, professor H. Wayne Pipkin, in including this

translation as volume 8 in the series *Classics of the Radical Reformation*.

Many hands, in addition, have assisted in preparing this volume. Among these Michael A. King must be singled out for his unstinting commitment to producing a well-crafted volume. His skillful help has made the task of translating and editing an enjoyable one and has contributed greatly toward minimizing errors or flaws. To all of the above and to my many students of Reformation history, I dedicate this volume with gratitude and affection.

—*E. J. Furcha*
McGill University

Introduction

Andreas Rudolff Bodenstein (Carlstadt), 1486-1541, from Karlstadt,¹ near Würzburg, Lower Franconia, deserves a prominent place in the honorable company of radicals of the Reformation. To make this seminal thinker and original Reformer accessible to a wider readership, we have translated fifteen tracts which represent his wide interests and show him at the cutting edge of several important issues of his day.

While traditional historiography has tended to dismiss Carlstadt as an enthusiast, several scholars in the twentieth century have been able to show his significance through careful studies of his life and by giving attention to his numerous publications. Hermann Barge's magisterial biography (published 1908 in two volumes) of this erstwhile colleague of Martin Luther at the fledgling Wittenberg University, was among the first modern studies to take Carlstadt seriously. It remains to this day an indispensable source for anyone wishing to make sense of Carlstadt's life and bring some clarity to his thought—a clarity that eluded Erich Hertzsch, among others.²

Barge carefully gathered fascinating material on Carlstadt, showing him to have been at once more progressive and significantly more conservative than his better-known contemporary Luther. The biography is all the more remarkable since Barge had to work from widely scattered sources and against fierce opposition from a few Lutheran scholars to his assessment of Carlstadt's place in the sixteenth-century Reformation of the church. Although minor corrections to Barge's *Karlstadt* have been made in recent years, the major thrust of the work has stood the test of time.

Since the Barge biography, numerous others have focused their attention on specific aspects of Carlstadt's work. Notable among these

are U. Bubenheimer, C. A. Pater, R. Sider, and A. Zorzin. Many less detailed treatments by Reformation scholars of a variety of subjects relating to Carlstadt could readily be added.³ To allow the reader a clearer picture of who he was, a brief outline of high points in his life is here drawn from existing biographies.

Carlstadt's Life

Carlstadt came from a small town in Lower Franconia, where he was raised in the medieval piety normative for what we might now call a middle-class family. He seems to have had clerical ambitions from an early stage of his life which brought him to the University of Erfurt (1499-1503), and to the University of Cologne (1503-1505) where for at least one year he was exposed to the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. At the newly founded university at Wittenberg, he obtained his master's degree in 1505 and some five years later his doctorate in theology. Since Luther earned his doctorate under Carlstadt, scholars presumed until fairly recently that he was Luther's elder colleague.

During a leave from the university (1515-1516), Carlstadt went to Rome. There he earned a doctorate in civil and canonical law to better qualify himself for ecclesiastical advancement. On his return to Wittenberg, he was made archdeacon, which obligated him to preach, to celebrate mass once a week, and to teach theology at the university.

His newly won insights—which he had gained largely as a result of his stay in Rome—soon led to conflicts with the hierarchy of the church. As early as 1518, he became embroiled in a conflict with John Eck, a brilliant scholar who stood for the absolute authority of the church at Rome. Among the 405 theses Carlstadt had drawn up for the debate, those stressing the absolute authority of Scripture in matters of faith and those questioning the infallibility of the church's councils stand out most prominently. A marked shift in theological emphasis away from Thomism to a distinct Augustinianism seems to have come between 1517-1519 with his commentary on Augustine's *De spiritu et litera*.

Tensions with his colleague Luther did not become acute until, in the wake of radical changes to liturgical practices in Wittenberg in 1521-1522, Carlstadt became suspect in Luther's eyes. He was eventually forced out of the territory of Electoral Saxony, although he had acquitted himself well of pastoral duties in the town of Orlamünde and seems to have been well liked by parishioners there.

On Boxing Day in 1521, Carlstadt became engaged to Anna von

Mochau, whom he married on January 19, 1522. Having openly broken his vows of celibacy, he had thus clearly stepped on the side of evangelical reform, since the right of priests to marry was an issue which pitted many an earnest cleric against the hierarchy.

For several years Carlstadt was forced to live as a fugitive, carefully balancing his evangelical faith and the desire to bring about radical changes in the life and work of the church with the need to support his growing family and to avoid imprisonment or death.

Employment through the Greatminster Foundation at Zurich in 1530 brought about welcome changes. Carlstadt ended years of wanderings, gained a new focus within the Reformed tradition, and eventually returned to academic work in 1534 in the city of Basel, Switzerland, where he remained until his death in December 1541.

This brief overview must suffice. However, for further details regarding Carlstadt's personal life and his activities, the reader is directed to Barge, Bubenheimer, Sider, and Zorzin. All provide reliable biographical data and are readily accessible in libraries and research centers.

Historical Contributions

Ulrich Bubenheimer's important monograph on Carlstadt the theologian and legal expert, published in 1977, shows him to have been an important link between scholastic thinking and reform activities.⁴ The author followed up this study with a number of articles on Carlstadt's reform of congregational worship and the Christian life, on his relation to Luther, and on his reading of the late medieval mystic Johann Tauler. Bubenheimer also gets credit for the discovery of Carlstadt's year of birth. While many reference works still give conflicting dates, 1486 must now be seen as the correct year of his birth.

Calvin A. Pater argued in his *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movement* that the Reformer's contribution had far-reaching effects on Anabaptists and on all reform activities which valued discipleship and lay Christianity.⁵ Pater has shown that, despite staunchly held positions on certain theological notions, lay persons and theologians alike had many more ideas in common than their occasional confrontations would suggest.

Other important aspects of this book are the author's argument for far greater kinship in essentials between the Anabaptists of Zurich and South Germany like Huldrych Zwingli and Reformers like Carlstadt; and an important realization. That realization is that Christians of the twentieth century who wish to take the radicals seriously must

learn to value their insights without closing themselves off to the possibility that their alleged opponents shared common roots, drew from the same spiritual source, and worshiped the same God to whose Son they committed themselves.

Ronald Sider's monograph *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. The Development of His Thought 1517-1525* appeared almost concurrently with Bubenheimer's major work on Carlstadt. It is easily the best general study in English of Carlstadt's early years.⁶

Alejandro Zorzin, Karlstadt als Flugschriftenautor must be mentioned here as the most recent critical study of the Reformer's writings and of their dissemination and significance in the early sixteenth century.⁷ Zorzin's analysis of Carlstadt's work shows as most significant the close connection between Carlstadt's life and his writing. Zorzin notes, for example, that crisis points in Carlstadt's life led to a reduction in his publishing. Sometimes he completely ceased publishing for prolonged periods. Zorzin observes six publication blocks between May 1518 and September 1525, interrupted by periods of varying length during which Carlstadt seems neither to have written extensively nor published through any of the printing houses at his disposal.

Carlstadt's Significance

Although Carlstadt has left us a literary legacy of some eighty publications, his work has never been given sufficient attention to merit a critical edition.⁸ Apart from Sider's *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther*, only scattered translated excerpts from Carlstadt's tracts have appeared in journals or document collections.⁹

This volume is the first extensive collection of a cross section of Carlstadt's tracts to appear in English. A second volume, which will contain all of Carlstadt's eucharistic tracts, is currently in preparation as a joint project by Pater and Furcha. To date no other modern edition brings together in one volume as many of Carlstadt's booklets as this current volume does.

One reason for the relative neglect of Carlstadt is undoubtedly the fact that no Christian denomination has been able to identify him as its own. In denominationally oriented histories, Carlstadt has generally had a bad press for far too long to make publishing his writings an attractive undertaking. To both the Lutheran and the Reformed camps, Carlstadt has been somewhat of an enigma. Although by 1530 he seems to have been largely in tune with the aims of Zwingli and Bullinger in Zurich and was well received in Basel from 1534 on, his

German background may have posed an obstacle to his becoming fully accepted within the Swiss milieu.

Anabaptists, too, remained astonishingly distant, probably because Carlstadt lacked a clear stance on believers baptism. However, had they overlooked his return from being a lay Christian to serving as one of the “doctors” of sixteenth-century Protestants, they might have found in him much with which to resonate. Pater’s analysis almost succeeded in showing Carlstadt’s “paternity” of many Anabaptist tenets. Yet descendants of sixteenth-century Anabaptists have been slow to accept him as truly one of them in spirit, if not a card-carrying member of one of their conventicles or congregations. It is our sincere hope, then, that devoting a major volume in the series *Classics of the Radical Reformation* to Carlstadt’s tracts will begin to redress the neglect his work has suffered for so long.

Much remains to be done, of course. Carlstadt’s numerous writings ought to be collected in a critical edition. His correspondence must be sifted and gathered in one place. His exact place among the various agents of change and renewal in the sixteenth century needs still to be determined as we give him a careful and sympathetic hearing in the continuing process of charting his theology and ethics.

Carlstadt never had the good fortune of being heard as widely as he ought to have been, simply because the bad name he was given too often preceded knowledge of what he actually wrote or said; however, he certainly should be heard now. Today perhaps we can appreciate at last the useful, nonsectarian stance he chose to uphold in an age that seemed to thrive on partisan spirit and was incapable therefore of understanding a voice that sought to be heard above the clamor of conflicting interest groups.

Carlstadt is significant for a number of reasons. Most attractive perhaps is the manner in which he combines in his work the academic and the practical. Notable as well is his approach to ecclesiastical reform in full awareness that reforming the externals of the church will remain ineffective if not also accompanied by an inner transformation of its members to create a climate conducive to change and renewal.

While he does not unduly flaunt his learning by quoting patristic or medieval sources in detail, Carlstadt does show his extensive knowledge by allusions to canonical writings and by occasional references to saints and martyrs and to the theological nuances in the ancient doctors of the church. His knowledge of the Bible is impressive. He seems equally familiar with writings from the Old and New Testa-

ments and quotes or paraphrases these frequently. While his interpretation of some biblical texts may be open to debate, there is no doubt about his familiarity with the Vulgate, the LXX, and probably German translations.¹⁰

He resonates with some of the notions of the mystics of the late medieval period such as Tauler, the *Theologia Germanica*, and Thomas à Kempis's *imitatio Christi*. However, he adapts these to formulate his own brand of evangelical Christianity which stresses inwardness, the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, and regeneration as foundational to the reform of Christendom.

This independence of spirit is most fully apparent in his two tracts on *Gelassenheit* (documents 1 and 6 below), but comes to the fore also in the arguments he advances on the place of vows in Christian commitment (document 3), or in the shift in his understanding regarding the eucharist, which he unravels with some rhetorical skill in his "Dialogue on the Most Blessed Sacrament" (document 12).

As a result of Carlstadt's fresh approach to issues of theology and ethics, and because of his largely uncluttered style of writing, much of what Carlstadt had to say in his writings appealed to a number of his contemporaries who were concerned with the "inner experience" of the divine. Pietist thought of a later era may well have reaped some of the fruits of this inner experience in what was referred to as "true Christianity" (*wahres Christentum*); and the *Stillen im Lande* (the quiet in the land) may have patterned their lifestyle by the notion of *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness to Christ) he helped shape by his two tracts and many other references to it.

A. Zorzin has shown recently the relative success Carlstadt's publications enjoyed during his lifetime, as well as the fairly wide circle of readers he reached by publishing with different firms in at least eight cities.¹¹

Carlstadt's stance was relatively moderate even in those heady years of reform in 1521-1522 during Luther's temporary absence at the Wartburg. Thus his involvement in iconoclastic activities must in retrospect be seen as having been determined by what he perceived to be the effect regenerate persons would have on ecclesiastical and social structures. He was not being guided primarily by strictly political, social, or hierarchical interests.

What seems to have mattered more than anything in his decision to participate in the removal from Wittenberg sanctuaries of so-called idols was his own inner yieldedness—*Gelassenheit*—to the perceived will of God and his concern for "weak consciences." These latter, he

concluded, should—for their own and the church's good—no longer be exposed to the external temptations of having their old ways constantly before their eyes.¹²

In his theology and practice of the sacraments, notably baptism and the Lord's Supper, Carlstadt advances some important insights. His ability to undergo changes in worldview make him a most attractive Reformer in an age which was still largely dominated by intolerance toward divergent views and practices. A major impetus for Carlstadt's rethinking of the nature of the eucharist may well have come from the understanding of the relevant biblical passages advanced by Cornelius Hoen which also found acceptance, in part at least, with Huldrych Zwingli and Caspar von Schwenckfeld. The key was to be found in Hoen's reading of John 6 as significant for the "correct" interpretation of the intended meaning of the words of Jesus, "This is my body."

Like so many of his contemporaries, Carlstadt began his theological career firmly rooted in the scholasticism being taught in the early sixteenth century at Erfurt and Cologne. However, he was deeply affected by the observed worldliness of Rome and the profligate behavior of monks, priests, and prelates. As a result, he began distancing himself from scholasticism by turning to a religious internalizing which, because it drew on the language of the medieval mystics, has often been described as spiritualism or mysticism.¹³

What he intended, however, seems more akin to the New Testament idea of rebirth or regeneration than to the gradual ascent of the soul toward union with the divine, as the medieval mystics appear to have envisaged it. In his writings after 1523, this focus on regeneration comes to the fore and brings Carlstadt close to arguing for separate communities of regenerate people. What prevented him from going wholly in this direction remains an open question.

His exposure to Zwingli and Bullinger in Zurich and the relatively congenial academic and spiritual climate of Basel may well have played a significant role in his final accommodation to Reformed thinking as practiced in the two Swiss cities. He was welcomed into these circles for the last eleven to twelve years of his life.

However, Carlstadt remained his own person even in this last period of his life. Thus it would not be wholly appropriate, without further study, to equate Reformed thought and Carlstadt's thinking during the last phase of his theological development. It is clear, however, that he stressed the community of the spirit while acknowledging that ecclesiastical ordering has a rightful place. In Basel especially, he

worked toward preparing ministers of the Word of God who would be firm in their knowledge of the Scriptures and be malleable under the guidance of the spirit of God. This would allow them, in turn, to point to Christ and act as spiritual midwives when hearers of the word learned to internalize it in appropriate ways.

To support the above sketch of the essentials in Carlstadt's thought, we have chosen fifteen key tracts of his (ranging from 1520 to 1534) which state in his own inimitable way what he considered essential in any reform of Christian life and practice. We limited our selections to his German tracts, since we believe his concern for common Christians was a dominant characteristic of his writing and publishing since at least 1520, perhaps as far back as 1518.

Furthermore, the tracts in this volume reflect a good sampling of the variety of issues he dealt with and provide us with a reasonably rounded understanding of his reform activities. Apart from the 1524 "Dialogue on the Most Blessed Sacrament" (document 12 below) and apart from material that appears in the *Main Points of Christian Teaching* of 1525 (document 14), we have not, however, included Carlstadt's writings on the sacraments.

The Essential Carlstadt

This is a preview. Get the entire book here.

1

Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit¹

Dr. Andreas Bodenstein from Karlstadt
[1520]

*Carlstadt wrote this tract in October 1520, shortly after the Papal Bull **Exsurge domine** and a letter from John Eck had been received in Wittenberg. Subsequent editions appeared in different printing shops in 1520 and 1521 (see Freys/Barge, numbers 38-42).*

*At this stage in his career, Carlstadt was still identified with Luther's reform work. However, the tone of the tract suggests that Carlstadt was beginning to rethink his position, probably inspired by notions transmitted from late medieval mysticism through such tracts as *imitatio Christi* by Thomas à Kempis and **German Theology** by an anonymous author. The radical changes hinted at were to bring about transformation in his attitude toward organized Christianity within the next three years. In 1523 Carlstadt published with a Wittenberg printshop an even more detailed analysis of the notion of **Gelassenheit**, *The Meaning of the Term Gelassen and Where in Holy Scripture It Is Found* (see document 6 below, and Freys/Barge, 104, 105).*

The notion of Gelassenheit was widely used by other contemporaries, both traditionalists and Reformers. It was particularly popular among Anabaptists who expressed their "existentialist" commitment to the immediacy of the divine will to which they were prepared to submit

themselves in total abandonment and to the exclusion of external human intermediaries.

In this as well as in the later tract, Carlstadt focuses on the dimension of physical and spiritual suffering, self-emptying, or self-denial before the overpowering presence of the divine. Since God's nature and will are perceived to be benevolent and graciously inclined toward the yielded person, Carlstadt implies that the ultimate outcome of being *Gelassen* toward God is to receive divine approval and blessedness.

The translation of this early Carlstadt tract was made from a photocopy of the volume located in Zentralbibliothek, Zurich.

Peace, joy, love and a strong Christian faith from God through our Lord Jesus Christ, I, Andreas Bodenstein, desire for my dear mother and all my friends. Amen.

I might well say now in deep anxiety, O God, my Lord, Creator, Redeemer, my refuge, my body and life, do not leave me [mar: Ps 12,² *tribulatio prima est*;³ Ps 91:15. I will be with him in trouble. A Psalm of Invocation].⁴ Do not leave me, for sorrow, trials, and temptations are very close to me. Nothing is closer to me than anxiety, and there is no one to rescue me except you alone, as you spoke through your true and unchanging word. "I will be with him in tribulation; I will redeem him from sorrow; and he shall praise me."⁵ You also said, "Cry to me on the day of your suffering, misery, and pain and I shall help you."⁶ Lord, you are a righteous and true God; your judgment and your promise are truth itself. Through this, your word, you comfort all believers. You desire no more than for me to believe in you, to believe that you are my Creator, my help, my Redeemer from all evil, and my Savior. You say, "If you can believe that I can and will help you, I shall help you." [mar: *credite quia accipietis*—"Believe that you receive it" Mk 11:23]. Yes, my God, all my comfort, heart, concern, and soul stands by you. How certain is the word of your truth; be mindful of that for the sake of your servant (yes, your small worm) [Mt 9:22, *Secundum fidem vestram fiat vobis*—"According to your faith be it done to you"]. In your promise you gave me all my hope [Ps 119:43; Ps 22; Ps 119]. This hope alone which my spirit received from your word, comforts me in my misery and sorrow. My Lord, do not leave me; do not ever take out of my weak heart the word of your true promise. [mar: Strong bulls]⁷ Stand by me with your help and redemption. For many calves and bulls surround me, my God, my Lord and my only help: Annas, Caiaphas, the scribes and hypocrites who do not give much attention to what your word and law contain and of what use they are. The pope, several cardinals and some bishops open their

throats and yawn with their traps like wild roaring and devouring lions. The [/]^s Florentine lion⁹ opens his mouth and is about to swallow me. Hear my cry now, O my God. Look upon my misery, assess for yourself what he is about to do to me; note my anxiety and redeem me. For the lion, along with several calves and bulls, is about to snatch my body and soul. I do not complain because of this temporal life (nature has nothing more noble, precious and dear than this miserable life), but rather because of my spiritual life [mar: Mt 10:28 . . . *nolite timere qui occidunt*—“do not fear those who kill the body”].

Undeservedly and without any merit on my part you have reborn me by the word of your truth, as is written, “He gave birth to us by the word of his truth that we might become his creatures.”¹⁰ In your word (i.e., in your promises and pledges), you bore us spiritually unto yourself, in faith, love, comfort, and hope, and you enlivened us.

If God had not enlivened us by his word [Ps 119;¹¹ Rom 10:6; Lk 1:25; Jn. 4:41], David would not have made this speech and prayer, “Enliven me, according to your word.” Faith depends on your word. Paul wrote, “Faith comes from the hearing of the word,” and Elizabeth verified this. Blessed are you for believing the word. Therefore, John the evangelist said, “The man or the official believed the words and promises of Christ and went away; and his son [*sic!*] stayed alive.” Now, since faith is attached to the word of truth and since no one doubts that the righteous person lives by faith, it follows indisputably that we receive and attain to Christian life through the word of divine promise [Hab 2:4; Rom 1:16].

This life, Lord, (this most noble life which renews a person and brings about faith and every fruit pleasing to God, and which also makes us pleasing and acceptable to God, on which salvation is grounded, and without which we can expect nothing but hellish death) several calves and bulls want to take from me.¹² They are intent on killing my spirit which lives in your word [Mt 10:26ff.].

Because of them fear has enveloped me, as you yourself said, “Fear the one who kills the spirit.” They say that I must renounce and deny your word and they threaten to cut me off, to ban and curse me, to rob me of honor and possessions, body and soul. Lord, the fat bulls surround me. And yet, this suffering is nothing compared to the suffering my spirit must face when they [threaten] to take the word of your promise out of my heart and understanding. Compared to death it is to be considered like a small festering [A ij] sore, or like a kernel of sand over against a mountain.

Therefore, Lord, look down from the heavens. Note my distress,

suffering, and affliction, and my being spun around. I stand in hellish anguish, in pain of death, in hellish trials; with hands and feet I am nailed to your cross. Hear my lamentation and wailing and note what they are undertaking, how they stick out their tongues and how they shout like the Jews (at the cross), “He trusted in God, let him now save him, for he desired him” [Ps 22:8]. Do they not abominably say the same thing when they say that I ought to think on your word of truth and wait a while? If I fall from your word, I end up having fallen away and far from you. If I forget your promise, you, too, will not think of me. If I depart from your Scriptures, the devil with all his misfortune and evil will soon find me, torture me, and possess me forever. Therefore, help and redeem me.

I am solely comforted by Christ on the cross who also had to hear and suffer such robbers of God’s word. I am further comforted that each tribulation washes away sin, if its pain is endured in faith [Tob 3:5] and has been accepted through hope in God [Jas 1:2ff.]. Thirdly, God tests and proves our faith through temptation. Fourthly, I rejoice that all suffering is a punishing rod with which the heavenly Father visits, cleanses, and beautifies his children. I am also constantly refreshed by the word of God which says that the living, merciful God descended into hell and ascended again. He castigates so that he might show mercy. The righteous Job says, “Do not despise or ridicule the punishment and pain of the Lord, for he wounds what he heals, he beats what his hand restores to health” [Prov 3:11f.; Heb 12:5f.; 1 Sam 1; Lam 3:31f.; Job 5:18].

God casts me into deep waters and makes all his rivers flow over me [Ps 23:2]; God pins me down in the mud with bulls and ruttish calves;¹³ had God not led me there, they would not be able to do anything to me [Deut 31]. Should I despair then—since God averts his face from me and hides himself; since every evil has found me and burst in on me—lest he has forsaken me? That, in the judgment of the world, God is not with me? Far be it from me to believe that God has totally forsaken me.

Christ says, “O my God, why have you forsaken me?” [//] He laments to God, yet commends his spirit to him, saying, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” [Mt].¹⁴ Why then should I despair? He names him “father” and calls on him, yet feels abandonment, nonetheless. So the word of God is true (when it says), “I am with you in sorrow and anguish, in pain and misery.” Therefore, Christ in his suffering must ever be before my eyes and go ahead of me. Although God permits me to be beaten and ridiculed, boiled or roasted, broken

on a wheel and torn to pieces, I know, nonetheless, that he is my God, that he is in control of my life and my suffering, and that he is my redeemer. Therefore, I will put my hope in him and cry unto him. And although he should kill and murder me (as Job says), I will hope in him, nonetheless. And though I should see with my own eyes how he stirs up Annas and Caiaphas, calves and bulls, lions and bears, and incites them against me, I shall call on him, nonetheless [Job 13:3].

Lord, my hope and consolation are in you. In you I have placed my hope; in you shall I hope. Therefore, do not leave me forever. Maintain me in your wholesome word. Firm me up and make me strong, according to your word and I shall live [Ps 119:33ff.]. Lord, do not dash my hope and expectation, and set me free from the jaws of the lion [Ps 22:21] and from the horns of unicorns who press in on me exceedingly greatly. They make of me a fable for the people and a laughingstock for everyone. They say that I am a stranger and alien to you. But, Lord, avert my eyes so that I cannot see the great evil of their great wickedness and unkindness [Ps 119:39, 134]. Then shall I have an answer for those who taunt me.¹⁵ Let salvation be my portion according to your word. Then I will answer those same mockers,¹⁶ “Yes, I trust in God’s promise.” Do not allow them to tear your word of truth out of my heart, so that one who loves your law and clings to your word and speech may depend and build on it and have great peace. Abundant peace to those who love the law.¹⁷ They shall never be forsaken, although for a little while you [God] may appear to be strange and far away. As Job says [Job 19:9], “He robbed me of my glory and has taken away the crown of my head. He shattered me altogether and I perish. He took away my hope like that of a tree which has been uprooted. His wrath is kindled against me and he treated me like an enemy. Nonetheless, I know that my redeemer lives and I know [A iij] that I shall see him.” This hope has been put in my bosom. I will cry unto him therefore, and hope; I shall do this as long as God’s grace assists me to do so.

Therefore, my mother, brothers and sisters, uncles, cousins, brothers-in-law and sister-in-law, and all my dear friends in Christ, I beg of you, do not hurt and afflict yourselves because of the temporary shame, the tribulations and anxiety that surround me on all sides. I see two deaths before my eyes, one of which I must suffer. On the right, death threatens to destroy and kill my spirit and torture me forever. On the left, stands the death to my flesh. I must accept one of them. If I love and preserve my flesh by following the Florentine lion, my spirit is bound to fall away from the word of God and die eternally.

Is it not better then, since I must die, not to lose anything (except a short time in this life), to suffer the death of body and flesh and thus preserve the life of the spirit, rather than to love this perishable life of mine and spoil myself for all eternity? The righteous St. Andrew rejoiced in his heart that he was to die on a cross on account of his master Jesus Christ—and he was righteous and holy. Why should not this poor and great sinner, also desire to die, on account of the one who first died for my sin, my evil life, for my good and my benefit? If I flee physical death, the eternal hellish death shall destroy me—body and soul. Christ died in bitterness and he rose again so that he might sweeten death for us and remove its sting. I enquire by your conscience and by the strong and living God, and call on heaven and hell, trees and grass, wood and stone to be my witnesses, so that you will have to say and confess that, according to the word of God, I am bound to die. If I am bound to die, why then do you want to mourn over whether the lion or the fire shall destroy me? If you love God and your honor, you would encourage and admonish me, as did the mother of Symphorianus,¹⁵ at the moment when the executioner leads me to the stake, saying, Son or cousin, be of good cheer. Is there a more precious way [/]/ to give up your life? For you will go from a miserable and perishable life to the divine and eternal life. Be of good cheer and fear not.

I know that you had rather I allowed myself to be murdered than that I should deny my territorial prince or that I should betray a city. Granted, I have temporal sustenance and much work from my territorial lord. But from there I receive physical and spiritual birth, daily life, temporal sustenance, honor, possessions, faith, hope, and the promise of eternal life. I know that he is my gracious lord when he makes me anxious. Should I then flee death when no one wants to rob me of that same lord and force me to diminish, deny, and reject his unerring word. [mar: *Scoma in papam*]¹⁹ This is what the tyrannical and alleged Pope Leo X dares to do. Would I not be an evildoer and traitor toward my most gracious Prince Elector²⁰ and suzerain if I should throw away and deny a letter (entrusted to me by His Grace and which I promised to handle)? How then can I renounce and reject Holy Scripture?

Through my godparents and sponsors (who lifted me out of baptism), I promised God and the Christian church to remain and die in the faith [mar: *Patrinos notat*—Note my godparents]. Now faith is contained in Holy Scripture as in an enclosed garden. How then can I recant Scripture without reneging on my oath and my faith? [mar: *Fides hortus conclusus*—Faith is an enclosed garden]

I let you know that often during my mature years I bound myself to Holy Scripture with oaths, never to depart from it. Should I now deny the articles which an unlearned Pope [*mar: Indoctus Papa*] condemns, but which I know to be grounded in Scripture, yes, more than that, several of which I can explain in words, sentences, and with my hand? Yes, why would you desire (something I should not attend to, anyhow) that I deny the same (to my eternal shame and harm), and break my many vows and oaths? I should be an evildoer with regard to all that is right and a fugitive knave and you, a dishonest friend if you were to think that I ought not endure fire and tongs. I do not want to negate any truth, especially not if I am under oath to it, even if all the devils along with the [//] pope were against me. God will surely help me to this.

Yes, some may say, the pope too understands the Bible quite well, but you have a raving, proud mind. To this I should answer, dear friend, I have the text of the Holy Bible which is so clear that not only a scholar, but also a layperson who hears it read, is able to understand it. In this way also I generally read my response and argument at Leipzig from the Bible and from the books of Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Bernhard, Gregory, Cyprian, Cyril, and others—to stop, flee, and avert from me any suspicion of heresy [*mar: The Pope labels Augustine a heretic!*].

My enemies hold this up to me to my shame, although I did it for the sake of my honor and in order to anticipate what I am now facing. Thus no one can say, “He understands Scripture according to his own lights,” and the pope cannot condemn me as a heretic without also condemning the pillars of the Christian church, as I have just shown [*mar: Truculentus papa—cruel father*]. But as you shall note, this fierce raving person, Pope Leo X, never looked at a single one of them, yet seeks to force me away from the Bible, against God, right, and honor. He shall not accomplish this, even if he should light a fire as large as the entire earth.

Should you also fall prey to the lion and burden yourselves with unnecessary concern, you must know that my sorrow will be to your honor [Eph 4]. The apostles thanked God and left the Council of the Jews with joy because God considered them worthy of suffering for the sake of the name and word of Christ [Acts 5:41]. Why then should not I, too, and you with me, rejoice in suffering on account of our Redeemer? I know well that no suffering is worthy of the future glory. Therefore, rejoice with me that God called me to suffer on account of his word.

But, if you should become soft and undertake to keep me from it, I will say to you, as Moses said [Deut 33:9], “He said to his father and mother, I do not know you and to his brothers and sisters, I know nothing of you. And those who did not know their children, knew and kept your covenant, your word, and your judgment.”

Therefore, I, too, shall leave you and if you should say, dear son or uncle, follow the pope, I will dare say, Who are you? [/] May God preserve me from you and your counsel. If a bishop’s miter can protect me from error, then Christ inappropriately resisted Annas and Caiaphas. In this matter I know neither father nor mother. I follow divine Scripture alone—it cannot err; it cannot deceive me. Although I should have to endure shame, derision, poverty, and misery, I shall do so happily.

[mar: Archdiaconate: if I be found to have forfeited it] I will willingly divest myself of my archdiaconate and all the goods which I have; forgive father, mother, brothers, and sisters; and surrender [*Gelassen*] everything in body and soul which draws me away and distances me from divine promises. I know that I must be yielded [*Gelassen*], and that I must let go [*Gelassen*] of all creatures, and that I must not trust any angel who wishes to teach and bless me other than as delineated in the Bible [Gal 1:8f.]. Everything which an angel from heaven teaches, other than what is contained in Holy Scripture, is an abomination [*vermaledeuung*], dreaded and hateful, worthy of excommunication and banning before God. Why then should I fall for a person [mar: the pope] who has not studied Holy Scripture much, when he wishes to teach me contrary to that which is written in Holy Scripture?

But if the pope is righteous and a Christian, let him show me Scripture and overcome my teaching with the word of God. I have always taken my teaching from the Bible and can prove it through Scripture. I trust that almighty God shall give me grace so that I cannot depart from his word, although this might aggrieve all my enemies.

I recall the word of Christ who speaks as follows [mar: *Gladius*, Mt 10:34f.], “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to earth. I have come to send a sword—a sword which separates children from their parents, wives from their husbands, brothers from sisters, yes, the soul from the body.” It is written [Rom 8:35-39], “The sword separates soul and body and places a person wholly and totally in the divine will, in love, hope, and faith, in such a way that neither derision nor need, neither sword nor danger, neither torture nor fire shall sep-

arate us from God.” Innumerable sighs and pain arise in such a person when he [B] takes the sword properly into hands of faith. For this is the sword which now separates me from the pope and which shall separate the pope from Christendom, which Christ sent us and of which he wrote as follows [Lk 22:36; mar: *Qui habet tunicam vendat eam, et emat gladium, et ema relinquat propter verbum*—Let the one who has a mantle sell it and buy a sword, etc.”].²¹ But now in the beginning of death, whoever has a pouch or bag and who does not have a purse or bread basket, will sell his coat and buy a sword for it. What kind of sword is this? Hear what Christ says.

This is the sword: Scripture must be fulfilled. I observe then that Scripture is the sword which we are to purchase. And this same sword must be accomplished with suffering, blood, and death.

Yes Lord, it is right. On account of this same sword I have to surrender my bag, purse, clothes; in other words, the least and the externally greatest goods and everything else to boot [Mt 25]. My old Adam will probably whisper, “Ask God to remove the cup of death from you.”²² But the spirit will say, “My Lord, not as I, but as you will.”²³ On account of the same sword, i.e., the word of God which separates me from father, mother, brother and sister and from all friendship, I dare say it.

Christ cannot be found amidst friendship, but in his temple within which his word rings out, so that the Pharisees and hypocrites, the pope and all his ninnies shall marvel and go nuts. In that same temple (which is a yielded person), God is;²⁴ Christ our Lord is found. In this case I shall not find Christ with you, my sorrowful friends, but you will write to me and sound off, “Dear friend, far be it from you to be captured, cut in pieces, and killed by the pope at Rome.” Just as poor Peter said to Christ, “Lord, far be it from you that you should be captured, beaten, and killed by the Jews at Jerusalem” [Mt 26:33ff.]. You will thus hear badly. Although Peter had a sound, worldly, natural opinion, as he and other Christians might have, [/] Christ, nonetheless, said to Peter, “Get away from me, Satan, you devil, you obstructer. For you do not understand what God wills, but only what is human” [Mt 16:23]. In some such manner I shall answer you, if you dare say to me, “You had better stop what you are doing. Those who seek to bind you to the pope through the Word of God, are not well-disposed toward you. What if you had remained well and enjoyed honor!” You devils, depart from me, all of you, for you do not know what is of God.

[mar: John Hus] Did not the righteous, Christian, and highly learned Dr. John Hus receive and suffer a bitter sword?²⁵ They con-

demned him for his good, righteous teaching, the greater part of whose articles are found in Scripture. They placed on this strong martyr a miter full of painted devils, and they then burned him, and in this way ridiculed him. I fear that I may also become such a ridiculed bishop, though unmerited; my friends have a hard time swallowing this. But then Scripture comforts me with Christ speaking through his word, “You must not think that I have come to make peace; for I came to set a man against his father and a son against his mother.”²⁶ Therefore, dear friends, I have to be against you, if you should try to draw me away from the word of God.

But why do you want to impute that the matter is right and Christian and so high that I am unworthy to suffer on its behalf? If you want to continue in your carnal love, I do not know you and am against you, as I am against the pope who is not my father, as he claims, but a wolf [mar: *Papa lupus, non pater*—The pope is a wolf, not a father]. Whoever loves father and mother more than me is unworthy of me.²⁷ Holy Scripture in which Christ lives and dwells as if being in a temple is available to me. But if I join the pope, I should leave Christ in Scripture [Mt 10]. And if you cling to the pope and I should want to attach myself to you, I would become odious to Christ and his enemy. Remember that the daughter of Jephthah [Judg 11:35ff] sealed her father’s vows with her death. Why then should not I seal the vows of my godparents who pledged me to God at my baptism? Yes, not only must I detach myself from you, but from myself as well. I must have no regard for my body and soul [B ij].

[mar: The cross] I must wrong myself and be irksome and willingly face death. For Christ says, “Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me” [Lk 14:27]. The term cross means suffering, scorn, sneering, mockery, ridicule, death, and destruction. Yes, it means descending into the abyss of hell, yet in God’s pleasure it also means that a kernel of grain must die unto Christ [Jn 12:24].

Now, since Christ says that we must take up the cross and follow him, it is necessary that in the end we are fastened to the cross (i.e., to misery and pain). Therefore, do not concern yourselves, even if I should be tied to a fire-grate and be burned. Was not Christ truly human and God, yet he was not ashamed to hang on the gallows and die.

Since on account of my old Adam I have no intention of running after the cross, nor do I especially long for the fire, therefore, I shall flee the Florentine lion from one place to another (just as David fled Absalom). If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he shall bring me back again and protect me [2 Sam 15:8]. But if he should say, “You do

not please me,” I am aware that it must happen in that way since he wills my good, even though it may appear to me like bitter and acrid gall and pus. It would be a thousand times more beneficial to take up the cross and suffer shameful and painful death than for me to abjure God’s word and deny Christ [Mt 10:33]. For I know that if I allow my soul to perish and die on account of the word of Christ our Lord and God, I shall preserve it for eternity. But if I find my soul here, i.e., if I love it so as to flee suffering and misery and falsify or negate God’s word, I shall corrupt my soul.

Hear then and note, dear friends, if I yield myself on account of God’s honor, why then should I not leave you and deny you when you seek to turn me away from God’s word [Lk 14:26ff]? I know that I cannot be a disciple and follower of Christ unless I leave father and mother, brother and sister, all my friends, my own nature, and everything else [*Haut und Haar*]. Everything within and around me must be yielded—everything that prevents body and soul to attain to the kingdom of heaven [//]. May the gracious God grant that. Amen.

[mar: *Gelassenheit*] I know that there is no greater virtue on earth and in heaven than detachment, when a person leaves behind all possessions, honor, friends, body, and soul. Even if I should burn in the midst of the flames, but if I have no detachment, my suffering would be of no merit to me, i.e., if I did not love God and place my trust, comfort, faith, and hope in him, I would be like a sounding bell [1 Cor 13:1].

Christ says, “No one has greater love than to give his life for his friends” [Jn 3:1].²⁸

I have friends in Christ (whom the precious blood of Christ fashioned); on their account I am to suffer (so that they might not decrease in God’s word). No evil, fire, or death can happen beneficially without divine love. The reason: Anyone who loves God aright seeks nothing other than God’s honor in suffering and works, in sweetness and bitterness. But the one who places himself before his eyes and pursues his own glory, loves himself and not God, and does not serve God in any of his suffering, or else merely through works. For this reason Paul says [1 Cor 13:2], “Although I believe in miracles so that mountains should move themselves into the sea on my word, but if I have no divine love, and if I do not hate, my faith would be of no avail.”

Therefore, Christ diligently admonishes us, saying, “Whoever wants to follow me, must deny himself, carry his cross daily, and follow me” [Lk 9:23].

[mar: Gelassenhait in suffering and works] Is it not a painful matter that I cannot accept any suffering as if it were my own doing? If I desire to suffer something or carry a cross for God's sake, I must first deny and forsake myself. I must totally submerge my own will in God's will and drown self-will in all things. Hence, I must will as God wills.

[mar: Gelassenhait of all persons] Therefore he places detachment ahead of works and suffering, even people themselves, saying, Whoever wants to come after me, must deny himself. See and hear how works fall away from self-will. If you want to hear of suffering, note what he says about the cross [B iij].

[mar: Lk 9:26 *Qui erubuerit sermones meos*—whoever is ashamed of my words]

He must deny himself and take up his cross. Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him I will also be ashamed. How hard this is to nature. Nature likes to think highly of itself and is naturally ashamed of God's honor. Therefore, Christ says, "He must deny himself," i.e., he must be ashamed and seek to praise me. For anyone who seeks his own honor in works or suffering seeks self-interest and is not totally yielded. One must never testify to oneself in one's cross, but to God alone through Christ. "You must deny yourself and not boast" [Lk 9], for the apostles rejoiced in suffering on account of the name of Christ. Nonetheless, Paul reproaches himself for having clung too firmly to glorying in his suffering, saying, "I was foolish in being too joyous and in glorying too greatly in my suffering" [2 Cor 12:11]. All nature—be it sweet or sour, sharp or mild—must be drawn out of my eyes. I must have no standing in my own eyes, but Christ alone. He alone is to be in my thoughts and before my eyes. In him and in nothing else, I must stand.

Now that I must deny all works, my suffering and death, yes, even myself, and must alienate myself from myself, neither mother nor friend, pope or the pope's mother must dare make me put him or them before my eyes and cause me to depart from God's word. I would rather suffer tongs, torture, and most gruesome death. Christ our Lord clearly expressed how detachment ought to be [Lk 14:33]. He said, "Whoever does not hate his soul, cannot be my disciple."

I must develop a tough, serious, and rigorous hatred and envy against myself when I hear the voice of my Lord and note how my soul draws me away and blocks me. No, dear soul and dear body, though you dislike to die and though you want me not to follow the word of God, I shall nonetheless follow Christ cheerfully unto death.

[mar: *Diabolus et suus papa*—Satan and his father] I know be-

forehand that both of you shall fight with me and that I must let you. And I also know that if I myself do not harm myself, the devil and the pope are also unable to harm me.

If you, my flesh and blood and you, old Adam, would die gladly, what could and would death concern me? [//]

I know that I shall not be spared the daily trials I endure, such as.²⁹ Yes, God's verities and promises are indeed just and do not deceive anyone, but I am not one who is equipped for them. "You evil flesh, you vile enemy concupiscence, how often you lead me astray." [mar: Mk 11:24 *Orantes credite quia accipietis*]³⁰ God is merciful and mighty to give, and he will give to everyone who asks in faith and who does not doubt that he shall grant it. Therefore, (wicked Adam), I shall believe in God to spite you; I shall avoid³¹ you and all my friends and I shall defend myself against you as against my enemies.

My sins too (of which I have many), ought to cause me readily to accept with greater patience and more readily to suffer sneers and scoffing. Death shall be to me as a healthy medicine, for I also know that Scripture does not lie which says [Jn 12:25], "Whoever hates his life in this world, shall keep it unto eternal life." Likewise, "Christ came to save sinners."³² Likewise, "this is the lamb which carries the sin of the world."³³ Likewise, "recall your sins and I shall forget them" [Isaiah].³⁴ And finally this promise [Jn 15:16], "If you remain in me and my words in you, then everything you ask shall be given you."

On these and other comforting promises, I shall stand as upon a rock. As much as is granted me, I shall remain firmly in Christ; in faith, hope, and love; and I shall flee no tumult. I shall be in God, in full confidence that he will maintain me in his word and equip me with eternal life after I suffered death. May the gracious God help me and all of us to this.

AMEN

I have this to bring to you regarding carnal love and fear, written as best I could, so that you may escape God's wrath. And I humbly beg of you not to allow any slander to distress you, and I commend the matter to God in sincere prayer. This would be my greatest reward. With this, God be with you.

Shucks.

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