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Martin Luther's Sermons and Postils

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Summary and Keywords

For Martin Luther the sermon was not simply an exercise in which a preacher expounded on the biblical text, taught moral lessons, and reprimanded listeners for their shortcomings. The sermon meant far more than that. Preaching was God's voice speaking through the minister. Hearing God's promise of salvation was far more effective than reading it. In terms that echoed medieval theories of demonology, which posited that reading biblical passages aloud exorcized the air, Luther insisted that Satan fled the spoken word of God even if the written form bothered him not a whit. The sermon was the site where Christ confronted Satan in eschatological combat. Ministers made Christ really present from their pulpits and, through their preaching of God's word, provided the means through which the Holy Spirit "worked," literally, upon the auditor. Luther's sense of the sermon was spiritual *and* physical to the extent that he considered preaching quasi-sacramental in the medieval sense of the *opus operatum*.

Luther's theology of preaching was among the most original of his discoveries, but he did not invent the sermon. For 1,500 years Christianity had spread among overwhelmingly illiterate populations, and the oral exposition of scripture was part of Christian services early on. Patristic theologians such as Augustine had preached extensively and left a corpus of manuscript sermons that influenced later exegetes. The advent of printing in the mid-15th century spread the homilies of medieval preachers and their patristic forerunners as never before. Especially popular were postils, model sermons for Sundays and festival days that were available in Latin and vernacular versions. Printing, the spread of the Mendicant preaching orders, improved clerical education, and increasing lay literacy all combined to produce a late medieval preaching renaissance. Martin Luther was born into this renaissance just as he became a trained professional in its tradition. When he died in 1546 he was no longer a late medieval Augustinian, but he had been a preacher by trade for nearly forty years.

Luther preached constantly. None of his other duties took as much of his time. About 2,300 of his sermons survive, which, based on his preaching schedule, represent about half of the sermons he preached. Sermons take up some thirty volumes—that is, one-third

—of the Weimar edition (WA) of his works. No other genre in his corpus comes close. The same can be said of the printing and impact of his sermons: none of Luther's contemporaries came close either. Unlike many of those contemporaries, however, the most significant preacher in early modern Europe never wrote a treatise on *how* to preach. Luther never produced a comprehensive work of dogmatics either, and for the same reason: the incredibly gifted theologian was not a gifted systematician. Several of Luther's greatest admirers noted as much, warning future preachers that unlike Luther, whose sermons tended to drift hither and yonder, they should stick to the main roads.

Determining what sermons Luther actually delivered is nettlesome because it hinges on the types and numbers of texts that have come down to us. The issue is always the state of the sources. Thus, the rudiments of Luther's sermons and postils as genres are presented, and select issues of manuscript and print production that shape our understanding of what Luther preached and how his ideas were received are examined.

Keywords: Martin Luther, preaching, eschatology, printing, propaganda, Lutheran orthodoxy, confessionalization, law and gospel, Holy Spirit, Word of God

Luther's Late Medieval Heritage: Sermons and Postils, Preaching and Printing

Two extraneous factors helped make Luther the most important homilist of the 16th century. First was the foundation of the Mendicant preaching orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians that accompanied the rise of universities and lesser schools (*studia*) throughout Europe. Well-educated and explicitly enjoined to travel, preach, and Christianize (i.e., to make Christians better Christians), mendicants delivered sermons in urban and rural settings throughout Europe. Also known as friars, they were famous for preaching and so commonly known by 1500 that the bruised apples among them provided ample material for satirists and reformers from Chaucer to Erasmus.¹ The Martin Luther who first arrived at Wittenberg was one of these—an Augustinian friar.²

The second development crucial to Luther's preaching fame was the printing press.³ He could have developed his theology and become a fantastic preacher without it. But the thriving network of printing houses and their markets in Germany helped turn the Reformation into a mass movement and established Luther as the most influential preacher-author of the age. Already in the 1460s, German printers profited enormously from sermon collections that placed homiletic aids into the hands of mendicants and, eventually, into those of many parish priests who lacked all but the most basic training.

Single sermons published in pamphlet form (*Flugschriften*) became a staple after 1517, but the dominant late medieval genre was the postil (Latin: *postilla*; German: *Postille*), collections of model sermons that followed the lectionary calendar of assigned Epistle and Gospel readings (pericopes) for each Sunday and festival day of the year. By the early 800s the Carolingians had standardized the pericopes in order to present core scriptural verses to those who would never have access to a complete New Testament: the most significant events in the lives of Jesus and the apostles, and the most important passages for the teaching and defense of doctrine. The pericopes were as close to Holy Writ as most people would ever get. These alone, however, could not ensure effective let alone orthodox preaching. That is why leading preachers and scholars developed collections of brief outlines or complete model sermons to accompany pericopes. Such sermons might be plucked from the patristic or Carolingian corpus just as new authors emerged throughout the Middle Ages. "Postil" refers to this combination of pericope and sermon: *postilla* as shorthand for *post illa verba textus*, that is, "after reading these words [the pericope], explain them as follows in your sermon." In the era of print typical postils increased in size. Added by Luther's time were extra sermons for seasons such as Advent or Lent, when preachers worked overtime, as well as samples for special occasions or disasters such as processions, harvesting, drought, storms, plague, and war.

Given the tendency in older (and some newer) scholarship to assume that most people rarely heard sermons before the Reformation,⁴ late medieval publishing statistics warrant attention. To reduce Anne Thayer's impressive data set to but one example: in Strasbourg between 1480 and 1500, printers produced at least 53,000 books of sermons.⁵ The most popular German postillators of this period were mendicants such as the Dominican Johannes Herolt (d. 1468), whose postils were printed nearly seventy times by 1520.⁶ Nearly as popular were those of his contemporary, Franciscan Johannes von Werden, whose collection's title—*Sleep Well! or Sleep without a Care! (Dormi secure vel dormi sine cura)*—laid bare just how priests might rely on them.⁷ Smaller collections of the pericopes in the German dialects, sometimes with minimal or no exposition, were popular with the literate laity as well as many priests.⁸

The massive production of postils and other sermon collections in pre-Reformation Germany attests to the frequency that ordinary Christians heard sermons. Many towns and cities established special endowments in order to attract talented preachers. Among them were Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg (d. 1510) in Strasbourg and many later Protestant reformers such as Zürich's Zwingli (d. 1531).⁹ In rural areas many peasants negotiated with their clergy, and put up money, in order to hear more sermons. Later in the 16th century, an aging Lutheran cantor recalled the days before 1517 when he remembered ordinary peasants reciting pericopes by heart, knowing on which Sunday this or that passage fell.¹⁰

The most popular sermon collections were explicitly pastoral by design and free of the complexities common in scholastic texts. The demand for simplicity entailed an emphasis on basic doctrine, ethics, and morality. Reformers such as Erasmus criticized these sermons especially because of their allegorical interpretations and examples drawn from medieval miracle collections. But standard preaching theories highlighted the need to teach and reprimand while making sermons memorable and thus pedagogically effective.¹¹ In 1537 Luther would thank God “that now in the pulpit one must at least preach the texts of the Epistles and Gospels [i.e., pericopes] fully and purely, through which the utterly innumerable idolatries that crept into the church ... are increasingly driven out.” Congregations no longer heard of the veneration of the saints let alone any of the old superstitions: “Everyone wants instead to hear only Christ, regardless of how much it angers the pope.”¹² Luther referred not to the quantity of late medieval preaching by any means. Nor did he claim that previous generations failed to explicate the Bible as a text. He meant, rather, that medieval divines had failed to explicate the scriptures through the lens of his doctrine of justification *sola fide*. This Luther knew well because, when he began preaching as a young friar in Wittenberg, he was a late medieval divine himself.

Early Sermons in Wittenberg

Luther's election as sub-prior of the Wittenberg cloister in 1512 marked the official beginning of his pulpit ministry. He was overwhelmed. He now had the duty to preach to his fellow friars, to supervise their school (*studium generale*), and to acquire the doctorate in theology so as to assume Staupitz's Bible professorship at the university. At least by 1514 he preached regularly in Wittenberg's City Church of St. Mary, which he did for the rest of his life. Luther's preaching outside the cloister made him a familiar figure in town, and many listeners were impressed from the start, just as some were offended by his treatment of righteous works, forgiveness, and grace.¹³

From these first years through 1522 some 200 of Luther's sermons survive in various forms, ranging from auditors' notes to those Luther himself prepared for the press. Until 1516 but increasingly less so thereafter, his efforts reflected his scholastic training: take the assigned pericope, determine its theme, and develop it as a proposition (*suppositio*) explained via logical distinctions and supported by proof texts. On the one hand, Luther might engage in allegorical interpretations just as wildly as his medieval predecessors.¹⁴ On the other, several early sermons reveal him developing his own course.¹⁵ He went beyond mere morality to deeper discussions of Christian ethics, that is, from “*not* what to do” to “*what* to do”; his scholastic structure was much simpler and to the point; scripture

functioned increasingly as proof text at the expense of patristic and other traditional authorities (although these did not disappear completely).¹⁶ One must be wary of earlier studies that found too much of Luther's mature theology in these sermons,¹⁷ but one cannot deny the early appearance of theological formulations that became central thereafter.

There is no better example than the sermons on the Ten Commandments preached from July 1516 through February 1517 in Wittenberg's city church to an audience of learned and unlearned alike.¹⁸ In them Luther castigated his listeners: they feared punishment more than their guilt; they strove for perfection whereas God asked merely that they acknowledge their sinfulness; God did his "foreign" work—with suffering and the cross—before bestowing the gifts of mercy, faith, and righteousness.¹⁹ At play were two concepts crucial to evangelical theology. Timothy Wengert finds clear formulations, first, that "God gave the law not for humankind to fulfill in the future but to show right now that human beings did not and could not fulfill it," and second, that "at this very early stage Luther demonstrated his conviction that God's Word *does* something to its hearers." Luther's famous distinction between law (the letter) and gospel (the spirit) appeared as well: the former drags us to the depths whereas the latter gives us life.²⁰ To this he added a thorough critique of both the teaching and praxis of popular piety. Drawing on experience and typical handbooks, Luther attacked numerous popular "superstitions" from astrology to witchcraft and magic, all without denying that the nefarious arts existed. He criticized the various saints' festivals and complained that ordinary Christians venerated these saints for personal gain. He called for the abolition of saints' days, parish fairs, and the recently established celebration of Mary's conception. He insisted that one attend mass in one's own parish church, a move that attacked the mendicant domination of pulpit and confessional. He addressed issues such as child-rearing, education, business and banking practices, clerical benefices, and gambling. Many of these criticisms, to be sure, smacked of the moralizing common in pulpits across Europe. The difference was this: Luther was beginning to formulate it all in terms of a radically different theology. In mid-1518 a Wittenberg shop printed these German sermons in a Latin version that others reprinted five times within seventeen months. By comparison the Ninety-Five Theses were meager fare: the Decalogue sermons made Luther a superstar among the Latinate *literati*. A German translation reached a larger audience in 1520 and sold so well that four editions were printed in that year alone.

Finished eight months before the Ninety-Five Theses, these sermons illustrate more than Luther's early theological preoccupations and preaching. Their transmission from pulpit to print shop to modern critical edition is indicative of the challenges scholars face when they attempt to reconstruct Luther's preaching. Contemporaries recounted that he caused a stir in Wittenberg when he delivered these Decalogue sermons; thus, we know they were preached. Luther sent complete Latin and German manuscripts to Johann Lang

(d. 1548) in Erfurt several months after giving the sermons; the fate of both manuscripts is unknown. In July 1518 a Wittenberg printer released a Latin version (but the sermons were delivered in German), without a preface by Luther (was he involved?), that lacked in each instance the *exordium* (the introductory remarks with which each sermon began), making the work appear more like a commentary. Two years later the Franciscan Sebastian Münster (d. 1552) translated the Latin (hence also without the *exordia*) and provided a preface in which he acknowledged toning down or abandoning some of Luther's more complex formulations (*subtiligkeiten*).²¹ Then, in the early 18th century, Valentin Löscher published the *exordia* taken from a manuscript in his possession (now lost), positing that his texts were notetakers' redactions but which the editors of the WA suspected might be (or stem from) those Luther originally sent to Lang. Either way, both the *exordia* and the 1518 Latin version appeared in the first volume of the WA as separate texts, the former enabling the latter to be broken down into distinct sermons that could now be dated; of Luther's original German version there is no trace.²² We know neither the extent to which Luther was involved in the original Wittenberg 1518 printing nor the extent to which this text reproduced Luther's pulpit sermons. But relative to much else that remains of Luther's actual preaching we have been fortunate even if one must still jump back and forth from *exordium* to commentary in order to get a sense of what Luther actually preached. As scholars of Luther's sermons are well aware, the situation is often worse.

Popular Sermons That Were Not Really Sermons: The Sources of Luther's Fame

From 1518 to 1520 Luther engaged in learned exchanges with his theological opponents. At the same time, he embarked on a program of vernacular preaching and publishing aimed at nothing less than a reformation of popular piety. The latter is what made Luther famous, at least among those in the Empire who were neither connected to universities nor educated bureaucrats in the various cities, towns, and princely courts, even though they, too, read his German works.²³ Many of Luther's popular publications during this phase appeared in print as "sermons," but most were either sermons heavily revised for the press or, as was more often the case, not sermons at all.

In late medieval and humanist Latin, the term *sermo* (plural *sermones*) might refer to a "sermon," but most often captured the English equivalent of "essay," "a brief discourse," or "reflections." This multi-valence was reflected in the German vernacular with the term *Sermon*. Germans had a word frequently reserved for a *sermo* that was actually preached—*Predigt*—but even its use could be ambivalent.²⁴ Luther's early popular pamphlets,

many of which were titled *A Sermon... (Ein Sermon)*, were either essays in the strict sense, or sermons that were preached but heavily revised for the press at the expense of their sermonic character, or in some (but few) cases printed sermons that stuck closer to his actual discourse in the pulpit based on Luther's own manuscript or the redactions of others. His *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace* was titled, in German, *Ein Sermon oder Predig (An essay or sermon)*.²⁵ Luther described his famous 1520 *On Christian Freedom* as a "little treatise and sermon," and it certainly was not the latter in our sense of the term.²⁶ He often referred to his printed pamphlets as "German sermons" (*deutsche prediget [sic]*), which he distinguished from his German treatises, that is, "little German books" (*deutsche buchlin*).²⁷ His [*Short*] *Sermon on Usury* (1519) was indeed an essay, whereas the [*Long*] *Sermon on Usury* (1520) was a developed treatise.²⁸ At the same time, Luther and his contemporaries could use the word *sermo* or *Sermon* to refer to a preached sermon in our sense.²⁹ The English translations of many of these works retain "sermon" in their titles, but whether these refer to pulpit discourse must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. When Luther became Germany's best-selling author during the years after 1517, *Ein Sermon* signaled most often a short pamphlet, an essay.

Examples abound and are important precisely because the mass of ordinary Germans, literate or not, came to know Luther through these "sermons" that were not really sermons. In the language of the day, however, a treatise titled *Ein Sermon* promised to break out beyond elite theological discourse. As Berndt Hamm remarks:

By putting these works in the genre of 'sermon', Luther emphasized that they were not learned tracts that rationally discussed problems and provided detailed authoritative references; instead, they were simple documents in everyday language that were close to the pastoral situations of the pulpit, the confessional, and the deathbed. They were intended to communicate the essential elements of his theology in a basic, elementary, and catechetical way to a theologically untrained public.³⁰

In marketing terms this was revolutionary, for Luther put all of the issues up for discussion on an equal (this means vernacular) playing field. The title *Ein Sermon* assured readers (and listeners) that Luther intended to speak to them intimately, that the doctor of theology felt them capable of engaging with crucial issues. The results were profound.

His first such effort, in fact, rocketed Luther's fame far beyond the academy.³¹ In early 1518 he learned that a German translation of his Ninety-Five Theses was imminent, an idea that bothered him because the Theses "were not fitting for the common folk."³² His solution was *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace* (actually *Ein Sermon oder Predig ...*), in which he boiled down key aspects of the Theses into twenty short paragraphs that amounted to an eight-page pamphlet. Keenly aware of rising fears that his Theses were

dangerous, primarily because of their critique of traditional authority, Luther omitted references to the pope and downplayed his criticisms of the church hierarchy. Here the doctor of theology exercised his right to highlight unresolved and debated issues, to target scholastic views that lacked biblical or patristic precedents, and to remind readers that without definitive confirmation by a church council, much of what was being pushed as doctrine remained merely "opinion." But the learned doctor also played the pastor, adopting a homiletic style that counseled and consoled. His work was "addressed directly to the lay Christian faced with practical dilemmas of salvation and the temptations of indulgences." It expressed pithily Luther's developing ideas that no human could possibly make satisfaction for his sins, that God always forgives gratis via his abundant grace, and that the sinner would do better to give money to the poor than to use it for an indulgence that paid for a building.³³

This was the first of many such "sermons" that struck a chord no one could have predicted. In less than three years German printers produced at least twenty-four editions of the work. Luther followed up with similar vernacular pamphlets such as his *Sermon on the Meditation of Christ's Passion* (1519), the sermonic character of which is undeniable. Here Luther critiqued popular pious practices as dangerous, urging believers to turn inward, to conform to Christ, to be tormented by their sins as He was. This required outside help: "For unless God buries it in our hearts, it is impossible for us, on our own, to meditate thoroughly on Christ's passion ... Seek and desire God's grace so that you master it not by your own power but by God's grace."³⁴ In simple language readers encountered the rudiments of Luther's notions of justification and the theology of the cross. It is reasonable to assume that Luther repeated many of these points in the pulpit during Holy Week that year. As is the case with many other printed *sermones*, however, we have no corroborating evidence that Luther preached this sermon in 1519. He handed the manuscript to his printer nearly three weeks before Easter rather than a few days thereafter.³⁵ What we can confirm are at least twenty-four separate printings within five years.

The year 1519 was indeed the year of the *Sermon*.³⁶ Thereafter Luther produced a number of such popular "sermons" with one notable difference: they got longer.³⁷ The homiletic qualities of these early reflections were so evident that, in many instances, they became actual sermons upon their incorporation into Luther's larger collections of sermon helps for pastors, the *Church Postils*. His *Sermon on the Meditation of Christ's Passion* appeared in Luther's 1525 *Lenten Postil*; his editor Stephan Roth included it in the *Winter Postil* of 1528, to which he also added *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*.³⁸ As such these essays experienced a transformation of genre and were disseminated in far greater numbers, and for many more centuries, than their separate early printings suggest. In this way, many of Luther's *sermones* that were not really sermons became sermons after all.

Unity in Diversity: Evangelical *Kernpunkte* and the Thematic Breadth of Luther's Sermons

Luther became the best-selling author in the Holy Roman Empire. But writing, lecturing, debating, and traveling did not keep him out of the pulpit.³⁹ If anything the frequency of his preaching increased because of demand in Wittenberg and any place else Luther happened to be; he gave his final sermon in Eisleben three days before he died there in 1546.⁴⁰ Although Johannes Bugenhagen (d. 1558) became pastor of the Wittenberg city church in 1522, his frequent absences (from months to years) required that Luther keep preaching there; in fact he often did so when Bugenhagen was in town. The number of surviving sermons from 1522-1546 averages about seventy per year, but he certainly preached more than this when one considers his extended absences from the pulpit due to illness or the periods for which auditors' transcriptions are lost. He usually preached more than 100 times per year, reaching peaks in 1528 (190) and 1531 (180).⁴¹ Beginning on Palm Sunday 1529 he preached seventeen times over the following ten days.⁴²

Luther retained the traditional Epistle and Gospel pericopes that had become so familiar to commoners, even if he applauded explication of biblical books seriatim for those preachers up to the task. In 1523 he predicted that the selection of pericopes would require tweaking (which they never really received), especially the Epistle texts: "Those parts from ... Paul in which faith is taught are read only rarely, while the exhortations to morality are most frequently read." Luther supposed these Epistles were "chosen by a singularly unlearned and superstitious advocate of works."⁴³ His 1526 *German Mass and Order of Service* made the customary Wittenberg preaching schedule official for Electoral Saxony and several other (especially northern) territories and cities. Preaching became the essential act of every service just as various services throughout the week offered a variety of preaching texts. Intended or not, it is ironic that at the early Sunday services Epistle pericopes—those "exhortations to morality"—were explained to congregations made up largely of servants (even then, one just couldn't find good help anymore ...). The later morning service employed the standard Gospel pericopes for preaching, and in the afternoon ministers expounded on the Old Testament or (more rarely) the catechism. During the week, morning services were especially important for students, who heard sermons on the catechism (Monday-Tuesday), Matthew (Wednesday), Epistles (Thursday-Friday), and John's Gospel (Saturday).⁴⁴ This schedule allowed Luther to interpret the standard pericopes regularly and, at the same time, to offer sermons on those biblical books especially important to him. Sometimes Luther gave catechism sermon series lasting two weeks (four sermons per week). In 1528 he announced from his pulpit that catechism preaching would commence the next day, and that he expected entire families

to show up at 2:00 PM, servants in tow. These 1528 sermons formed the basis of one of Luther's most influential works, his *Large Catechism* (1529).⁴⁵

In addition to his pericopic sermons, Luther's preaching from the early 1520s until his death covered numerous biblical books and innumerable themes, many of which addressed contemporary issues. He expounded on 1 Peter in 1522; 2 Peter, Jude, and Genesis over the next two years; Exodus from 1524 to 1527; Leviticus and Numbers from 1527 to 1528; Matthew 11-15 and John 16-20 thereafter; Deuteronomy in 1529; Matthew 5-7 and John 6-8 from 1530 to 1532; 1 John in 1532; John 14-15 the following year; 1 Corinthians 15 in 1534; John 1-2 and 16-17 in 1537-1538; and finally, Matthew 18-24 and John 3-4 from 1537 to 1540.⁴⁶ Less frequent but still numerous were sermons without a base text that addressed specific topics while expounding Luther's basic evangelical concepts.⁴⁷

No scholar has attempted anything approaching a comprehensive analysis of this mass of sermons that places them squarely in their theological and historical contexts. Many doubt even the feasibility of such a study. But enough has been done in terms of particular sermons in specific situations, and especially of Luther as a preacher, to allow for some generalizations. The place to start is the style and method of Luther's preaching as it developed in the wake of the Ninety-Five Theses. Much like his "reformation breakthrough," which scholars now understand more as a process than a moment, one may posit simply that his preaching had changed drastically by 1521 or thereabouts.

Several factors influenced this change, the most important of which reflect Luther's understanding of justification *sola fide*. But he needed help beyond that. As Emanuel Hirsch noted, Luther found aid in terms of biblical exegesis from both Augustine and the mystic Johannes Tauler (d. 1361). He learned from Augustine that thematic interpretation paled in comparison to the explanation of scripture itself; he discovered formless exposition that closely followed the biblical text. This included the rejection of all rhetorical pretense for the sake of simply explaining the text in terms of the hearers' needs (which does not mean Luther rejected rhetorical theory—he embraced it).⁴⁸ Tauler taught Luther that all exposition must have a core (*Kernpunkt*), repeated constantly, that led listeners to understand the crux of the scriptural passage. From Tauler he discovered further that sermons must "relate the individual to the living God." Tauler's point was that foundational truths needed to be chewed upon over and over again.⁴⁹

Once Luther understood that justification occurred through Christ alone, through God's mercy alone, and through the gift of faith alone, his sermons centered upon and repeated this core revelation, the *Kernpunkt*. What Tauler taught him was not the theology but rather how to preach about it. This is the hermeneutical key that unlocks Luther's sermons thereafter. Despite the range of biblical texts and topics treated therein, most of

Luther's preaching makes sense only in light of his theology of justification. He now interpreted the standard pericopes, as well as other biblical books, in terms of God's saving grace and the action of God's word upon the sinner. When he claimed to preach "nothing except Christ," he meant Christ as revealed in scripture who drives us to repentance and comforts us, through the Holy Spirit, with faith and joy. That is why Luther ferreted out a few central passages of each scriptural text and expounded upon them in terms of evangelical *Kernpunkte*, a method now termed "expository preaching" (*schriftauslegende Predigt*). The method mirrored precisely what Professor Luther did in the lecture hall as he explicated biblical books, a task he performed his entire professional life just as he preached constantly throughout that life. Mary Jane Haemig sums it up admirably:

To find the central point, he employed the same hermeneutic he had discovered in his exegetical studies. He interpreted each text from the perspective of what God in Christ was doing, defining those actions in terms of demand and gift, threats and promises, law and gospel. For this reason, it is sometimes said that Luther had only one sermon.⁵⁰

Within that one sermon there were many, however, for Luther constantly confronted pressing issues in real time. When he returned from the Wartburg (1522) to roll back the "radical" reforms instituted by Karlstadt (d. 1541), on the first Sunday of Lent he began eight straight days of preaching intended to restore order in Wittenberg (*Eight Sermons Preached ... in Wittenberg* aka *The Invocavit Sermons*). As the title page of the printed sermons explained, Luther dealt with "masses, images, both kinds in the sacrament, eating [of meats, fasting], and private confession." He countered Karlstadt's innovations and restored civic tranquility while explaining, to great rhetorical effect, evangelical *Kernpunkte* such as the "working" of the Gospel, salvation *sola fide*, and Christians' new freedom to serve their neighbors.⁵¹ After 1535 he regularly ordained ministers and gave sermons during these ceremonies on the dangers, duties, and expectations of the pastoral office. But at the same time he preached repeatedly the fundamental theological principles to those through whom God would later speak in their own pulpits. Unlike most of the sermons discussed thus far, the majority of these ordination sermons survive only in the fragmented forms left by notetakers.⁵²

Luther preached too many sermons on too many occasions in too many specific contexts to summarize here. In terms of the parallel discourse—the evangelical *Kernpunkte*—that consistently streamed through these sermons, however, one may say that, indeed, he preached only one sermon.

Auditors as Authors, Printers' Profits, and Luther's Self-Censorship

Luther's theology of justification provides the hermeneutical key that unlocks the bulk of his surviving sermons. Beyond this, however, salient issues remain: the extent to which his actual pulpit discourse can be recovered, Luther's control of his sermons through the press, and the listeners who attempted to transcribe his sermons (sometimes in order to profit from his fame). A few examples must suffice.

The list of notetakers is long and ranges from the respected (Georg Rörer, d. 1557) to the theologically challenged (Stephan Roth, d. 1546) to the anonymous. A contemporary chronicler noted that Luther's sermons were so moving that the stenographers were driven to tears.⁵³ They probably wept more from the frustration and exhaustion of their labors. Once Luther became a best-selling author, there was a market for his sermons beyond his control. Less a rule than a rule of thumb, the litmus of authenticity is place of publication: first editions printed in Wittenberg are considered more trustworthy than those that came from presses in Leipzig, Erfurt, Augsburg, Nuremberg, or Strasbourg, where publishers capitalized on Luther's fame with texts that were often substandard if not outright misleading (as Luther often complained). The famous 1522 *Invocavit Sermons* appeared in six separate editions by 1524, but not one came from a Wittenberg shop, and these printings deviate from the surviving, fragmentary manuscript evidence.⁵⁴ The profit potential was such that even printers in Catholic cities admitted to producing Luther's works; without these revenues, they could not possibly turn out the Catholic pamphlets that nobody wanted to buy.⁵⁵ Exemplary in this context was Luther's *Sermon on the Estate of Marriage* (a sermon not a *Sermon*), preached January 16, 1519. An auditor took notes, worked them into prose, and handed them over to printers in Leipzig (one of whom, Martin Landsberg, was also busy printing Catholic works). After reading one of the three renegade Leipzig editions of 1519, Luther revised it for a Wittenberg printer and added an angry preface. Within nineteen months, five editions emerged from local shops as well as ten more from publishers in other cities.⁵⁶ This was six months *after* Luther had preached on marriage. We lack any manuscripts from the notetakers. An unknowable gap thus separates the sermon text we have and the sermon Luther actually preached. Without doubt, however, one can say assuredly: in the public eye this printed version became the reformer's January 1519 sermon on marriage. How close it was to Luther's actual sermon is another matter entirely. Such is the daily bread of the Luther scholar.

Scribes were not the only barrier between the sermons as delivered and their printed versions. Luther was often the problem, sometimes even in cases where he carefully saw

sermons through the press. Rather than preparing a detailed manuscript, he ascended his pulpit with a bare-bones outline (*Konzept*), a common practice for trained preachers then and now.⁵⁷ When he reworked the unauthorized edition of his marriage sermon in 1519—as well as any sermon he delivered in his pulpit and then sent to the press—he enjoyed complete freedom over what became that sermon for the public beyond Wittenberg and everyone else since. Many witnesses attest, for example, that Luther's proclamations in the pulpit could be fiery and aggressive toward his opponents. Often his self-censorship functioned to separate this Luther from the persona created through print.

Such is the case with a sermon delivered in Leipzig while waiting to debate Johann Eck (d. 1543) in 1519. On the Festival of Saints Peter and Paul, Luther gave an inflammatory two-part lesson on (1) God's grace and human free will, and (2) Peter, the power of the keys, and papal primacy (all the easier given the pericope, Matthew 16:13–19). The first part addressed the substance of Eck's disputation with Karlstadt days earlier, and the second allowed him to speak uninterruptedly on the very issue he and Eck would debate the following morning. The mix of context and content proved toxic: Eck enjoyed the obvious support of the townsfolk, to which Luther responded with especially impassioned preaching. Days later in debate, Eck brought up the sermon and accused Luther of sarcasm so offensive as to mock St. Peter himself, before the *public* and *in German*: Luther had scoffed, Eck claimed, that if the church was to be built upon a rock, how possibly then upon Peter, the guy who after confronting a mere servant girl denied both Christ and the Christian faith?⁵⁸ Luther never disavowed it. He did, however, prepare a version of this sermon for a Leipzig shop, admitting in the preface that his discourse was so controversial it nearly blew the place up, for which reason he had substantially toned down this printed edition.⁵⁹ Needless to say, the part of the public sermon called out by Eck found no place in the printed one. How much else disappeared?

The published version, in fact, was assuredly much shorter than what Luther had preached in Leipzig. In terms of printed format it mirrored exactly his best-selling German essay (*sermo*) of 1518, the *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*, that is, an eight-page pamphlet, a quick read. Like other such *sermones*, the *Sermon on the Festival of Saints Peter and Paul* was reprinted constantly (at least seven editions by 1521), and its tenor was no different than Luther's other pamphlets so popular at this time. He focused on core evangelical principles in a pastoral, personal, and utterly assuaging tone. What happened was another transformation of genre, this time in the reverse: a sermon was altered, through Luther's pen, into nothing other than a comforting yet instructive essay (*Ein Sermon ...*). Like other such works previously discussed, however, the *sermo* became a sermon when Stephan Roth included it in his 1527 edition of Luther's *Festival Postil* and thereby guaranteed its reception in tens of thousands of printed copies thereafter.⁶⁰

The early pamphlets, and their subsequent inclusion in short collections of homilies and in larger postils, assured wide dissemination of Luther's sermons, but the bulk of his preaching remained unknown beyond Wittenberg audiences until much later, in many cases until they appeared in the Weimar edition (WA) in the 19th and 20th centuries. This is because most of Luther's sermons survive in the stenographic notes compiled by auditors,⁶¹ among whom Georg Rörer was the most reliable and enduring. Rörer had arrived in Wittenberg in 1522 and quickly became Luther's favorite stenographer such that, eventually, his full-time job was to record the reformer's lectures, sermons, and table talk.⁶² Rörer's manuscripts have provided much of the surviving material, some (but not most) of which can be compared to editions printed before Luther's death (1546) or later in the 16th century. Luther preached in German, but Rörer took notes in a macaronic mix of abbreviated Latin and German that editors and translators must flesh out. Given the thorny issues of transmission from pulpit to press during the reformer's own lifetime, however, Rörer's and others' stenographic notes are as close to Luther's actual pulpit discourse as one may get. The manuscripts confirm that, in all sorts of different contexts that required him to address wide-ranging themes, Luther never lost focus on core evangelical principles.⁶³ For scholars interested in Luther's actual preaching on particular issues or during specific periods of time (or both), these redactions have proved, and will continue to prove, priceless.⁶⁴

Luther's Postils: Composition, Content, and Impact

Despite the saturation of model sermon collections in Germany when Luther began preaching, nothing guaranteed a link between postils and Protestantism. Those who followed the lead of Zwingli and later reformers such as Bullinger and Calvin rejected pericopes altogether as but another instance of papal suppression of scripture. They insisted on preaching through biblical books seriatim (*lectio continua*). Luther's early decision to retain the pericopes reflected his pragmatic approach regarding the degree and pace of reform; the *lectio continua* was acceptable, as were the pericopes in that they were God's word and dear to the people (as reformed theologians in Germany later admitted when they published their own postils). Interpreting the pericopes properly was another matter entirely, which necessitated a genuinely evangelical postil. Luther provided one, but in fits and starts and with help. Several of his allies felt he should have done so sooner, evidenced most clearly by Bugenhagen's 1524 set of outlines that explained each pericope in terms of evangelical theology (*Postillatio*); ten printings in barely twelve months confirmed the demand for such a work, as did the cessation of its publication after Luther had provided a postil for the entire liturgical year (1527).⁶⁵

Along with catechisms and hymns, Luther's postils count among the most influential of his works in the 16th century and beyond. Contemporaries noted as much, as did German Lutherans thereafter. In 1679 Johann Gottfried Zeidler (d. 1711) published the first history of Luther's postils, a pamphlet that mentioned many of the compositional contexts, production issues, and controversies discussed today.⁶⁶ Zeidler recognized both the long-term significance of Luther's postils as well as their complex authorial and editorial history. Shortly thereafter Phillip Jakob Spener (d. 1705) attempted the first critical edition of Luther's postils. He improved upon older printings but, at the same time, made editorial choices and misjudgements that were repeated in all subsequent editions until corrected by the editors of the Weimar edition (WA); Spener's choices determined the contents of the standard English translations, some of which are still in use.⁶⁷ The introductions and editorial work in the WA put the various versions of the postils in their proper order and contexts while establishing reliable texts; the completion of the WA and subsequent scholarly finding aids and cross references further revealed how much in the postils had appeared as earlier printings or survived in stenographers' manuscripts in one form or another. Most recently editors of the "New Series" of *Luther's Works* (LW) have presented a new translation of Luther's postils that draws on this scholarship in what amounts to a rarity: a translation that also provides the best detailed analysis and annotation.⁶⁸ The history of Luther's postils is much easier to narrate as a result.⁶⁹

Like several luminaries of the Reformation's first century, Luther produced more than one type of postil. His first complete "postil" in the traditional sense emerged over a six-year period and was a combination of several separate seasonal (Advent, Lent, etc.) volumes that covered the entire church year only by 1527; Luther penned just part of it. This series of seasonal volumes underwent several editorial alterations—some of them substantial, with and without Luther—until emerging as complete sets in the 1540s as his *Church Postil*. In terms of format and length, the *Church Postil* was similar to other large model sermon collections both Protestant and Catholic. At exactly the same time a shorter postil appeared, Luther's so-called *House Postil*, first edited by Veit Dietrich (d. 1549) and based primarily on Dietrich's notes taken during Luther's preaching to his extended household in the 1530s. Among the substantial (as in large and thus costly) books printed in 16th-century Germany, both the *Church-* and *House Postil* count among an elite but tiny cadre of absolute bestsellers.⁷⁰

The Church Postil (1521-1544)

As an Augustinian friar there is no doubt that Luther was intimately familiar with a number of standard postils. If he envisioned writing one of his own someday, he certainly knew that typical postillators preached for years before presuming to author such works.

The combination of his ordinary duties, theological discoveries, and the flurry of events after 1517 allowed him no time anyway; clearly his preferred media were the short essay (*sermo*) and treatises of the type written throughout 1520.⁷¹ Then, out of the blue, by March 3, 1521 (only six weeks before he was to appear and perhaps die at the Diet of Worms), Luther had finished a Latin postil for Advent that he dedicated to his prince, Elector Frederick III of Saxony (d. 1525).⁷² Given his efforts since 1518 to reform the contours of popular piety, and the enormous role of postils in parish life, preparing a postil was inevitable. But why now? Because Frederick commanded it. As Luther admitted, “you have judged that I should disregard the quarrelsome, biting, and boisterous writings ... and now devote myself to holy and quiet studies ... [and] work out the exposition of the Epistles and Gospels [pericopes] ... for the common pastors and people.” With these model sermons, Luther promised to dispel the “absurd and silly glosses” of the late medieval postillators, “so that instead of fables and dreams people can hear God’s words alone, cleansed from human filth.” Luther intended his prince to accept the Latin *Advent Postil* as “my compliance.”⁷³ Inasmuch as the events of the last four years had made Luther something of a headache for Frederick, the elector must have welcomed the prospect of Luther engaged long-term with a postil as a practical means of keeping him out of trouble. Preachers convinced of Luther’s message certainly welcomed the work, evidenced by six Latin printings and a German translation over the next ten months.

Luther was less concerned with scholastic theology than with the proper proclamation of the Gospel and worship of God. He took Elector Frederick’s wishes seriously as well, and upon leaving Worms for his extended residence at the Wartburg, continued work on his postil. It was there that he executed his translation of the New Testament, such that his involvement with each task informed the other. He abandoned the idea of translating his Latin *Advent Postil* and commenced work on new German sermons on the assigned Epistles and Gospels, completing first those for the days of Christmas and thereafter those for Advent; they appeared within a few months of each other in 1522 and were printed together thereafter (known as the *Wartburg Postil*).⁷⁴

The success of these first volumes confirmed the need for evangelical, German postils for use in parish pulpits, but Luther was unable to get another volume to his printer before 1525. This *Lent Postil* picked up where the *Christmas Postil* ended, providing sermons from the first Sunday after Epiphany through Palm Sunday. What Luther now had was a complete *Winter Postil*, that is, a collection that took preachers from the beginning of Advent to the eve of Holy Week or thereabouts.⁷⁵ Printing the *Lent Postil* as a separate volume ceased one year later, but within that short time shops had issued eight editions. With few exceptions, thereafter the *Advent-*, *Christmas-*, and *Lent Postil* appeared together, despite the title, as what contemporaries simply called a “winter postil.”⁷⁶ Luther was halfway to finishing a complete postil that would provide preachers across

Germany with model sermons for the entire year. It was precisely at this halfway point, however, that Luther's authorship ended in the technical sense. Thereafter, his postils would become the business of editors who worked with stenographer's notes, earlier sermon pamphlets, and even sermons written by others, to complete the most widely disseminated large postil of the 16th century.

Although Luther did not personally prepare the summer or festival postils that followed, his editors certainly understood his core theological principles enough to make these volumes utterly "Lutheran,"⁷⁷ even if the early attempts were vastly improved upon later. That is why a description of what Luther accomplished by 1525 applies to those postils that appeared thereafter. Luther accomplished in these model sermons what he accomplished in the pulpit. Martin Brecht describes this feature in the postils:

The proclamation of Christ by word of mouth is the central matter of religion. Christ is the gift, works are the response. Again and again this is repeated in very simple, understandable formulations in the sermons.... It is clearly spelled out in Luther's treatment of the relationship between faith and love or between faith and works, of law and gospel, or of the central position of Christology.... Theology, or doctrine, is the means of expressing a living faith in Christ and grows out of preaching in the worship service. The exemplary significance of the postil lies in this.⁷⁸

This core runs throughout but is constantly surrounded by discourse on innumerable themes. The core is Luther's, to be sure, but the topical breadth is a feature of all postils because of the pericopes, the subjects of which required postillators such as Luther to address the life-issues relevant to each biblical passage. Just as Luther seized upon the pericope for Saints Peter and Paul's feast day to preach on papal primacy at Leipzig, the calendar of Epistle and Gospel readings lent itself to topics such as marriage, in this case with the pericope for the second Sunday after Epiphany (on the wedding at Cana; John 2:1-11). The events recorded in these pericopes, which were repeated every year, led to sermons on the causes of sickness and suffering (not least because Jesus often cured disease *and* forgave sins simultaneously), raising children, politics and revolt, the place of reason and science, witchcraft, Islam and the Turks, astrology, and the Last Days to name but a few. At least three separate pericopes offered themselves up as "mirrors for preachers" (*Predigerspiegel*), such as John 10:11-16 ("I am the good shepherd," second Sunday after Easter), which allowed Luther to address issues of preaching and the duties and pitfalls of the ministry.⁷⁹ "Precisely because these sermons concentrate on the gospel [pericopes], they are up-to-date and surprisingly contemporary."⁸⁰ There is no better indicator of this breadth than the postils' subject indexes, which, in Luther's case, appeared already in the early 1520s but increased in detail and length steadily thereafter.

After 1525 Luther was unable or unwilling to complete volumes for the summer and saints' days. His friend Stefan Roth took the task upon himself after leaving Wittenberg for Zwickau in 1527. Roth was educated and a schoolteacher, but no theologian. In Wittenberg he had translated several works for publication and served as a notetaker when Luther preached. Armed with his sermon notes but lacking Luther's permission, he assembled a summer postil rough in form and limited only to Gospel sermons; where he lacked originals from Luther he simply added materials from others; he failed to turn his stenographic notes into clear and eloquent language. Nevertheless, without paying much attention to its contents, Luther provided a preface to the work, which was published in Augsburg and Wittenberg in 1526.⁸¹ Between Luther's preface and the fact that Georg Rhau printed the Wittenberg edition, Roth's *Summer Postil* acquired something of an imprimatur and was reprinted (astonishingly) thirty-one times over the next ten years. Roth kept it up and the following year released a volume for an entire year of festival days (also limited to Gospel pericopes). Roth's *Festival Postil* of 1527 was inferior to his summer volume, for in many more cases he lacked sermons for the appropriate feasts. Sometimes he provided only the Gospel text and a translation of Bugenhagen's 1524 bullet-point *Postillatio*. At other times he inserted portions of Luther's published commentaries, throwing in a few of Melancthon's here and there. Some he wrote himself. Luther provided another preface, approving unequivocally a work he had not proofed, and thereafter Roth's hatchet job became Luther's *Festival Postil*.⁸² Like the summer volume of the previous year, this, too, was a bestseller, printed twenty-three times over the next ten years. Unlike the summer volume, however, Roth's *Festival Postil* was never replaced and has appeared in editions of Luther's *Church Postil* ever since.

Thereafter the former stenographer reworked Luther's original *Winter Postil* of 1525. Everyone including Luther understood that several of his original model sermons were far lengthier than actual sermons could be. In this context, Roth's move may be considered a response to the market, for he took the 1525 versions, eliminated the Epistle sermons, considerably cut down the rest, and produced a more affordable volume; his 1528 Augsburg edition was a small quarto of 302 leaves, whereas Luther's own Wittenberg of 1532 had about the same number of pages but in folio (thus twice the size).⁸³ Upon seeing the work Luther was angry but agreed to provide a preface anyway, in which he thanked Roth for tidying up and condensing the original.⁸⁴ Roth's *Winter Postil* was printed seven times from 1528 to 1535, after which its publication ceased; significantly no Wittenberg shop ever produced it. During these years it competed directly with Luther's original, and once Luther learned that Roth had profited financially from these projects, their relationship and Roth's work as postil editor ended.⁸⁵

By 1528 Luther was aware of the problems in his own and Roth's versions of the postils; his were too long and wandering whereas Roth's were rough, at points misleading, and often lacking sermons that were actually Luther's. Had Roth's versions been terrible,

however, shops would not have printed them so frequently; clearly, evangelical preachers found them serviceable enough, for they could cobble a sermon from them with far less work than was the case with Luther's loquacious homilies. As much as the problem displeased Luther and those who worked with him throughout the 1530s, they failed to fix it until 1540. That year Luther released a personally edited version of his *Winter Postil* of 1525. In part the changes reflected a radically different context: in Lutheran lands there was the Augsburg Confession, ministers instead of priests and friars, and state-controlled churches utterly cut off from Roman authority. Numerous sections were simply no longer relevant.⁸⁶ After Wittenberg's Hans Lufft produced the first edition of Luther's self-corrected *Winter Postil* in 1540, Roth's renegade version was never reprinted; nor was Luther's own from 1525.⁸⁷ Thereafter Caspar Cruciger, one of his closet co-workers and a proven talent at turning stenographic notes into publishable sermons, completely reworked Roth's 1526 *Summer Postil*. Cruciger gave Luther's summer volume Epistle sermons (which Roth's lacked) and replaced several of Roth's Gospel sermons. Unlike Roth, who dutifully stuck to his stenographic manuscripts, Cruciger turned macaronic redactions into readable prose and liberally added as much as was needed to produce a coherent whole. He saw as his task not to reproduce what Luther had said but rather to recreate what Luther had meant. This he did masterfully, for Luther accepted the work as his own and provided a preface in which he stated that Cruciger's version was better than his original.⁸⁸ Like Luther's revised *Winter Postil* of 1540, Cruciger's *Summer Postil* replaced all others after it appeared in 1544.

That same year, Luther's *House Postil* arrived on the market, which required printers to distinguish Luther's larger postil from this newer, compact version. In 1544 and thereafter, the postils that Luther and his editors had shaped since 1521 came to be called the *Church Postil* (*Kirchenpostille*).⁸⁹ Among the substantial, multi-volume postils produced by both Catholics and Protestants in 16th-century Germany, none appeared in numbers approaching Luther's (at least thirty-nine separate printings of complete sets from 1527 to 1598). By 1600 nearly 50,000 sets circulated for use by Lutheran preachers. Production declined after the late 1560s, but only because the Confessional Age presented new challenges that required new postils. Luther's *Church Postil* was doubtless on the desk of every later Lutheran divine who composed his own, as most of them insisted repeatedly: to the battle cry *sola scriptura* they claimed exegesis *solo Luthero* as well.⁹⁰

The House Postil (1544 and 1559)

Luther and his colleagues in Wittenberg were not the first to realize that the size of his standard postils was cost-prohibitive for many pastors, just as the sermons therein were too long for pulpit use without considerable picking and choosing. Nevertheless Luther's

collection was the only real alternative until 1535, when others such as Anton Corvin (d. 1553) began to produce shorter, more manageable, and less expensive postils. Corvin had worked outside of the larger towns and had more experience with the rural pastorate. His *Short and Simple Exposition of the Epistles and Gospels* included in its title the assurance that the sermons were for *impoverished pastors and housefathers*. He especially meant the former. For both the Gospel (1535) and Epistle (1537) editions of the work (which appeared together in later versions), Luther wrote prefaces in which he recognized the practical problems facing rural pastors. He considered it “most useful if these were read word-for-word to the common people. For the common man needs such clear and short expositions if he is to retain something from the Gospel.” Luther also understood that, with short and affordable yet evangelically orthodox postils to hand, preachers were less likely to stir up trouble.⁹¹ Others joined Corvin and wrote shorter postils for pulpit use after 1535. Veit Dietrich’s edition of Luther’s 1544 *House Postil* was part of this trend.

A combination of general exhaustion and sicknesses limited Luther’s public preaching in the early 1530s, but he regularly preached to members of his extended household. Dietrich attended and took notes at a number of such sermons between 1532 and 1534, as did the preeminent stenographer of Luther’s sermons, Georg Rörer.⁹² Dietrich had since been involved with Nuremberg’s reformation and, like Anton Corvin, understood the challenges in rural parishes. He took his notes from Luther’s house sermons and, with a talent similar to Cruciger, turned them into especially useful, pulpit-ready homilies. Like others who worked from such notes, Dietrich had gaps to fill—sometimes with entire sermons—which he did without hesitation, inserting published sermons of Luther or those of his own making (as he stated clearly), including those for Lent and the Passion. Luther was as happy to endorse Dietrich’s efforts in 1544 as he was Cruciger’s, and noted in his preface to the *House Postil* that he envisioned lay fathers would read aloud these short sermons “as a pastor and preacher” to instruct their households. Some certainly employed the work as such, but Dietrich’s dedication undercut Luther’s hopes: “What especially moved me [to prepare this postil] is the fact that I consider it absolutely necessary that one have a common [i.e., approved] version of Sunday sermons for the unlearned pastors in the countryside.” He even recommended that such ministers simply read the sermons aloud (as Luther had for Corvin’s). Furthermore, he understood, as Luther did, that supplying pastors with “a single, authorized version” of sermons checked errors and prevented the rise of rebellious sects.⁹³ Instructions and other texts provided within the 1544 *House Postil*, as well as its overwhelming print production in pulpit-friendly, large folio editions, make it clear that this postil was intended for the clergy to read aloud to their congregations or, at the very least, to follow its contents closely in their own preaching.⁹⁴

Dietrich’s version withstood an attack by none other than Georg Rörer, who had kept his treasured stenographic notes and brought them to Jena in 1552 amid the intra-

denominational split that separated those in Magdeburg and Jena from Wittenberg. Rörer joined Andreas Poach (d. 1585) and commenced work on the Jena edition of Luther's writings, while the two collaborated on an alternate version of Luther's *House Postil* based on Rörer's notes. Poach published this *House Postil* in 1559 (two years after Rörer's death) as part of Jena's general assault on Wittenberg, claiming that Dietrich had grossly misrepresented Luther's preaching.⁹⁵ Scholars question whether this version is any closer to Luther's actual preaching, but in terms of reception there was no contest; only nine editions appeared by 1620 whereas Dietrich's was printed eighty-four times. All the same, that still put over 10,000 pulpit-friendly folio copies of the Rörer-Poach *House Postil* into circulation between 1559 and 1597, even if that pales in comparison to Dietrich's 1544 version, of which over 100,000 copies were issued from 1544 to 1609.⁹⁶ Between them both, they made Martin Luther's *House Postil* the most circulated evangelical sermon collection in Germany until at least the Thirty Years' War.

Review of the Literature

The quantity of surviving sermons relative to Luther's entire corpus, as well as Luther's theology of preaching (which lies at the heart of his entire theology), ensures that scholars enlist his sermons constantly in their work. This discussion limits itself to important studies on the sermons in terms of Luther's theology of preaching, sermons in terms of genre, and, by way of example, highlights a few studies that have made exemplary uses of Luther's sermons to explore theological or historical topics.

Several recently published German reference works provide good bibliographies. Christoph Spehr has produced excellent entries on both postils and Luther's sermons.⁹⁷ Hellmut Zschoch offers general observations and specific analyses of the *Invocavit Sermons* as well as Luther's sermons in Coburg (1530).⁹⁸ Albrecht Beutel's article in the *TRE* is older but extremely rich in bibliography, and Beutel is a leading expert on the topic.⁹⁹ Some of the key historiographical debates up to 2003 were discussed in the literature review by Sigurjón Eyjólfsson.¹⁰⁰

Fred Meuser produced the most accessible, general presentation of Luther's preaching in English, which is still cited constantly.¹⁰¹ Although primarily a study of Luther's hermeneutics, foundational was Gerhard Ebeling's study of Luther's Gospel exegesis, not least its exposition of how, through the preached Word of God, Christ comes to the believer spiritually; unlike many, Ebeling paid careful attention to some of Luther's postils.¹⁰² Eilert Herms wrote one of the best recent presentations of Luther's theology of preaching,¹⁰³ but the subject has been treated extensively in English-language studies (within which one finds reference to important German publications); see the works by

Ferry, Maxfield, Oberman, and Wilson listed in "Further Reading.". The relation of Luther's sermons to Lutheran dogmatics was thoroughly explored by Ulrich Asendorf, who proved that using Luther's sermons alone, one could construct a complete and systematic Lutheran theology; his method is strictly formal and without reference to chronological or historical contexts.¹⁰⁴

Emanuel Hirsch provided important insights regarding what Luther drew from Augustine and Tauler while developing his own particular way, or style, of preaching (as well as in structural terms),¹⁰⁵ whereas Ulrich Nembach explored the extent to which classical rhetorical forms influenced his sermons;¹⁰⁶ Neil Leroux carefully examined Luther's rhetorical strategies in the *Invocavit Sermons*.¹⁰⁷ On Luther's preaching and rhetoric also see O'Malley in "Further Reading."

Luther's sermons have been frequently mined by scholars investigating particular themes in Luther's thought or particular periods in his life (or both); there are more such studies than any other types discussed here. In fact, it is more correct to say that it is difficult to find studies of Luther in either context that fail to employ some of the sermons. For good summaries of the historical contexts and their relation to Luther's preaching during specific periods, see (with literature) the sermon volumes in the "New Series" of Luther's Works (LW 56-58). Exemplary because of their scope and method are Kwon's work on the Passion and Easter sermons before 1530,¹⁰⁸ and Mumme's investigation of Luther's ordination sermons after 1535.¹⁰⁹ An example in English is MacKenzie's treatment of justification in the *House Postils* (see "Further Reading"). Although the title does not promise as much, Hans-Henrik Krummacher's work on Gryphius contains an incomparable presentation and analysis of the pericopes' functions and meanings in German churches, schools, and houses that open up many new vistas for interpreting sermons and postils in context.¹¹⁰

Scholars have barely begun to mine Luther's postils for their theological and historical worth. The postils that Luther did not write (after 1525) are generally ignored because they are not "really" Luther's work; those that he did write were for a general audience and were therefore less sophisticated than his treatises, commentaries, and lectures. Scholars are typically interested in the *historical* Luther, that is, in what Luther thought and therefore wrote or said, rather than Luther *in history*, that is, how others received and understood his thought regardless of the source; at play is the history of ideas vs. the history of reception or impact. Frymire attempts to situate Luther's postils in their later medieval and 16th-century contexts, but focuses on print production, distribution, clerical use, and censorship; the contents of specific sermons find mention but only as occasional examples. Mary Jane Haemig demonstrated how Luther reinterpreted not just single pericopes but liturgical seasons in his postils, in this instance his emphasis on what God does to prepare us for Christ's coming rather than the traditional message of what we

need to prepare in ourselves. Although she moves well beyond Luther, Beth Kreitzer's study on Mary's treatment in sermons (including many postils) offers a methodological *exemplum* that others will imitate (see "Further Reading" for all three works). Given the interest in confessionalization and later confessional culture, including clerical and lay indoctrination, Luther's (and others') postils could, given their circulation, provide historians with a good idea of what people were hearing on the ground.

Primary Sources

Luther's own statements about sermons and the preaching ministry abound in the various volumes of his collected works, as their indices amply reveal. A representative sampling in the original languages may be found in the so-called Clemens edition.¹¹¹ Plass collected numerous examples for his thematic compilation in English.¹¹²

Serious study of Luther's sermons and postils requires careful reference to Kurt Aland's *Hilfsbuch zum Lutherstudium* (henceforth Aland).¹¹³ The complex history of the production and transmission of Luther's preaching, as previously described, leaves us with an array of sermons: (1) those which Luther wrote and saw through the press whether he actually preached them or not; (2) others that listeners attempted to transcribe, some of which they edited for publication, some of which we have in their original manuscript redactions, and some of which survive in both forms; and (3) the various sermons in the postils, the first volumes of which Luther wrote but most of which were transcribed or cobbled together and published by others—complicated further by the survival of many of these in earlier individual sermon printings or in auditors' original manuscript redactions. The result often yields several versions of what is supposedly the same sermon, all of which have been incorporated throughout the various volumes of the Weimar Edition (WA) but not usually in proximity to one another.

The situation makes Aland's *Hilfsbuch* indispensable. Its core contains an alphabetical list by title of Luther's writings (*Schriften*, pp. 23–185), a list of single sermons from the various collections of postils (*Postillen*, pp. 187–204), and a list of single sermons that were delivered or published either separately or as part of a sermon series that covered, for example, a particular biblical book (*Predigten*, pp. 203–262). Aland assigned each entry a number: when cited alone (e.g., Aland 46), the number refers to one of Luther's writings (*Schriften*), whereas postils and sermons are identified with abbreviations preceding their numbers (Po. and Pr. for *Postillen* and *Predigten* respectively, e.g., Po. 46 or Pr. 46); in each case "46" refers to an entirely different work. Thus, for example, in 1521 Luther delivered an Epiphany sermon that was published separately that year and therefore counts among his writings (Aland 460; WA 7:248ff), which Roth later edited for

his 1527 version of Luther's *Festival Postil* (Aland Po. 132; WA 17/II:371ff), and which survives in the 1521 manuscript redaction of Poliander, who attended the sermon (Aland Pr. 149; WA 9:548ff). Fortunately Aland always provides cross-references so that one may quickly establish the forms in which any individual sermon has survived. Aland groups each of the sermons in the postils according to the year a particular postil volume was printed (from the *Latin Advent Postil* of 1521 through Dietrich's 1544 *House Postil*). The section covering sermons (*Predigten*) proceeds chronologically, beginning with an overview that distinguishes the various sermons of any given year from those series of sermons dedicated to particular themes or biblical books; whenever possible Aland provides the specific date on which Luther preached a given sermon. Finally, in the case of each writing, postil, or sermon, Aland provides references to their location in the WA and several other editions.

The Weimar Edition and Select German Editions

The Weimar Edition (WA)

The WA contains single volumes dedicated to Luther's sermons and postils as well as volumes mixed with both treatises and sermons (some of which, as previously explained, were not really sermons). The following list is restricted to volumes whose titles refer explicitly to sermons or postils; a comprehensive list of every surviving sermon may be found in Aland. The WA volume numbers are provided, followed, in parentheses, by the year(s) of sermons covered in that volume as well as descriptive titles where applicable.

Sermons: WA 1 (1512-1518); WA 2 (1518-1519); WA 4 (manuscript sermons, 1514-1520); WA 6 (1519-1520); WA 7 (1520-1521); WA 8 (1520-1521 *cont.*); WA 9 (1509-1521, contains supplemental materials to WA 1-6, 8, 9); WA 10/III (1522); WA 11 (1523); WA 12 (1522-1523; sermons on 1 Peter, 1522); WA 14 (sermons on 2 Peter, Jude, and Genesis, 1523-1524); WA 15 (1524); WA 16 (Exodus sermons, 1524-1527); WA 17/I (1525); WA 20 (1526); WA 23 (1527); WA 24 (Genesis sermons, 1523-1524, printed 1527); WA 25 (Leviticus and Numbers sermons, 1527-1528); WA 27 (1528); WA 28 (sermons on Matthew 11-15 and John 16-20, 1528-1529; Deuteronomy sermons, 1529); WA 29 (1529); WA 30/I (catechism sermons, 1528); WA 32 (1530; sermons on Matthew 5-7, 1530-1532); WA 33 (sermons on John 6-8, 1530-1532); WA 34/I-II (1531); WA 36 (1532); WA 37 (1533-1534); WA 41 (1535-1536); WA 45 (1537; sermon compilations of the 1530s; sermons on John 14-15, 1533, printed 1538); WA 46 (1538; sermons on John 16, 1533-1534, printed 1538; sermons on John 1-2, 1537-1538); WA 47 (1539; sermons on John 3-4, 1538-1540; sermons on Matthew 18-24, 1537-1540);

WA 49 (1540–1545); WA 51 (1545–1546). Among the supplemental volumes (WA *Suppl.*), see vols. 32, 33, and 41.

Postils: WA 7 (*Latin Advent Postil*, 1521); WA 10/I.1 (*Christmas Postil*, 1522); WA 10/I.2 (bibliography of the postils; *Advent Postil*, 1522; Roth's *Summer Postil*, 1526); WA 17/II (*Lent Postil*, 1525; Roth's *Festival Postil*, 1527); WA 21 (Roth's *Winter Postil*, 1528;¹¹⁴ Cruciger's *Summer Postil*, 1544); WA 22 (Cruciger's *Summer Postil* cont.; comprehensive tables and cross references of postils and sermons); WA 52 (Dietrich's *House Postil*, 1544). WA lacks an edition of the 1559 *House Postil* of Rörer-Poach.

The St. Louis Edition (StL)

This massive, twenty-three-volume set is the most comprehensive modern (c. 1900) German-language edition of Luther's writings and is freely available online.¹¹⁵ Volumes 1–9 cover Luther's scriptural exegesis arranged in order of biblical books, among which sermons abound: StL 3 (about 110 sermons on the Pentateuch), and StL 7–8 (about 230 New Testament sermons). Various other sermons may be easily located in Aland (pp. 494–506). Appended to the Epistle volume of the *Church Postil* (StL 12:992ff.) are a mix of 130 sermons from 1515 to 1546 (including 43 prior to 1521).

StL is especially useful for Luther's *Church Postil* (StL 11–12) and *House Postil* (StL 13a–13b). The various postils in the WA appear chronologically and are better edited, whereas StL provides the reader with something much closer to what early modern preachers had in their hands after 1527, when complete editions of Luther's postils began to appear. Volumes 12 and 13b contain comprehensive scriptural and subject indices. Four to seven 16th-century editions were consulted for each section (except StL 13b); important textual variants were noted. For the winter season Luther's own *Winter Postil* (1525) serves as the base text as opposed to Roth's 1528 or Luther's self-corrected 1540 version. The editors preferred Roth's earlier editions (1526ff.) over the revisions for the summer season by Cruciger (1544), although the latter often appear as the second or third sermon provided for a given pericope. StL 11–12 also includes Roth's *Festival Postil* (1527). StL 11 provides the various prefaces by Luther and his editors for the major editions from 1521 to 1543. Unlike the WA, StL presents both versions of the *House Postil* (Dietrich's 1544 in StL 13a; Rörer-Poach's 1559 in StL 13b). StL 13b is the most recent, complete 1559 edition available and can be considered a transcription of the original with modernized spelling and punctuation.

Other Useful Editions

German scholars have produced many editions of Luther's sermons. The following is limited to the problematic modern version of the Rörer-Poach *House Postil* by Kurt Aland

(1965)¹¹⁶ and to two that are helpful for reconstructing the difficult, incomplete sermon transcriptions and notes found throughout the WA: Georg Buchwald (1925–1926)¹¹⁷ and Erwin Mülhaupt (1938–1954).¹¹⁸ Buchwald was better suited for the task than anyone, having edited many of the WA volumes of sermons and postils, including the homilies preserved by notetakers Rörer and Lauterbach. He used these manuscripts to reconstruct, in flowing German, nearly 200 sermons delivered by Luther from 1528 to 1932, and provided detailed scriptural and subject indices. That over 10 percent of these are not based on a specific biblical passage reminds us that Luther continued to deliver thematic sermons throughout his career. Mülhaupt employed the texts of more notetakers than Buchwald, which made his reconstructions more extensive. Mülhaupt's volumes span the Christmas season, sermons on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, as well as the Passion and Easter. Kurt Aland's edition of the Rörer-Poach *House Postil* (1559) in his *Luther Deutsch* collection has caused considerable confusion, and probably will in the future. He argued strenuously that it was far closer to the "real" Luther than Dietrich's (1544). Although Aland's arguments failed to overturn the status quo, they convinced Klug, who with his translation of the 1559 edition has proved a source of error (see "English Translations"). One interested in the historical Luther cannot consult Aland's work because much of this Luther was purged in the spirit of ecumenism, especially his broadsides against Jews, papists, and such.¹¹⁹

English Translations

Sermons and Postils in the "American Edition" of Luther's Works (LW)

The first series of LW (1955–1986) comprised fifty-four volumes of text but contained very few sermons (178) relative to their abundance in the WA (over 2,000). Heinrich Vogel's *Cross Reference* (1983) provides charts that allow one to locate LW's contents in the Latin and German originals (WA and StL), and likewise, to determine which texts in the WA and StL can be found in LW.¹²⁰ One hopes that the work will be revised to encompass the "New Series" of LW (2009ff.). The "New Series" will provide English versions of many of Luther's sermons for the first time. Those issued thus far offer translations, introductions, and annotations of the highest scholarly quality. Significantly these new editions include sermons selected on the basis of their content, their frequency of printing, and the fundamental shifts in research agendas since 1955; some volumes offer, now in English, reconstructions of sermons based on the incomplete notes of contemporary scribes. The following list includes volumes published by 2016 and refers to important sermons that are scheduled to follow according to the publisher's prospectus.

Sermons: LW 21 (commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, 1532);¹²¹ LW 22–24 (sermons on John 1–16, most late 1530s); LW 30 (sermons on 1–2 Peter and Jude, 1523–1524); LW 51 (various sermons to 1546); LW 52 (seven sermons from the *Christmas Postil*, 1522). Already published in the New Series: LW 57 (various sermons, 1531–1539); LW 58 (various sermons, 1539–1546); LW 60 (prefaces to postils of Corvinus and Spangenberg, 1535, 1537, and 1543); LW 67 (sermons on Matthew 18, 1537–1540); LW 68 (sermons on Matthew 19–24, 1537–1540); LW 69 (sermons on John 17–20, 1528–1530). Forthcoming in the New Series: LW 56 (various sermons, 1521–1531); LW 62–63 (sermons on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers preached prior to 1530); LW 66 (several sermons on the Psalms); LW 70–71 (“early works” including sermons before 1521).

Postils: The postils already published in the New Series of LW are vastly superior to the older translations by Lenker and Klug, even if these latter will continue to be of use (on which see following). LW 75–79 is a carefully introduced and annotated version of Luther’s *Church Postil* that contains Epistle and Gospel sermons for each Sunday in the liturgical year (e.g., winter and summer parts); absent is Roth’s 1527 *Festival Postil*. Contrary to the preferences of the WA and StL editors, this new translation presents Luther’s final (1540) revision of his *Winter Postil* instead of Roth’s shorter version, which had replaced Luther’s original (1522–1525) at the print shops after 1528. Thus the new translation presents Luther’s personally corrected, final version of the *Winter Postil*, a wise decision that nevertheless requires work beyond the WA to compare the translation to the original (see LW 75:xxviii). The same spirit informs their decision to abandon Roth’s 1526 *Summer Postil* (employed in StL 11–12), which Luther disliked, in favor of Cruciger’s revised version of 1544, which Luther openly endorsed. Yet to appear are LW 80–82, Dietrich’s 1544 version of Luther’s *House Postil* (WA 52), which is the edition Luther approved and provided with a preface.


Other Useful Translations

Sermons: Noteworthy are the 1529 Holy Week sermons of Sandberg and Wengert (1999)¹²² and *The Annotated Luther* series of Hillerbrand et al. (2015ff.).¹²³ *The 1529 Holy Week and Easter Sermons* include eighteen homilies on the passion and resurrection as well as examples of Luther’s Eucharistic preaching right before the Marburg Colloquy. The sermons are all new to English readers because they are translations of Buchwald’s and, in one instance, Mülhaupt’s German reconstructions of Rörer’s sermon notes (previously discussed). The worth of *The Annotated Luther* series is that it renders many of Luther’s most influential

sermons and short treatises (*Ein Sermon ...*) into excellent English and provides a wealth of philological, theological, and historical contexts based on the latest scholarship. Examples include in Vol. 1: *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace* (1518), *A Sermon on the Meditation of Christ's Holy Passion* (1519), and *Sermon on the Sacrament of Penance* (1519). Vol. 2 (pastoral writings) contains among its several homilies the best English edition of the 1522 *Invocavit Sermons* that we have.

Postils: Although the qualitative differences between LW's new postil editions and older translations are monumental, LW will not resign the latter to the recycling bin because in most cases the translations are based on different original texts. Lenker's stiff and often inaccurate translation of the *Church Postil* (1904–1909)¹²⁴ followed the German text in StL 11–12 but left out the festival sermons. Therefore and despite its weaknesses, Lenker's edition provides the only English versions of Luther's own 1525 *Winter Postil* and Roth's *Summer Postil* (1526). Until the new translation of Dietrich's 1544 *House Postil* (LW 80–82) appears, one may consult that of Loy (1871).¹²⁵ The absence of the Rörer-Poach (1559) *House Postil* in the WA, as well as LW's decision to translate Dietrich's version, reflect long-held scholarly consensus that his is the more reliable text or, at least, the one approved by Luther. Nevertheless, Aland's arguments to the contrary recently convinced Eugene Klug to translate the 1559 version.¹²⁶ It is a loose rendering of StL 13b and will provide a usable English text for comparison with LW's forthcoming translation of Dietrich's. The introduction is utterly unreliable, however, including Klug's transmission of a typographical error in Aland's edition that dates the Rörer-Poach text to 1539, leading Klug to claim falsely that Rörer-Poach appeared five years earlier than Dietrich. Contrary to Klug, neither of Luther's postils were included in the famous 16th-century Wittenberg and Jena editions of his collected works.¹²⁷ Finally, the only translation of festival sermons from either the *Church-* or *House Postil* has been done by Baseley (2005), who translated the festival portion of a Wittenberg edition of Luther's *Church Postil* (*Kirchenpostille*, 1584, i.e., Roth's *Festival Postil*, 1527ff.).¹²⁸ The text is readable but lacks all critical apparatus; the introduction is based solely on Lenker's unreliable 1904 prefatory remarks to his edition; via Lenker Baseley erroneously claims that Cruciger had substantially re-worked the 1527 *Festival Postil* of Roth in the early 1540s, whereas to Luther's disappointment there never was such a revision. As with Lenker and Klug, then, so with Baseley: the translations are usable for those without recourse to the originals, but the introductions and critical commentaries are not at all reliable.

Luther's Postils: Critical Editions and English Translations

Conventional Title	Critical Edition	English Translation
1. Latin Advent (1521)	WA 7:466-537	n.a.; Preface LW 76:450-452 ¹²⁹
2. Advent (1522) ¹³⁰	WA 10/I.2:1-208	Lenker 1 & 6 ¹³¹
3. Christmas (1522)	WA 10/I.1:8-728	Lenker 1 & 6 ¹³²
4. Lent (1525)	WA 17/II:5-247	Lenker 2 & 7
5. Roth's Summer (1526)	WA 10/I.2:213-441	Lenker 3-5, 7-8
6. Roth's Festival (1527)	WA 17/II:252-514	Baseley
7. Roth's Winter (1528)	WA 21:5-192	n.a.
8. Luther's rev. Winter (1540)	See LW 75:xxviii	LW 75-76
9. Cruciger's Summer (1544)	WA 21:203-551; 22:3-423	LW 77-79
10. Dietrich's House (1544) ¹³³	WA 52:10-827	Loy 1-2; LW 80-82 
11. Rörer-Poach's House (1559)	StL 13b:1344-2786	Klug 1-3

Further Reading

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Notes:

(1.) Geoffrey Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism in the German Reformation: Johann Eberlin von Günzburg and the Campaign against the Friars* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 1996), 18-36.

(2.) Eric L. Saak, *High Way to Heaven: The Augustinian Platform between Reform and Reformation* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 584-672; and Saak, *Luther and the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, in press).

(3.) "Printing, Propaganda, and Public Opinion" in this encyclopedia.

(4.) John M. Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils: Catholics, Protestants, and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 13-14, notes 15-18.

(5.) Anne T. Thayer, *Penitence, Preaching, and the Coming of the Reformation* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2002), 1-45 (27-28 for the data).

(6.) Ian D. K. Siggins, *A Harvest of Medieval Preaching: The Sermon Books of Johann Herolt, OP (Discipulus)* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2009), 295-296, 314-317.

(7.) At least sixty-four editions of this postil between 1450 and 1520; and Thayer, *Penitence*, 17-19.

(8.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 12 and n. 11.

(9.) Bernhard Neidiger, "Wortgottesdienst vor der Reformation: Die Stiftung eigener Predigtpründen für Weltkleriker im späten Mittelalter," *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 66 (2002): 142-189.

(10.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 15-25.

- (11.) Siggins, *Harvest of Medieval Preaching*; Elmer Carl Kiessling, *The Early Sermons of Luther and Their Relation to the Pre-Reformation Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1935), 27–41; and Guido of Monte Rochen, *Handbook for Curates: A Late Medieval Handbook on Pastoral Ministry*, eds. and trans. Anne T. Thayer and Katherine J. Lualdi (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), xiii–xliv, 271–306.
- (12.) Luther's preface to Anton Corvin's 1537 short postil on the Epistle pericopes (*Kurze Auslegung der Episteln ...*), WA 50:109–110 (now in LW 60:106–110).
- (13.) Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, trans. James L. Schaaf, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985–1993), 1:151.
- (14.) WA 1:58–60 (on Judges 14:14, around Easter 1516).
- (15.) LW provides only one sermon before 1516 (LW 51:5–13; WA 4:590–595), which most now date to 1514. LW 70–71 (forthcoming) will provide several.
- (16.) Kiessling, *The Early Sermons of Luther*, 60–78; and John W. Doberstein in LW 51:xvii.
- (17.) James MacKinnon was typical: *Luther and the Reformation*, vol. 1: *Early Life and Religious Development to 1517* (London: Longmans, Green, 1925), 263–268.
- (18.) WA 1:60–141 (*exordia*) and 398–521 (1518 Latin printed ed. without *exordia*); four of the *exordia* in LW 51:14–32; translation of 1518 Latin edition forthcoming (without *exordia*) in LW 70 or 71.
- (19.) This and much of what follows (with LW and WA references) in Brecht, *Luther*, 1:152–55.
- (20.) Timothy J. Wengert, "Martin Luther," in *The Decalogue through the Centuries: From the Hebrew Scriptures to Benedict XVI*, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 97–118; here 98–99 (his italics).
- (21.) Münster's preface in WA 9:780.
- (22.) J. K. F. Knaake in WA 1:18–19, 394–395; WA Br 1:103–104.
- (23.) Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther. An Introduction to His Life and Work*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 126.
- (24.) See for example the contemporary dictionary of Jakob Schöpfer (d. 1554), in which the Latin *sermo* appears in German as "Red, sag, spruch, sprach" (36b); *praedicare* is "Predigen, verkünden, leeren, predicieren, Gotts wort für tragen" (65a). Although he

included the words *predicant, predicieren, predigen, prediger, and predigstul* (65a), “predig(t),” the noun for the English “sermon,” is absent from the work. *Die “Synonyma” Jakob Schöppers neu herausgegeben*, ed. Karl Schulte-Kemminghausen (Dortmund, Germany: F. W. Ruhfus, 1927).

(25.) WA 1:243–246 (scheduled to appear in LW 70 or 71). Excellent version in *The Annotated Luther*, vol. 1: *The Roots of Reform*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 57–65.

(26.) LW 31:333 (WA 7:20, *tractatell unnd sermon*).

(27.) LW 44:21–22 (WA 6:203).

(28.) Compare WA 6:3–8 with WA 6:36–60 (LW 45:272–310).

(29.) Wentzelslaus Linck, preface to Luther’s printed sermon on Matthew 18 (28 October 1524), WA 15:724.

(30.) Berndt Hamm, *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation*, trans. Martin J. Lohrmann (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 110–111, 172–173, n.4.

(31.) Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe—and Started the Protestant Reformation* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 81–82.

(32.) WA Br 1:152; cited by Wengert in *Annotated Luther*, 1:58, noting no printed translation of the Theses from this period exists.

(33.) Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 80 (quotation); and Wengert, *Annotated Luther*, 1:57–59, 63–64 (WA 1:243–246).

(34.) LW 42:7–14 (WA 2:136–142); superior translation in Wengert, *Annotated Luther*, 1:167–179; here 174.

(35.) WA 2:131.

(36.) In the following list, brackets refer to the German *Sermon* in the original title where it has been omitted in the standard translations: [A *Sermon on*] *The Sacrament of Penance* (LW 35:9–22; WA 2:713–723); *A Sermon on Preparing to Die* (LW 42:99–115; WA 2:685–697); [A *Sermon*] *On Rogationtide Prayer and Procession* (LW 42:87–93; WA 2:175–179); [A *Sermon on*] *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods* (LW 35:49–73; WA 2:742–758); [A *Sermon on*] *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (LW 35:29–43; WA 2:727–737); and [Short] *Sermon on Usury* (WA 6:3–8 and 9:798).

(37.) *Sermon on the Ban* (LW 39:7-22; WA 6:63-75); *A Treatise [=Sermon] on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass* (LW 35:79-111; WA 6:353-378); and [*Longer*] *Sermon on Usury* (LW 45:272-310; WA 6:36-60).

(38.) Cf. WA 17/II:246, WA 21:164, 191.

(39.) Summary in Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 2:284-292.

(40.) LW 51:381-392 (WA 51:187-194); and LW 51 contains several sermons delivered outside Wittenberg.

(41.) Doberstein in LW 51:xii; and Fred W. Meuser, *Luther the Preacher* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), 38.

(42.) WA 29:132-323, 694-703.

(43.) *Order of the Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg* (1523), LW 53:23-24 (WA 12:209).

(44.) *The German Mass and Order of Service* (1526), LW 53:68-69 (WA 19:79-80); and cf. Brecht, *Luther*, 2:122-123, 256-257.

(45.) WA 30/I:57-121; partial translation of these sermons (3rd series) in LW 51:133-194.

(46.) For editions and translations see "Primary Sources," esp. the "Sermons" sections on the WA, StL [*Dr. Martin Luthers sämtliche Schriften*, ed. J. G. Walch, 23 vols. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1880-1910; reprint Gross-Oesingen: Harms, 1986)], and LW.

(47.) Noted by Georg Buchwald, ed., *Predigten D. Martin Luthers auf Grund von Nachschriften Georg Rörers und Anton Lauterbach*, 2 vols. (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1925-26).

(48.) John W. O'Malley, S. J., "Luther the Preacher," *Michigan Germanic Studies* 10 (1984), 3-16 (and the work of esp. Nembach and Stolt cited therein).

(49.) Emanuel Hirsch, "Luthers Predigtweise," *Luther: Mitteilungen der Luther Gesellschaft* 25 (1954), 1-23; here 7-9; quotation in Meuser, *Luther the Preacher*, 91 n. 23.

(50.) Mary Jane Haemig, "The Influence of the Genres of Exegetical Instruction, Preaching, and Catechesis on Luther," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, eds. Robert Kolb et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 449-461; here 453.

(51.) LW 51:67–100 (WA 10/III:1–64); superior translation in *The Annotated Luther*, vol. 4, ed. Mary Jane Haemig (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 14–46; cf. Martin J. Lohrmann in *Ibid.*, 7–14; and Neil Leroux, *Luther's Rhetoric: Strategies and Style from the Invocavit Sermons* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2002).

(52.) Jonathan Mumme, *Die Präsenz Christi im Amt. Am Beispiel ausgewählter Predigten Martin Luthers, 1535–1546* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015); Mumme's source base includes among other sermons fifty-four from ordinations.

(53.) Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 1:341.

(54.) Paul Pietsch in WA 10/III:lv–lxxx.

(55.) David V. N. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents: Catholic Controversialists, 1518–1525* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 199–201.

(56.) LW 43:3–14 (WA 2:166–171); notetaker's rejected version in WA 9:213–219. The Leipzig printer Landsberg was also publishing works by Catholics Eck, Emser, and Prierias in 1519.

(57.) Fourteen surviving examples in WA 48:335–349; see LW 69:374–376.

(58.) “Raciunculam adiecit etiam nuper in vulgari sermone disseminatam ‘Si super petram, quomodo super Petrum ecclesia edificari potuit, qui ad unius ancillule vocem Christum et fidem Christianam abnegaret?’” WA 2:282 (*Leipzig Disputation*, 5 July).

(59.) *Sermon on the Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul*, LW 51:54–60 (WA 2:244–249).

(60.) WA 17/II:453–454 (contains only substantial variants to the full text found in WA 2:244–249).

(61.) Abundantly clear in Aland, *Hilfsbuch*, 203–262 (see the description of this *Hilfsbuch* in the section “Primary Sources”).

(62.) On Rörer and the major issues regarding stenographic manuscripts, see Christopher Boyd Brown in LW 58:xxiii–xxviii (with further literature), and Benjamin T. G. Mayes in LW 57:xv–xvi.

(63.) For excellent accounts of some contexts (and thus thematic content) of Luther's preaching during the periods from 1521–1531, 1531–1539, and 1539–1546, see the volume introductions to LW 56–58; these volumes also present numerous stenographic sermons in English for the first time.

(64.) Most recently exemplified by Mumme, *Die Präsenz Christi im Amt*.

(65.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 225–252 (for German Calvinist postils), and 37 (Bugenhagen's *Postillatio*, which ceased to appear as an independent work after 1528 but sometimes appeared before each of Luther's model sermons as a sort of introduction).

(66.) Johann Gottfried Zeidler, *Historia Von den Postillen Doct. Martini Lutheri/Als da sind die Kirchen Postilla/Haus Postilla/und Eine seltzame unbekante Postilla* (Eisleben, Germany: Koch, 1679).

(67.) On Spener's edition see LW 75:xxvi–xxvii; for translations, see "Primary Sources."

(68.) *Luther's Works*, vols. 75–79: *Church Postil*, eds. Benjamin T. G. Mayes and James L. Langebartels (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2013), esp. the introduction in LW 75:xiii–xxxii. Luther's *House Postil* scheduled for LW 80–82.

(69.) In addition to Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, I draw heavily from the superb introduction in LW 75—more than will appear in these notes given the genre of this article.

(70.) Estimates of complete sets of the *Church Postil* after 1527: thirty-nine separate printings by 1598; Dietrich's (and then Rörer's) editions of the *House Postil*: ninety-two separate printings, 1544–1601. Here and hereafter printing data in Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, esp. Appendix 4 (535–555) and Table 3 (558).

(71.) See the entry "Essays and Treatises" in this encyclopedia.

(72.) Full bibliographical information (critical edition, translation) for each postil is included in the section "Primary Sources," which concludes with a chronological chart, with bibliography, of all the postils. In what follows I cite such information in the endnotes only when quoting from, or paraphrasing, specific passages.

(73.) Luther, dedication of *Exposition of the Epistles and Gospels which Are Called Postils* (Latin *Advent Postil*), LW 76:450–452 (WA 7:463–465).

(74.) Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 2:15–18; LW 75:xiv–xvi.

(75.) In the 16th century, winter postils did not consistently terminate on Palm Sunday but always thereabouts.

(76.) *Auslegung der Episteln vnd Euangelien vom Aduent an bis auff Ostern*, i.e., *Exposition of the Epistles and Gospels* [= pericopes] *from the beginning of Advent to Easter*.

(77.) Sigurjón Arni Eyjólfsson, "Überblick über die Bewertung von Luthers Predigten in der Forschung," In *Luther between Present and Past: Studies on Luther and Lutheranism*, ed. Ulrik Nissen (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2004), 17–39; here 27–28.

- (78.) Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 2:17.
- (79.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 29–30.
- (80.) Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 2:17.
- (81.) LW 75:xvii. Luther's preface in WA 10/1.2:211; translation forthcoming in LW 79.
- (82.) LW 75:xvii–xviii.
- (83.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 544.
- (84.) LW 75:xix; preface in LW 76:455 (WA 21:1).
- (85.) Extensive translations of the relevant correspondence in LW 75:xix–xxi.
- (86.) These and further examples in *Ibid.*, xxii.
- (87.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 540–541. (4.a.5), fails to distinguish Luther's 1525 from his revised 1540 version (editions of which begin at 541, nos. 24 and following).
- (88.) Following closely LW 75:xxiii–xxiv; Luther's preface in LW 77:7–11 (WA 21:200–203).
- (89.) LW 75:xiii n.4, xxiv–xxv.
- (90.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 71 n.195 (calculation method), 157–224, 548–550.
- (91.) Luther's preface in WA 38:441–442. Further references and excerpts in Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 75–78.
- (92.) WA 52:vii–xi, 10–827 (1544 *Hauspostille*).
- (93.) Deitrich's dedication, WA 52:3–9, esp. 6–7.
- (94.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 92–94, 202–203.
- (95.) Relevant forward and afterward to this *House Postil* transcribed in *Luther Deutsch*, ed. Kurt Aland, vol. 8: *Die Predigten* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 452–455.
- (96.) Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 71 n.195 (calculation method), 545–547.
- (97.) Christopher Spehr, "Postillen" and "Predigten Luthers," in *Das Luther-Lexikon*, ed. Volker Leppin and Gury Schneider-Ludorff (Regensburg, Germany: Bückle & Böhm, 2014), 551–556, 560–569.

- (98.) Hellmut Zschoch, "Predigten," in *Luther Handbuch*, ed. Albrecht Beutel, 2d ed. (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 315–331.
- (99.) Albrecht Beutel, "Predigt VIII. Evangelische Predigt vom 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert," *TRE* 27 (1997): 296–311.
- (100.) Sigurjón Arni Eyjólfsson, "Überblick über die Bewertung von Luthers Predigten in der Forschung," in *Luther between Present and Past: Studies on Luther and Lutheranism*, ed. Ulrik Nissen (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2004), 17–39.
- (101.) Fred W. Meuser, *Luther the Preacher* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983).
- (102.) Gerhard Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung: Eine Untersuchung zu Luthers Hermeneutik*, 3d ed. (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991).
- (103.) Eilert Herms, "Das Evangelium für das Volk: Praxis und Theorie der Predigt bei Luther," *Lutherjahrbuch* 57 (1990): 19–56.
- (104.) Ulrich Asendorf, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers nach seinen Predigten* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).
- (105.) Emanuel Hirsch, "Luthers Predigtweise," *Luther: Mitteilungen der Luther Gesellschaft* 25 (1954): 1–23.
- (106.) Ulrich Nembach, *Predigt des Evangeliums: Luther als Prediger, Pädagoge und Rhetor* (Neukirch, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972).
- (107.) Neil Leroux, *Luther's Rhetoric: Strategies and Style from the Invocavit Sermons* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2002).
- (108.) Jin Ho Kwon, *Christus pro nobis: Eine Untersuchung zu Luthers Passions- und Osterpredigten bis zum Jahr 1530* (Münster, Germany: LIT, 2008).
- (109.) Jonathan Mumme, *Die Präsenz Christi im Amt. Am Beispiel ausgewählter Predigten Martin Luthers, 1535–1546* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).
- (110.) Hans-Henrik Krummacher, *Der junge Gryphius und die Tradition: Studien zu den Perikopensonetten und Passionsliedern* (Munich: W. Fink, 1976).
- (111.) *Luther's Werke in Auswahl*, vol. 7: *Predigten*, ed. Emanuel Hirsch (1932; 3d ed. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962), 1–38.
- (112.) Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says. An Anthology*, 3 vols. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1959), 3:1109–1132.

(113.) Kurt Aland, *Hilfsbuch zum Lutherstudium*, 4th ed. (Bielefeld, Germany: Luther-Verlag, 1996).

(114.) Roth's 1528 *Winter Postil* was a different and more compact version of Luther's original *Winter Postil*, published first in 1525, which had combined the *Advent, Christmas, and Lent Postils* that Luther had written himself. Luther revised his work for the press in 1540 and thereafter his version replaced Roth's. Cf. LW 75:xvi-xx.

(115.) *Dr. Martin Luthers sämtliche Schriften*, ed. J. G. Walch, 23 vols. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1880-1910; reprint Gross-Oesingen: Harms, 1986). Online, downloadable pdf files for each volume at: Martin Luther og hans skrifter.

(116.) *Luther Deutsch. Die Werke Martin Luthers in neuer Auswahl für die Gegenwart*, ed. Kurt Aland, vol. 8: *Die Predigten* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965); the most recent (Göttingen, 2002) edition is unchanged.

(117.) *Predigten D. Martin Luthers auf Grund von Nachschriften Georg Rörers und Anton Lauterbach*, ed. Georg Buchwald, 2 vols. (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1925-1926).

(118.) *D. Martin Luthers Evangelien-Auslegung*, ed. Erwin Mülhaupt, 5 vols. (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1938-1954).

(119.) Compare Aland, *Luther Deutsch*, 8:89, 92-93, 96-97 with Luther, *Hauspostil vber die Sontags*, ed. A. Poach (Jena, Germany: Rödigers Erben, 1559; VD16 L 4858), 88b-89a, 93a-94a. The editors of StL 13b did not expurgate such passages.

(120.) Heinrich J. Vogel, *Vogel's Cross Reference and Index to the Contents of Luther's Works. A Cross Reference between the American Edition and the St. Louis, Weimar, and Erlangen Editions of Luther's Works* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1983).

(121.) The commentary bears no traces of the sermons it originally was, and the transition from pulpit to print remains obscure. LW 21:xx.

(122.) *The 1529 Holy Week and Easter Sermons of Dr. Martin Luther*, trans. Irving L. Sandberg, introduced and annotated by Timothy J. Wengert (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1999).

(123.) *The Annotated Luther*, eds. Hans J. Hillerbrand, Kirsi I. Stjerna, and Timothy J. Wengert, 4 of 6 vols. to date (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015 and following).

(124.) Reprinted as *The Sermons of Martin Luther: The Church Postils*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker, 8 vols. in 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996); reprinted as vols. 1-4 of *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000). This translation is mistakenly identified as Luther's *House Postil* in Timothy F. Lull, "Luther's Writings," in

The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 50.

(125.) *Dr. Martin Luther's House-Postil, or, Sermons on the Gospels for the Sundays and Principal Festivals of the Church Year*, ed. M. Loy, 2 vols. (Columbus, OH: Schulze & Gassmann, 1871); also printed as *Sermons on the Gospels for the Sundays and Principal Festivals of the Church Year*, 2 vols. (Rock Island, IL: Lutheran Augustana Book Concern, 1871).

(126.) *Sermons of Martin Luther: The House Postils*, ed. Eugene F. A. Klug, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996); reprinted as vols. 5-7 with the *Church Postil*, ed. Lenker, in *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000).

(127.) Klug, *House Postils*, 1:15; and Aland, *Luther Deutsch*, 8:8-9.

(128.) No critical edition was consulted: *Festival Sermons of Martin Luther: The Church Postils*, trans. Joel R. Baseley (Dearborn, MI: Mark V, 2005).

(129.) Also in LW 76: Prefaces to Luther's *Lent Postil* (1525), 453-454, and Roth's *Winter Postil* (1528), 455.

(130.) Nos. 2-3 became the *Wartburg Postil* (1522), and nos. 2, 3, and 4 became Luther's *Winter Postil* (1525).

(131.) Lenker's critical text was StL 11-12, the base texts of which were Luther's *Winter Postil* (1525) and Roth's *Summer Postil* (1526).

(132.) LW 52:7-286 offers much better translations of seven of these sermons, including the famously verbose Epiphany sermon.

(133.) The last section of sermons, on the Passion, did not appear in print until 1545; WA 52:734-827.

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