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EBERLIN VON GÜNZBURG AND
THE GERMAN REFORMATION

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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The Ohio State University
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Without the guidance of my adviser, Harold J. Grimm, and the forbearance of my wife, Joie, this dissertation would not have been possible.
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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the causes of the German Reformation and the effects of it upon later developments such as the rise of capitalism and nationalism. Comparatively few studies have been made concerning the interaction of Lutheran doctrine with German society. While it is difficult to generalize accurately on whether there was a "Lutheran ethic" or whether there were discernible changes in the mores and patterns of life in Lutheran areas, there is reason to believe that a study of the reaction of individuals as well as social groups to Luther's Reformation may shed new light upon the interaction between the reform movement and social issues.

It is the purpose of this study to ascertain in what manner Eberlin von Günzburg responded to the resurgence of evangelical Christianity. He is of special interest because he was a strong supporter and, for a time, a close associate of Martin Luther. Fortunately, as a highly literate and perspicuous writer, he recorded his thoughts, observations, and opinions in numerous pamphlets which were read by many.

Eberlin's importance in fostering the spread of the Reformation has not been given proper attention by historians, nor has there been any attempt to write a
meaningful evaluation of his religious, socioeconomic, and political thoughts. A study which brings together the various directions of his labors, his trenchant insights into German society, and his many contributions to the Lutheran Reformation is long overdue.

Primarily, this dissertation will be limited to the life and work of Eberlin von Gänzburg. At times, however, it will be necessary to compare him with some of his contemporaries, such as the noted humanists Erasmus of Rotterdam and Sir Thomas More and the important Lutheran reformers Johann Bugenhagen and Philip Melanchthon. Since it is unwise to view the life of a pamphlet writer in a vacuum, an analysis of some of the strong opponents and critics of Eberlin during his own day will be made, for example, the Catholic polemist, Thomas Murner.

Chapter One will be devoted to a brief outline of the social background of Germany at the turn of the sixteenth century. The increasing power of the territorial princes, the expanding wealth and prestige of the townspeople, and currents of peasant unrest created an interesting and complex environment in which the reformers worked.

Chapter Two will be a biographical sketch of Eberlin's life and career. Much of the information pertaining to his early life and education is scarce and is available only in scattered places in his pamphlets. Although his origins are obscure, there is ample material
concerning the ten-year period of his most active endeavors.

Following the biographical chapter, there will be a presentation of sixteenth-century printing as it pertains to the publication of Eberlin's pamphlets. He was quick to recognize the value of the printing press and was in many ways a pioneer in the artful dissemination of religious propaganda. Printers eagerly sought out notes from his sermons and pamphlets. His sparkle, warmth, and clear and simple style made him one of the most popular of Reformation pamphlet writers. His broadsides were translated into low-German dialects and sold far and wide across Germany. On one occasion, a bundle of them was sent as far east as Hungary.

In Chapter Four an attempt will be made to establish the fact that Eberlin had a sound and clear comprehension of Luther’s conception of the Christian religion. The link between Lutheran ideas and his is important since it is from this vantage point that he views society and its problems. At least, the fact that he thinks he is a genuine follower of Luther lends particular significance to his work.

Eberlin had many opinions on political and economic problems current in his own day. Chapter Five will describe his conception of the state, his secularism, and his attitude toward Roman law. Although many of his thoughts were neither new nor original, he had a unique
hope for a better social order resulting from the spread of the Lutheran Reformation to all Germany. Moreover, eschatological and millennial currents of thought which had a strong impact on "left-wing" groups during the early years of the Reformation will be discussed. When he is compared with the radical visionaries or esoteric cultists, it is clearly apparent that he drew his strength and his optimism not from currents of millennial thought popular in the late middle ages but rather from the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith and the merits of a Christian life.

The final chapter will be a presentation of Eberlin's ideas with respect to contemporary social problems such as poor relief, care of the sick, punishment of crime, and the extent to which the good Christian should indulge in worldly amusements. His comments are sometimes quaint and naive but appear to be written with sincerity. Frequently, knowledge of apparently trivial details makes it possible for the historian to see into the depths of an era. It follows that his social thoughts are of interest primarily for two reasons. First, they serve as a mirror of ordinary life in the sixteenth century, and, secondly, they reflect what one Lutheran reformer pictured as an ideal set of mores. It is hoped that by using Eberlin as a vehicle of the interaction of Lutheran doctrine with social issues new light will be shed on the history and the understanding of the Reformation.
It is strange that such an interesting and important figure as Eberlin has not been given in recent times more extensive and thorough treatment. Many of the scholars who have discussed or mentioned him in passing have been primarily interested in the fact that he was of literary rather than historical significance. None of the current college textbooks and few general accounts of Reformation history mention him by name. Writers who treat his life and work often praise him but fail to explore in depth. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Bernhard Riggenbach chose to write a biography of him because of the fact that "next to Luther, not one man had more influence on the atmosphere of the South German peasants than Eberlin."1 Yet, the biographers seemed more interested in proving the existence of source material than pointing out his significance to and relationship with the Reformation. Similarly, Karl Schottenloher, cataloger and scholar of German broadsides and newspapers, writes that he was one of the "most moving, clever, and widely read co-fighters with Luther."2 Be that as it may, the author allows him only minimum space. Another writer, Johannes Janssen, the

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1 Bernhard Riggenbach, Johann Eberlin von Günzburg und sein Reformprogramm (Tubingen: L. J. Fues, 1874), p. 3.
2 Karl Schottenloher, Flugblatt und Zeitung (Berlin: R. C. Schmidt und Co., 1922), p. 68.
strongly biased Catholic historian who views the whole Lutheran movement as a Pandora's Box, writes of Eberlin that he was "one of the most influential of those traveling preachers and pamphleteers."\(^3\) In the same vein, Friedrich Kapp, the nineteenth-century authority on the history of German printing and the booktrade, concludes that "he was a great folk preacher."\(^4\) But he overlooks the other aspect of his career. Another scholar, Julius Werner, states that when Eberlin is compared with such men as Reuchlin, Pirkheimer, and Erasmus, he seems quite small and insignificant; but nevertheless, when the proper time came he "made great sacrifices for the Lutheran cause...."\(^5\)

Curiously, the individual who was largely responsible for the collection and preservation of Eberlin's pamphlets in the \textit{Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek} in Frankfurt, Gustav Freytag, the prominent German literary figure and pamphlet collector of the nineteenth century, writes that "even though he was clever and popular, he was

\(^3\)Johannes Janssen, \textit{History of the German People at the Close of the Middle Ages} (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1907), III, p. 215.


in reality a demagogue just like Andreas Carlstadt and Thomas Müntzer, who were both raw and crude."\(^6\)

While all the writers noted above agree that Eberlin was of some importance, none have studied him in detail or have made any attempt to evaluate his overall significance as a connecting link between the Reformation and the masses of society. In the following chapters, an attempt will be made to show the importance of his life and work in the spread of the Reformation and how one individual reacted to the powerful doctrines of Luther during the crucial years of the Reformation, 1517-1530.

\(^6\)Gustav Freytag, Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1898), XIX, p. 182.
CHAPTER I

GERMANY ON THE EVE OF THE REFORMATION

The first three decades of the sixteenth century were marked by more and greater changes than perhaps any other period in German history until the advent of the industrial revolution. Rapid social, economic, and political transformations affected all members of society whether they were princes, knights, peasants, or townsmen.

In medieval times, every aspect of life had been under the domination of the church which tended to be conservative with respect to social matters. Although the power and prestige of Catholicism had waned by the time of Luther's revolt, it remained a potent force and continued to dominate and influence the course of events in Germany throughout the Reformation Era.

To many, the advent of the Lutheran Reformation appeared as a threat to the existing social order. A new spiritual and religious value lay in conflict with prevailing institutions. Even though powerful currents of religious reform spread through Germany in unequal currents and at intervals, every sector of society was challenged and forced to respond in some manner by it. Understanding the interaction of religious doctrine upon
life becomes a necessary part in the proper evaluation of the Reformation.

Unfortunately, the intellectual atmosphere and the social currents in Germany were varied to the extent that it is difficult to know the exact nature of the effect of Reformation doctrines on the overall picture of social, economic, and political thought. Moreover, Lutheranism, as a body of doctrine, was too ambiguous on social and political problems to be reduced to any single dogma which appealed to any particular group. Sometimes, individuals of the various social groups joined Luther's movement for tactical rather than religious reasons.¹

In the more densely populated areas of southern Germany, there existed in 1517 large numbers of restless and discontented people. The Bavarian territories bordering on Bohemia had long been a receptacle for the equalitarian ideas of the most radical portion of the followers of the martyred John Hus. Further, a number of strange groups of Beghards who accepted voluntary poverty and believed that they had attained mortal perfection wandered from one town to the other. The Beghards, frequently in trouble with the authorities, maintained that their inner light allowed them

free play to every personal idiosyncrasy and moral eccentricity. Aside from the Beghards, there were those who lived in a world of apocalyptic hopes and fears. The eschatological belief that the end of the earth was imminent affected men and women in either one of two ways. Some threw themselves into the depths of despair and prepared for immediate death while others saw visions of a utopian society on the near horizon. Secret peasant orders of the Bundschuh, worshipers of pagan gods, and astrologers with predictions of gloom all heightened the instability of the population not only in southern Germany but throughout Europe.

Along more rational lines, there was in Germany before the Reformation a powerful movement of humanism. Many humanists demanded reforms of existing institutions, both religious and temporal, in the name of German honor or of enlightened Catholicism. Conrad Celtes (d. 1508), Jakob Wimpheling (d. 1528), and Ulrich von Hutten (d. 1523) were among the many who vocalized the humanist desires for religious and economic reforms and the need for patriotism and German unity. In summary, Germany on the eve of

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3Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
Luther's break with Rome was, in many respects, a caldron of diversity, confusion, superstition, and unrest. When the dynamic of Lutheranism was infused upon the decaying society of the late Middle Ages, cathartic reaction was inevitable.

Politically, the German territories were in a weakened position at the outbreak of the Reformation. The Catholic Church had as much temporal power in German lands as did any single secular ruler, a state of affairs quite unlike those in the highly centralized states of France, Spain, and England. The major central governing body existing in Germany was the Holy Roman Empire which by 1517 was only a loose confederation of political entities consisting of large and small territorial states and a number of cities which were, for the most part, either free, imperial, or ecclesiastical. In the Empire there were few internal or external factors which were conducive to the centralization of secular power. Traditionally, the Austrian and Spanish Hapsburgs had considered Germany as being only a sphere of influence or, at the most, a connecting link between the dispersed Hapsburg lands and a place which would serve as a stage for battles against

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Indeed, policies that would benefit the Hapsburgs came first while German needs were relegated to the background.

In the reign of Emperor Maximilian I (1493-1519) there had been partly successful imperial reforms designed to solve some of the complex constitutional problems of the Germans. At the Diets of Worms and Augsburg in 1495 and 1500, a supreme court (Reichskammergericht) which was to sit in Frankfurt am Main, and an imperial regency council (Reichsregiment) were created. The importance of these new institutions, however, was lessened in 1502 when Maximilian formed his personal Hofrat (Privy Council). Continuing in the reform spirit, the Diet of Cologne in 1512 divided the land under the Emperor's aegis into ten administrative districts called Kreise (circles) designed to facilitate the solution of defense and administrative problems. During the Diet of Cologne, Berthold von Henneberg, the Archbishop of Mainz and one of the seven imperial electors, desperately tried to obtain financial support from the cities to pay for part of the cost of the imperial army and to subsidize the Reichskammergericht. Having little voice in conducting the affairs of the Empire, the townsmen

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rejected Henneberg's plans. In a few years both the Reichskammergericht and the Reichsregiment were discontinued; however, in 1520 these bodies were reluctantly revived by Charles V. As a result of the unsuccessful attempts to reform the Holy Roman Empire, powerful territorial princes began to dominate Germany to the point that imperial tax levies and decrees could not be enforced by the Emperor without fostering further discontent and violence.

By the time of Maximilian's death in 1519, much of the German nation had grown impatient with the disunity, incompetence, and lack of good government at the imperial level. To rectify and allay some of the unrest, Maximilian's successor, Charles V, established a governing council to operate in Germany during his absence from the country. Although constitutional and financial needs of Germany were debated in the new council, little headway was made against the rapidly growing power of the princes.

Even though political frustration was widespread, there were groups such as the imperial knights of the lower nobility who, bound by oath to the Emperor, continued to

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hope that somehow their chief would recognize their desires for representation in the imperial Diet and for efficient government. Eberlin von Günzburg, a Lutheran convert of noble birth, called out in 1521 to his "pious Prince" (Charles V) that "our needs are so great that we will have to go farther than mere complaints if conditions do not change for the better."  

Interjected into an atmosphere already saturated with explosive religious questions was the matter pertaining to the nature of the relationship between the church and the secular state. Now the old controversy between the pope and the secular ruler which had reached its climax under Boniface VIII in the fourteenth century was revived. Marsilio of Padua wrote in Defensor Pacis that all things are of a temporal nature that have origin and existence in time. Accordingly, the visible church is man-made and falls under control of secular authorities while only spiritual matters should concern the church. According to Marsilio, the church and the commonwealth are two aspects of one thing and therefore civil magistrates must regulate both. Countering this position was the papal view that the church was a body governing itself by its own organs which

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were distinctly apart from the state. Further, since the church was of divine origin, it had the right to dominate secular policy.  During the Reformation, Catholics as well as Protestants could be found to defend either argument. However, Marsilio's reasoning appealed to Luther and to those who sought to break down the political power of the Roman pope.

Luther was interested primarily in religious problems, whereas political and social thoughts were clearly on the periphery of his thinking. Yet, he did not live in a vacuum and from time to time commented on the world around him and wrote about it in pamphlets. Without question, his ideas, which sometimes seem inconsistent and haphazard, had an influence on many. In 1520 he wrote in his Address to the German Nobility that he believed temporal power had "become a member of the body of Christendom...and that its work should extend freely to all members of the whole body...it should punish and use force when necessity or guilt demands." Accordingly, obedience to authority was an essential to the proper functioning of the community and no person was to take rash action of any sort without

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justifiable reason. Further, he admonished all true Christians to distinguish carefully between the world of man and the spiritual realm of God. In reality, he went scarcely further on political matters than did Marsilio.

Similarly, Philip Melanchthon, one of Luther's most famous followers, believed that the secular magistrate was the true civil representative of the people and that an essential function of political authority was to administer the death penalty. If Luther and Melanchthon seem unclear or inconclusive on political subjects, it must be remembered that they did not intend to be. The early Lutheran reformer who elaborated lucidly and fully on the ideal structure of government was an exception. Consequently, the political thought of Eberlin von Günzburg becomes of great interest and significance.

Another factor adding to the political confusion of Reformation Germany was the particularistic attitude of the great territorial princes. By 1517, powerful princes and free imperial cities had made important progress in the consolidation of their lands to the point that many of them resembled small countries. In the place of a

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11 Ibid., p. 68.


13 Allen, op. cit., p. 32.
centralized and effective imperial government, the princes with their strong vested interests strove to maintain individual states. Further, it was not unusual or difficult for a great lord to believe that God had ordained him to rule, a conception current in Germany even as late as the seventeenth century.  

The actions of the princes adversely affected most levels of society. Believing that the prosperous cities were open threats to princely power, many of the territorial rulers sought to protect themselves by creating tariff walls on goods passing through their lands. This undoubtedly accounts in part for the steep rise in the cost of living and imposed a greater burden on those with fixed incomes, for example, the small land owners and the poorer elements in the city. With regard to the lower nobility, the princes resented the fact that many of them as knights had pledged loyalty to the emperor. In short, the great lords, who were at odds with the townsmen, knights, and the emperor, generally opposed anything that was in the best interests of Germany as a whole and as a result became targets for many of the reformers. Luther in a sermon preached in 1522, in the presence of the

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15 Pascal, op. cit., p. 16.
exceptionally tolerant Duke John of Weimar, castigated those rulers who failed in their responsibility to govern well their temporal domain and who "do no more than strip and fleece, and heap tax upon tax and tribute upon tribute, letting loose here and there a wolf. They have no justice, integrity, or truth among them."16

As the strength and well-being of the great land­lords waxed, the economic and political importance of the lesser nobility declined. The origin of this depressed group lay deep in the Middle Ages when villeins gradually were raised to the rank of vassal and enfeefed. Bound by oath to their feudal lords, the primary function of knights in the Middle Ages had been a military one. When feudalism began to decline, their social status, rights, and privileges were jeopardized. Some became officers in the mercenary armies of the territorial princes or became robber barons. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many of the knights were forced to fend for themselves and rely more on the uncertainties of an agrarian subsistence. Further, rising inflation and competition with the prestige and wealth of the proud townsmen brought added difficulties to the lower nobility already beset by other aspects of the changing times.17

17 Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
To make things worse, the style and method of warfare had progressed to the extent that a mounted knight was a poor match for the wide variety of artillery that was coordinated with large numbers of mercenaries owing no oath of allegiance to anyone. As a consequence, many of the knights lived in an atmosphere of pessimism, gloom, dejection, and poverty. By 1517, some of them had fallen into incessant robbing, raiding, drinking, and ribald living. The morality of the knights had deteriorated to the point that Luther on one occasion commented: "Everywhere knights are suspected and disliked because everyone knows how rare chastity is among them...fathers must be afraid for their daughters."¹⁸

Nevertheless, the knights as a whole were a potential ally to the Reformation since they had little to lose and much to gain from any shift in the status quo. Luther believed if groups such as the Teutonic Knights would try to live according to Christian principles and regain respectability, they would become an asset to the Lutheran cause.¹⁹ Although the power and influence of the warrior class had been weakened, the fact that they rated criticism and were feared indicates that during the early years of the Reformation, knighthood had not yet been reduced to a

¹⁸ *Iw*, *loc. cit.*, p. 142.
series of romantic myths. The decline of the prestige of
the knight as symbolized by the defeat of Franz von
Sickingen at Trier in 1523 was more apparent than real.
Indeed, Eberlin's contention that the lower nobility was
the "nucleus of society"\textsuperscript{20} seemed to be justified when the
territorial princes recognized the stabilizing influence of
the knights after the great peasant upheavals in 1524 and
1525.

Even though there was a streak of crass, ebullient,
and self-centered egotism among the knights, many of them
reflected a spirit of manliness, a love for a simple life,
and a desire for education. In the fourteenth and fifteenth
centuries they had established a number of cathedral schools
and foundations for their children who were not heirs or
chose not to enter a military life.\textsuperscript{21} Prosperous townsmen
and powerful princes often unfairly underrated the
intellectual and cultural level of the lower nobility.

Another important segment of the German population
was the town dweller who comprised about twenty-five per cent
of the total. The German towns existed in a wide variety of
economic and political circumstances. Some of them profited
from their proximity to the trading areas of the Baltic and
Netherlands while others in southern Germany acted as

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{EAS}, I, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{PE}, II, p. 137.
entrepots for goods coming from the Levant through Italy.\textsuperscript{22} There were also those which gained wealth and prestige as important cathedral sites and others which were important because of their location. A few of them were autonomous political units. Many were dominated by the church, and a number of them were under the aegis of the territorial princes. Wealthy and puissant Nürnberg had a special status. Since Nürnberger gold had been an important factor in Emperor Maximilian's victory over the House of Wittelsbach, the city had been allowed to annex surrounding territory and had become by 1517 a territorial state in its own right.\textsuperscript{23}

The environment of the townsmen varied considerably from one city to the next. Urban areas such as Nürnberg were dominated by a class of great patricians who wielded extensive political and economic power. Still, there was in Nürnberg a vigorous middle class which lived in prosperity and enjoyed significant social and political prominence. In contrast with Nürnberg was the city of Augsburg, which was dominated by three or four patrician families and powerful guilds. Unequal distribution of wealth in Augsburg was responsible for the fact that large

\textsuperscript{22}Holborne, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{23}Baron, \textit{loc. cit.}, p. 57.
numbers of her population lived in poverty.\textsuperscript{24} However, late medieval cities, as a rule, were crowded and there was a close physical contact between the rich and the poor. Consequently, the welfare of all was necessary, if the townsmen were to live together in comfort and peace. Extreme poverty was seldom present in the city where concern for the poor and the general welfare of the community had long been a tradition.\textsuperscript{25}

One of the most significant developments in German cities on the eve of the Reformation was the great growth in the amount of worldly goods possessed by the class of small shop keepers, skilled craftsmen, and traders. But material progress was not the only sign of change. Something emerged which was more than the collection of fine silks and jewelry. It was a new ethic of optimism, a driving force to make life better and more interesting.\textsuperscript{26} The psychological frame of mind of the townsmen became a fertile field for the activity of the Lutheran reformers who offered a more vital and less burdensome religion. Yet, the new ethic was not shared by all townsmen. Many of them had little concern for problems other than their own and had a limited conception

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 628.

\textsuperscript{25}Willy Andreas, \textit{Deutschland vor der Reformation} (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1959), p. 284.

of the world outside their own walls, the boundaries of their universe. This provincial spirit is reflected in the paintings of late medieval artists who, for example, liked to picture Biblical events such as the birth of Christ taking place in a colorful German stall.  

In general, the townsmen enjoyed a position of power and prestige in the first half of the sixteenth century that was not equaled until the early years of the nineteenth when the municipal reforms of Hardenberg and Stein in Prussia were the initial steps in restoring social power to the townsmen which had been lost to the nobility in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is true that day laborers, servants, and the smaller proprietors profited less from the general prosperity than did the upper levels of the social structure and that an increasing number of lesser townsmen found the guilds closed to them; but, in the main, the first half of the sixteenth century was a golden age for most German townsmen.

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Despite the prosperity of most German towns, there was one serious blight on urban living, the lack of proper sanitation. Periodically, epidemics of deadly plagues swept the crowded towns. In 1521, for example, a pestilence spread through Bavaria to the extent that not one village, hamlet, or town escaped its fury.\textsuperscript{30}

At the base of German society were the peasants who comprised about seventy-five per cent of the population. These tillers of the soil and hewers of wood lived under a great variety of economic, legal, and social conditions. The great landlords held most of the property rights and had absorbed the greater portion of the common pastures and woodlands which had been important to the peasants' well-being. The major concern of the landlord was the prompt collection of land rents and dues from the serfs. Similarly, the Catholic Church, which held the bulk of the arable land in Bavaria, acted like a secular lord in squeezing out as much revenue as possible to operate monasteries, bishoprics, and parishes. Accordingly, a heavy burden fell on the shoulders of those least able to pay.

One of the earliest documents of peasant unrest was the pamphlet by an anonymous clergyman from Augsburg entitled the "Reformation of Emperor Sigismund" (1439). It castigated serfdom in general and voiced grave concern over

the seizure of public land by greedy landlords who were in flagrant violation of common law. It is important to note that the pamphlet was much more conservative than radical because it wanted old rights restored rather than an overthrow of society. Many reprints of this broadside circulated in Germany late in the fifteenth and early in the sixteenth centuries.

It is important to note that serfdom was not completely universal at the outbreak of the Lutheran Reformation. A number of free peasant villages were scattered among the great manors of the nobility. Although landlords had forced most peasants to accept what amounted to feudal overlordship, there were many who for all practical purposes were free men. Thus, grievances and reform programs varied from region to region and there were many calls for peace and justice rather than revolution.

Among the tillers of the soil there was a rising awareness of their importance and a cognizance of the fact that they were making a greater contribution to society than their compensation indicated. Ultimately, the peasant

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wars of 1524 and 1525 resulted partly from the fact that the peasant realized there was a conflict between his demands for justice and the official authority of the law of the ruling class.\textsuperscript{33} Generally, the rustic came to view himself as something more than the mud-spattered foot of the medieval corpus. Some became literate and highly self-conscious people eagerly waiting for a leader who offered promises of a better future. Large numbers believed the new Lutheran doctrine would become a force for positive change. Eberlin von Günzburg reported that he found the peasants in one Swabian district so interested in Reformation ideas that he was able to convert the whole group after a few days of preaching and explanation.\textsuperscript{34} Sometimes the peasants concluded that religious freedom and equality were synonymous with social and economic reform. As a result, many, led by fanatical leaders and impelled by onerous conditions, instigated a series of violent revolts during the years from 1524 to 1526. The brutal suppression of the revolutionaries put an end to their hopes for any amelioration of their situation.

The life led by the men with the hoe and the rake was not conducive to social and cultural refinement or to

\textsuperscript{33}Günther Franz, Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg (Darmstadt: Herman Gentner, 1956), p. 291.

\textsuperscript{34}EAS, II, p. 70.
the subtle distinction of theological points. Nevertheless, they were able to realize that certain rights had been lost and that injustice had been done. Further, they were keenly aware of the fact that their superiors often despised them as subhuman outcasts and knaves who were little better than the lowest beasts.\textsuperscript{35}

In conclusion, it is important to understand that within the complexities of the social, economic, and political life of sixteenth-century Germany, the Lutheran reformers found many obstacles as well as much encouragement. The decentralized political situation made it impossible for the Catholic powers to establish religious conformity. Hence, pockets of Reformation thought were nourished and protected until they had become permanent factors in German life. The discontent of the lower nobility and the restlessness of the peasants added up to a widespread demand for a change of the status quo. Individuals at all levels of German society felt that the support and adherence to Lutheran doctrine was a step in the right direction. One reformer, who is little known today, Eberlin von Günzburg, concerned himself very much over the problem of utilizing Lutheran doctrine to help solve the ills of everyday life in Germany.

CHAPTER II

A SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eberlin von Günzburg was born in the Margravate of Burgau in the city of Günzburg about the year 1465.\footnote{Riggenbach, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 6.} Unfortunately, there is little extant information on the early years of his life. It is, however, certain that he lived a large part of his youth in the homes of relatives after his parents died leaving him as an orphan. In one pamphlet he writes of the period in which he lived with his cousin, Mathis Sigk von Günzburg. Sigk was an educated and respectable person who was the city clerk for the town of Lougingen on the Danube. Eberlin recalled this association with much pleasure and happiness.\footnote{EAS, II, p. 40.} But, in the main, his youth and background are shrouded in mystery until he, as a young man in his twenties, began to prepare himself for a life of service to the Catholic Church.

By the time Eberlin had reached the age of twenty-nine, he had become a priest in the Diocese of Augsburg and the holder of the Master of Arts Degree from the University of Basel. In the year 1500, he traveled to the city of
Heilbronn to live and study with Dr. Johann Scherdine, a pious and devout Franciscan who was city preacher. Soon after his contact with Scherdine, he took the vows and became a member of the Franciscan Observantines, an order which was strict and demanding. The Observantines, who were governed by Caspar Schatzgeyer, a Bavarian Friar, were well represented in southern Germany. When Eberlin joined, there were approximately twenty-eight friaries with a total of five-hundred and sixty members. Many of them were Franciscans who had with the full approval of Rome transferred their membership from the Conventuals, an order with relaxed rules, to the ascetic Observantines. Several years after he left the Catholic Church and joined the Lutheran movement, he related to his readers many of the regulations of the Observantines which in his view were unbearable. In his pamphlet, Wider die falschen Geistlichen genannt die Barfüßer und Franziskaner, he castigated the order's numerous long fasts and their ban on luxuries and women. Further, writing as a reformer, he thought that the extreme poverty of the order and the constant begging for bread on the streets by its members were degrading. Eberlin had

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5EAS, III, pp. 50-55.
found it difficult if not impossible to find peace by adhering to the tenets of the "Barefooted Franciscans." After his break with Rome, he wrote, "I know that at Wittenberg no one can say of me that I did not try to be a good monk. But monastic life was against God, nature, and God's Word."^6

Prior to the advent of the Reformation, officials at the Ulm Cloister allowed Eberlin to travel to Tübingen where he became a preacher and a schoolmaster in the Tübingen Hochschule. While there, he preached from the same pulpit in which Gabriel Biel, the late Medieval pietist and nominalist, had won a large and devoted following. 7 Similarly, Eberlin, who was a good orator, preached to ever-growing crowds. Perhaps his popularity and success were too great. Soon officials of the Bartholomäus Cloister in Tübingen and theologians began to quarrel with him both on the content of his preaching and his conduct in the classroom. 8 As a result of the altercation at Tübingen, he returned to the Observant Cloister at Ulm in a depressed and confused state of mind. Then, in 1520, three of Luther's most significant pamphlets came into his hands. With avid

^6EAS, III, p. 37.

^7Julius Werner, Johann Eberlin von Günzburg der evangelischsoziale Volksfreund (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1889), pp. 4-5.

^8Realencyklopädie..., loc. cit., p. 122.
interest, he read his Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, and The Freedom of the Christian Man.\(^9\)

The ideas contained in the pamphlets were too controversial and exciting for Eberlin to keep to himself. He began debating them with his monastic brothers. The political troubles of Germany, the injustice and suffering caused by rapid social changes, added to corruption in the Catholic Church, all became issues too explosive for friendly conversation. While still within the walls of the monastery, he began to think along the lines suggested by Luther and became what he called a "spiritual Lutheran," that is, one who believed in Reformation doctrine but physically remained within the confines of a Catholic order. In 1521 he was asked to leave the cloister at Ulm; immediately, he set out upon a wandering course which ultimately led him to the side of Luther in Wittenberg.\(^{10}\)

Since Eberlin had friends and was acquainted in Basel, a city which by 1520 had already become a center for Lutheran printing, he decided to go there to live. On the way to his new home, he preached evangelical sermons to those who would listen. During this period, he believed

\(^9\)Karl Hagen, Deutschlands Literarische und religiöse Verhältnis vom Reformationszeitalter (Erlangen 1844), p. 168.
\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 168.
that he had much to learn about "true" religion since much of what he had learned and experienced hitherto now appeared false. Accordingly, he spoke of himself as a "poor German layman" who was carrying the Gospel into the streets and penetrating the hearts of the common people. After his arrival in Basel, he spent part of his time writing pamphlets which the enterprising printer Pamphilus Gangenbach printed under the title *Fünfzehn Bundgenossen*. These pamphlets contained Eberlin's views on a variety of religious and secular topics. When not occupied with writing, he expended much energy preaching Gospel messages to the masses. In some circles he seemed to be nothing more than a trouble maker. Consequently, he was forced to leave Basel under heavy pressure from Bishop Christoph von Ullenheim, a powerful official who up until the time of his death in 1527 had played a paramount role in the prevention of a Lutheran landslide in his Bishopric. Eberlin resumed his wandering and for the next two years was an itinerant preacher in a number of places in Swabia and Switzerland.

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12 Hagen, *op. cit.*, p. 168.


14 EAS, III, p. 165.
In some respects, this period of roving was one of the most productive of his life. A steady stream of pamphlets came from his pen and his name was becoming well known as a "south German Luther." In this early period of his career as a reformer, he expounded relatively conservative views and had little sympathy for those who were violent and destructive. The content of such pamphlets as Vom Misbrauch Christlicher Freiheit closely paralleled in content Luther's eight sermons against the Wittenberger idol smashers. In the same vein Eberlin in his pamphlet Der Clockenturm warned his cousin Jacob Wehe of Leipheim, who was preaching radical views equating social and political freedom with religious equality, to be careful about making exaggerated promises to the peasants. In short, he believed that the rashness of his relative's sermons was contrary to the Word of God. In sum, those who sought to reshape the social and political order by unconstitutional and radical means found little sympathy with most of the Lutheran reformers.

In 1523 Eberlin came to Wittenberg for a period of study and association with Martin Luther and the circle of reformers which surrounded him. Friends and co-fighters with Luther such as the brilliant Philip Melanchthon, who had come originally to the University of Wittenberg to

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15 EAS, III, p. xxiv.
teach Greek, had long held Eberlin's respect and admiration. As early as 1520, the scholar Konrad Pellikan reported in a letter to Luther a conversation which he had had with Eberlin. According to Pellikan, one of the striking things about him was his great enthusiasm for Philip Melanchthon. Upon his arrival at Wittenberg, Eberlin stated, "I thank God that He has led me to the pious Melanchthon who is both learned and modest." Another reformer with whom he found much in common and from whom he learned much was Johann Bugenhagen from Pomerania. Johan Pomern (as Eberlin called him) had read Luther's pamphlets of 1520 and had left his teaching position in a Latin School to come directly to Wittenberg. One of the results of the interchange of ideas and mutual stimulation was, as will be pointed out in detail later, an amazing similarity in the social thought of the two reformers as expressed by Eberlin in his pamphlets and Bugenhagen in the church disciplines which he wrote for the city of Brunswick in 1528. "I have learned much from my pious teachers...Philip Melanchthon and Johan Pomern," wrote Eberlin.

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17. Werner, *op. cit.*, p. 34
But, primarily, Eberlin had come to Wittenberg to learn from Luther; he literally became a pupil of the master. He viewed his relationship with Luther as a worthwhile and pleasant association. In short order, he began to link himself with the Wittenberg reformers. In the pamphlet Wider die falschen Geistlichen genannt die Barfüsser und Franziskaner, he writes that "Since I have been in Wittenberg, I have learned something every day that is useful and necessary for my own salvation; I will soon go and teach others as God has commanded."\(^1\) On another occasion when writing to the people of Ulm, he gave his advice to them a ring of authenticity by prefacing his remarks with the words, "I am in Wittenberg and have asked many questions of Luther...."\(^2\)

Eberlin was accepted at Wittenberg and got along well because he found the religious and academic climate for which he had been searching. Evidence that he accepted the basic ideas of the Reformation is borne out in the list of reading matter which he recommended to his public. He believed every Christian should study and grasp the German Bible, Luther's Postil, which in his view was the best one extant, and Luther's major pamphlets such as the Babylonian

\(^1\)\textit{EAS}, III, p. 265.  
\(^2\)\textit{EAS}, II, p. 191.
Captivity of the Church and The Freedom of the Christian Man. Indeed, he believed that Luther was one of God's best servants because he was a "native German, a learned and Christian man who had uncovered the truth about God." Further, he thought that there could be no doubt that God was with Luther because "soon many of the scholarly and believing persons both in Germany and in other European lands will become converts to the true faith." He was, however, careful to point out to his lay audience that they should not fall into the pit of hero worship since "Martin Luther's teaching is not his but God's and his Christ."

Late in 1523, a movement initiated by an old friend and cloister brother, Henrich Kettenbach, arose to invite Eberlin to Ulm for a disputation on monasticism and to preach a series of sermons. But neither Kettenbach nor Eberlin could obtain the necessary guarantees from the city council which was being importuned by the bishop and others to retain the status quo. Nevertheless, Eberlin's pamphlets and open letters circulated freely in Ulm and

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21EAS, III, p. 19.
22EAS, I, p. 4.
23EAS, II, p. 191.
helped to pave the way for the spread of the Reformation which swept over the city in 1524. 25

During most of the year 1524, Eberlin traveled in Germany preaching the Gospel and Lutheran doctrine to large crowds in Rheinfelden, Rottenberg am Neckar, Nürnberg, and Erfurt. 26 It was at Erfurt that he was forced to remain for many months because of illness and the outbreak of the peasant revolts of 1524 and 1525. On several occasions when the peasants near Erfurt were swept with revolutionary fever, he was called to utilize his oratorical powers to calm and caution them against violence and destruction. Even though writing and preaching occupied most of his time at Erfurt, it was here that he courted and married his comely wife. 27

With a family to support and no permanent position or salary, Eberlin was most anxious to find a benefactor. For several years Graf Georg II of Wertheim, the prince of a small principality, had been writing to Luther in Wittenberg asking him for a recommendation for a capable preacher and theological adviser. Luther suggested that Eberlin would be a good candidate since he has "learned our ways at

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27. EAS, III, p. 165.
Wittenberg and is a pious follower of the Word." He and his wife arrived at the Wertheim court in 1525. At this moment in his life, he enjoyed a status of respectability and honor and was rapidly approaching the apex of his career.

One of Eberlin's first moves in his new position was to call his old friend Kettenbach to come to Wertheim. Kettenbach, who had a wide range of scholarly and religious interests including a thorough knowledge of the Bible, Lutheran doctrine, scholasticism, canon law, Roman poetry, and a familiarity with the Koran, quickly accepted the offer. Together these two reformers of a scholarly bent showed a passionate zeal for maintaining social peace with the help of Gospel preaching. The extent to which Eberlin and Kettenbach influenced conditions in Wertheim is unknown. Although Georg II was something of a potentate in his small domain, he had been an early supporter of Luther and from

28 Johann George Walch (Editor), Dr. Martin Luthers Sämtliche Schriften, XXI (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1903), p. 517.


30 Ibid., XV, p. 676.


1525 to 1530 an enlightened and Christian ruler of his lands. For example, he was one of the few German princes to compromise with the peasants after the revolts of 1524-26. He allowed the rustics under his jurisdiction to have some of their demands and there was no brutal suppression of the peasants as in the majority of centers of revolt in Germany.  

According to what is known of Eberlin's life at Wertheim, it appears that he was able to spend a part of his time on his humanistic studies which for him had been an area of major interest. An analysis of his work as a humanist is useful in understanding his relationship with the Reformation Era. Although humanism was a variegated body of thought, there were certain similarities in the thinking of the German humanists. Many of them were noted for their dislike of scholasticism, an admiration for the ethics of classical heroes, a new sense of history which was closely related to local and national patriotism, a love of rhetoric, and, particularly in northern Europe, a great desire for sincerity and reform in religion.

Many of the humanists in northern Europe were quick to blame the "Pope's dark Doctors" for the decay and corruption in the Church. The greatness of schoolmen such

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as Thomas Aquinas was often misunderstood or unappreciated.
Eberlin reflected his contempt and disdain toward the
scholastics by writing that it would be best for society
if all of them would be prohibited from teaching at any
grade level. In fact, he categorically rejected the whole
"thousand year tradition of the schoolmen." 34

Toward the historical past, Eberlin revealed a
typical humanistic characteristic. He believed that it was
helpful for young children to read about the great heroes of
the classical period of history and learn from their
examples. 35 Moreover, he suggested that it was vital for
people to understand the trends which had shaped Germany.
It was for this reason that he, while at Wertheim,
completed the first full translation of Germania by
Tacitus. On the title page of this remarkable accomplish­
ment, he wrote the usual ceremonial remarks eulogizing his
benefactor, Georg II, and then added, "It is shameful that
the German people know so little of their nation's
history." 36 He liked to think of the German greatness of
earlier times and contrast it with the decadent position
of Germany in his own day. With much passion he writes in

34 EAS, I, p. 118.
36 The title page of Der Germanie des Tacitus is
reproduced by Radlkofer, op. cit., p. 542.
his first pamphlet of 1521, *Ein Klagliche Klag an den Christlichen Römischen Kaiser*, that "we know our old history and how our nation has been."³⁷ His reflection of the romantic nationalism of the German humanists is borne out further by his admiration of Ulrich von Hutten, the articulate and outspoken member of the free imperial knights who had a burning desire to create a united Germany. Although he had never met Hutten,³⁸ he felt that Hutten was doing almost as much good for Germany and Christianity as was Luther.³⁹

Another humanist who was admired by Eberlin was Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, a man who was in no sense a nationalist but rather a cosmopolitan in his world view who wanted religious unity and peace. Nevertheless, Erasmus had an important influence on many of the German humanists. In 1521 Eberlin writes that "Erasmus of Rotterdam has done with a great English *[sic]* ingenuity much good for God's cause and his books have been very useful." Eberlin took it upon himself to translate a section of the *Praise of Folly*, the acclaimed satire upon the Roman Church by Erasmus, in order to bring it before the common people of Germany. With

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³⁷ *EAS*, I, p. 10.
³⁹ *EAS*, I, p. 4.
much satisfaction and pride, he in one of his pamphlets spoke highly of the importance of his translation of this widely read book. 40

The use of rhetoric was one of the most marked characteristics of the humanists. Eberlin in a letter to his cousin, Jacob Wehe of Leipheim, advised him not "to scorn the rules of rhetoric" since they will help one to "pour out the spirit of the Holy Ghost." To learn the art of utilizing rhetorical devices, he suggested that one should read the works of the old masters such as Cicero and Quintilian and the contemporary writers such as Erasmus and Melanchthon. 41

Accordingly, when Eberlin joined the Lutheran movement, he had been heavily swayed by the powerful currents of northern humanism. Yet, humanism in itself was seldom a sufficient force to motivate one to break with Catholicism nor was the acceptance of Lutheran theology always the sole factor. Part of the reason why Eberlin, who, unlike many of the humanists in the sense that he decisively broke with Rome, became a staunch supporter of Luther, may

40 EAS, I, p. 79.
41 EAS, III, p. 204.
be explained by an analysis of his social origin and class. 42

The status level with which he identified himself most closely was that of the lower nobility. 43 Whether or not the "von" in his full name represents noble lineage is a matter of speculation based upon internal pamphlet evidence. In a sermon which he preached to the order of the Knights of St. John in Ulm, he used terms of affection which he rarely used in connection with other classes. He told the Johanniter Knights that "I have many good friends among you in this order and therefore I wish you all the help of God." Then he added, "I pray to God that He will send his light into your hearts to save your souls and to enable you to carry the cross of Christ proudly." 44 Aside from the fact that he expressed emotional sympathy with the knights, he suggested some practical remedies for the plight of the

42 It is misleading to use the word "class" in the modern sense in the description of the social structure during the age of the Reformation. Eberlin and his contemporaries used the word Stände which usually had the meaning of estates of the realm, that is, those who performed an essential function in society and had similar interests and outlooks.

43 In the pamphlet Mich wundert, das kein Geld im Land ist (EAS, III, p. 152), Eberlin confirms his sympathy with the lower nobility but denies that he is of noble blood. A possible explanation may be that he sought in the dialog to give his position the semblance of clear thinking rather than class prejudice.

44 EAS, I, p. 194.
whole estate of the lower nobility. In the pamphlet *Ein frunftlich antwort aller gotforthigen...*, he writes that when the "monasteries are closed, their benefices should be given to the poorer nobility." Moreover, he sincerely believed that if the knights could end their feuding and become rearmed morally and spiritually, they would help themselves, as well as all members of their class. Further evidence of his link with the lower nobility is the aforementioned fact that he married the daughter of a poor nobleman who lived near Erfurt. In the status-conscious sixteenth century, marriage outside of one's estate was the exception rather than the rule.

As an observer of the world around him, Eberlin's vantage point seems to be one of a class which is threatened from above by the territorial princes and from below by the rising power of the merchant classes. He writes in *Die andere getreue Vermannung an den Rath von Ulm*, that the "great lords worry me since they seem to be carried away by the devil; they should once again be brought under the cross of Christ." Toward the wealthy traders and shopkeepers, he has an equal apprehension which was typical of his class.

45 EAS, I, p. 140.
46 EAS, I, p. 194.
47 EAS, III, p. 165.
48 EAS, III, p. 27.
In his celebrated pamphlet *Mich wundert, das kein Geld im Land ist*, he predicts that "soon the merchants and storeowners will have the upperhand and destroy the nobles, steal from the townsmen, and reduce the peasants to beggars."  

Eberlin's social background affected and influenced the content of many of his viewpoints expressed in the pamphlets. Yet, it would be wrong to classify him as only a spokesman for the depressed members of the lower nobility. His class interest, his background in northern humanism, and his sincere belief in Lutheran dogma all fuse together and suggest a motivational basis which transcends the narrow limits of one estate. Indeed, if any one single element could be singled out as the driving force behind Eberlin's active mind, it would be his sincere faith in the power of the Word and the overpowering greatness of Christ. But, since it is unwise to single out one motivational force, all the various currents working upon him must be considered and evaluated in their proper context. In sum, he is at once a voice for his own class, a humanist, and a strong adherent of Lutheran doctrine. He lived through a period of great transition and as a consequence endured a rather tumultuous life. Responding and reacting to the currents of thought in his day, his whole career becomes a mirror of an epoch of upheaval.

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49 *EAS*, III, p. 27.
One of the first steps in clearly understanding and properly evaluating Eberlin's overall significance in fostering the spread of the German Reformation is the examination of his work as a pamphlet writer. The polemical Flugschriften, as described in the following chapter, were an important innovation in which Eberlin played a significant role that has been largely overlooked by historians of the Reformation Era.
CHAPTER III

THE POLEMICAL FLUGSCHRIFTEN

The tensions and complaints of sixteenth-century German society were soon reflected in the propaganda of the reformers and the prophets of a new day in Germany. In 1520, a flood of pamphlets descended upon Germany and became the "true soldiers" of the Reformation.\(^1\) The war of pamphlets was a phenomenon that was a new experience in the history of the German people.

In the fifteenth century there had been at least one important forerunner of the pamphlet in the aforementioned widely circulated "Reformation of Emperor Sigismund," the first printed declaration of grievances in the German language.\(^2\) This document was a work of prime importance in the history of the peasant uprisings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It energetically expounded the secular demands of the common people and insisted on "God's Justice" for all. Significantly, this work was reprinted many times and was in circulation at the time of the Lutheran Reformation.

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The art of propaganda dissemination evolved to the extent that small sheets were printed with woodcut pictures and short captions. Gradually, longer sections of writing were added until the average circular had more literary than pictorial content. At the time of Luther's break with Rome, a number of printers in Germany were able to earn a living by publishing small pious books, folk sayings, and calendars. But real prosperity was unknown to most of the printers until the Reformation became a puissant and widespread movement. By the year 1520, hundreds of small pamphlets filled with revolutionary and Reformation slogans were printed and sold. In the period from 1518 to 1523 titles which were printed in German and bore revolutionary or Reformation headings increased almost one-thousand per cent. About sixteen hundred titles came from Wittenberg alone in the six years after the beginning of the Reformation; further, there were presses in at least fifty German cities which represented a press increase of ninefold over the previous decade. The tremendous stimulation of the Reformation to printing continued until about 1530.

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Itinerant book hawkers and peddlers took the mass of printed matter to trade fairs in the cities and to smaller hamlets in remote areas. Some enterprising salesmen wended their way through rural areas selling their pamphlets.\(^5\) Paralleling the increase in printed material was a significant rise in the general literacy of the public. The brethren of the Devotio Moderna had founded a number of elementary schools in the German towns between 1456 and 1506. Most of these schools emphasized reading and writing in Latin, singing, and biblical history.\(^6\) Moreover, the brethren frequently offered instruction in the use of vernacular. During the same period nine new universities were opened in Germany. As a result there was a considerable base of literate people in Germany at the time of the Reformation. Those who were unable to read could without great difficulty find someone to aid them in reading.

The chief literary vehicle of the Reformation was the Flugschrift (pamphlet) and the shorter Flugblatt (fly-sheer) of fewer than three pages in length. The pamphlet which bore the brunt of the task of carrying the ideas of the reformers to the masses ranged in size from three sheets

\(^{5}\) Louise Holborn, "Printing and the Growth of a Protestant Movement in Germany from 1517 to 1524," Journal of Church History (1942), XL, p. 125.

to several hundred with the average running between a dozen and thirty pages.\(^7\) It is difficult to ascertain the exact cost but according to one authority, the price of the shorter pamphlets was well within the range of the poorer classes at about one groschen.\(^8\) Moreover, the quality of the paper and the printing was good. After four hundred years, Eberlin's extant pamphlets are still in an excellent state of preservation. On one occasion he writes, "I love a printer who prints good material correctly and on good paper."\(^9\)

Frequently, the pamphlet covers were decorated with woodcuts and slogans designed to bring the reader a piquant message. Some of Eberlin's pamphlets had portraits of prominent people of the day such as Erasmus or Charles the Fifth. Others had scenes ridiculing fat and idle monks. One had a set of contrasting altars with one being a simple Lutheran altar and pulpit with a group of pious looking saints listening to a sermon and on the opposite half of the cover was a cluttered and ornate Catholic altar and pulpit. Pictures of asses with the Papal scepter or the

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\(^7\) These figures were taken from Paul Hohenemser's Catalog, Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Societatsdruckerei, 1925), passim.

\(^8\) Kapp, op. cit., p. 436.

\(^9\) EAS, III, p. 162.
devil with holy regalia were commonplace. Finally, many were simple genre scenes with a religious theme.

The sum total of popular pamphlets printed during the period from 1517 to 1530 is difficult to determine. Many have disappeared without a trace, some have been destroyed in war, others have been burned and destroyed by anti-Lutheran officials, and a part of them were thrown away. Often the common people had no secure place to keep the pamphlets. Furthermore, as late as 1800, interest among scholars and librarians was not strong enough in the popular literature of the sixteenth century, especially that which was written by the lesser figures, to warrant the systematic collection and preservation of the pamphlets. Yet, many of them have come down to us and it is logical to assume that they represent only a part of the original avalanche.10

Among the Gustav Freytag Collection of pamphlets in Frankfurt, there are six hundred titles by about one hundred and fifty authors who wrote and published during the early decades of the Reformation. The headings and places of publication indicate the vogue of pamphlet writing had spread rapidly all over Germany and had affected both Catholic and Protestant factions. Although many are unsigned, it has been possible for scholars by the use of

10 Kapp, op. cit., p. 136.
critical techniques to determine the author and origin of the work.\textsuperscript{11} On the other hand, hundreds of the pamphlets are signed and dated. The list of writers is impressive, containing representatives of the estates of German society, nobles, knights, laymen, monks, priests, reformers, shoemakers, and scholarly humanists.\textsuperscript{12} Without question, Luther, who had the art of popular writing almost instinctively, led the way in using his weapon to the utmost. Many other able men supported Luther either directly or indirectly with pamphlets of their own. Ulrich von Hutten, Johann Brenz, Hans Sachs, Wilibald Pirckheimer, Helmuth von Cronberg, Martin Butzer, Johann Bugenhagen, Urbanus Rhegius, and Eberlin von Gänzburg are but a few.

The contents of many of the broadsides ran parallel to the major questions and controversies of the day such as the social, political, and economic needs of Germany. Frequently, the pamphlet literature served as the newspapers of the day. For example, Eberlin often referred to contemporary events such as the abdication of Christian II (1513-1523), the King of Denmark, or to the statements and positions of public figures.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Hohenemser, op. cit., passim.
\textsuperscript{13} BAS, III, p. 153.
As stated previously, Luther pioneered the writing of the small pamphlet and sermon for publication intended for the mass market and he has been given proper credit by scholars. For him, it was of more significance to write many small booklets than one large scholarly volume.14 Moreover, he seldom hesitated to lend his own prestige to other authors by writing prefaces to their pamphlets. For example, in 1528, he wrote the introduction to the anonymous work, Von der falschen Bettler Buberei.15 But, even though he led the way in the writing of propaganda material in 1521, it is unwise to neglect some of the others who foresaw with equal clairvoyance the tremendous possibilities of the Flugschrift.

Eberlin was one of the first of the reformers to grasp the implications of bringing the "truth" to the German people in their own tongue.16 In his own mind he was keenly aware of the fact that he was a pioneer when he announced in his first pamphlet that he was advocating

14 Dr. Martin Luthers Werke, VI (Weimar: Herman Böhlau, 1923), p. 203. Hereafter cited as WE.

15 Johann Konrad Irmischer (Editor), Dr. Martin Luther's Vermischte deutsche Schriften, LXIII (Frankfurt am Main: Herder und Zimmer, 1854), p. 270. Hereafter cited as EE.

16 EAS, I, p. 86.
"ein nee nützlich Kunst der buchtruckery." With the new weapons at his command, he informed his readers that this is "how we destroy the Roman Empire of the pope." Indeed, he searched for and found a viable method of establishing contact with the masses.

It did not take long before Catholic officials were greatly disturbed over the impact of the immense number of pamphlets coming from Lutheran presses. On February 8, 1521, Aleander, the papal nuncio, wrote from Worms to Pope Leo X that "Every day, Lutheran propaganda in the German language pours from the presses. It is so popular that book printers will not sell anything but Lutheran writings." Two years later in Basel, Erasmus made a similar observation in a letter which he wrote to King Henry VIII of England: "No one is allowed to print a word against Luther and one may write what he will against the Pope."

It is not surprising that the Edict of Worms of 1521 declared that all Lutheran books and pamphlets must

\[17\text{Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, XVII, no. 76.}
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\[18\text{BAS, III, p. 234.}
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\[19\text{Die Depeschen des Nuntius Aleander vom Wormser Reichstage, Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, IV (Halle 1886), p. 44. Hereafter cited as DA.}
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\[20\text{Cited in Kapp, op. cit., p. 417.}
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be burned. Similarly in 1525, Ferdinand, the brother of the Holy Roman emperor and ruler of the Hapsburg possessions of Austria, Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola, forbade the reading, buying, selling, and printing of the works of Eberlin, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and Luther. Though local officials had orders to destroy heretical materials and were often themselves unsympathetic with the ideas contained therein, they often hesitated to interfere with the powerful economic interests of the printers. To make matters worse, distribution was often rapid and extensive and frequently the local authorities were confronted with a fait accompli. A final complication in the Catholic move to suppress Lutheran writings was the fact that as early as 1521 there was a tacit acceptance in some areas of the spirit of cuius regio, eius religio, a factor which militated against uniform regulation and suppression.

Eberlin was one of the first of the reformers to attract the public attention of three of the most prominent defenders of the Catholic position, Cochläus, Murner, and Aleander. Especially interested in his writings was Cochläus who went to the trouble of summarizing in Latin

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21 Ibid., pp. 431-432.
22 Holborn, loc. cit., p. 135.
the content of his first fifteen pamphlets in order to inform Aleander of their nature. Cochläus' conclusion was that Eberlin was guilty of being a German slanderer of Rome. After reading the report of Cochläus with avid interest, Aleander, on March 15, 1521, wrote to Rome from Worms that a certain Franciscan Observant from Ulm (Eberlin) had achieved fame and popularity through his pamphlets and his agitation both written and vocal was causing trouble for the Catholic Church. Aleander judged that there was nothing he could do at the moment but hope his brothers in Ulm would pray for him.

A direct attempt to counter Lutheran propaganda with means other than restrictive measures and prayer was made by the brilliant Catholic pamphlet writer, Thomas Murner (1475-1537). Murner, born in Oberehnheim in Alsace, entered the Franciscan Order in 1491 and later became a popular preacher and head of a friary in Strassbourg. He studied at the Universities of Freiburg i. Br., Paris, Basel, and Cracow to become a doctor of theology and a doctor of jurisprudence. Indeed, he was a formidable man pitted

\[\text{\textsuperscript{24}}\text{Paul Kalkoff, Ulrich von Hutten und die Reformation (Leipzig: R. Haupt, 1920), p. 541.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{25}}\text{DA, loc. cit., p. 98.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\text{Max Koch and Friedrich Vogt, Geschichte der Literatur von den Ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1934), pp. 294-300.}\]
against the reformers. He had been attacking Luther since 1520 trying to persuade the German populace that he was a dangerous radical. To antagonize him further Murner translated Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* into vulgar German, a deed which was against the author's will since the pamphlet was intended only for scholars. The German version of the pamphlet was done poorly and was neither exact nor complete.  

Murner quickly recognized the potency of the Flugschrift as a weapon to help stem the Reformation. In 1522 he published his pamphlet *Von dem grossen Lutherischen Narren*, which warned the reader against the Lutheran plot to upset old traditions, customs, and the established hierarchy of order. Soon, he turned his pen from attacking Luther to the writing of parodies on the work of Eberlin. He suggested to his readers that Eberlin's famous *15 Bundesgenossen* (his first fifteen pamphlets) should be renamed the *15 Bundschuhgenossen*. Thus Murner was trying to link the reformers with those peasant bands who periodically plundered and pillaged the countryside.  

Information on the exact number of pamphlets printed in each edition by Reformation printers is not generally available. It is know that some editions of Luther's

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28 *Gravier, op. cit.*, p. 249.
pamphlets contained four-thousand copies. Similarly, Adam Petri of Basel printed three-thousand copies of Bugenhagen's Psalmenauslegung. According to the Lübeck Convention of 1498, many German printers agreed on one-thousand copy editions. It is likely, however, that printers were limited more by technical and economic factors than by self-imposed agreements. Further, it is necessary to determine the number of duplicate editions. For example, in a two-year period from 1518 to 1520 twenty separate printers took Luther's Disputatio pro declaracione virtutis indulgentiarum and published it as Ein Sermon von Ablass und Gnade. Another factor to be considered is the translation of the pamphlet into dialects other than high-German. Otto Clemen discovered in the University library at Helmstedt that Eberlin's pamphlets had been translated into low-German and published. Eberlin's early success with his pamphlets stimulated him to produce more of them. His Flugschriften, which were heavily loaded with social as well as theological content,

29Kapp, op. cit., p. 325.
30Holborn, loc. cit., p. 129.
31Kapp, op. cit., p. 412
sold in large quantities; undoubtedly, he reaped some financial reward from their sale. But he wrote to convince the simple laity of the need for reform of the church, state, and society according to Christian principles and to bring the Word of God to all. Further, he was aware of the didactic value of inexpensive reading material. He writes in Der Vierd trostloss Pfaff that "German books are increasing and can serve as teachers for the unlearned. From them a five-year-old boy can learn the basic rudiments of reading in a language full of Godly and human wisdom." The net effect of his writing was to bring to the common man a broader knowledge of the issues of the day as well as entertainment and education. In short, the poor and the ignorant were given a new sense of dignity, enlightenment, and importance. Whether the pamphlets debated the position of Jews in society, legal or judicial problems, or the question of social welfare, the average person had an opportunity to read and to think for himself.

Eberlin's popularity among the common man, his bold rhetoric, and his Swabian humor not only pleased his readers

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34 EAS, II, p. 69.
35 Bezold, loc. cit., p. 2.
but impressed the printers. The Reformation pamphlet writer had a close working arrangement with his publisher. Often the printer was in his own right a man of letters or strongly interested in promoting Reformation doctrine because of sincere religious belief as well as for profit.

The first printer to publish Eberlin's pamphlets was Pamphilus Gengenbach (1480-1525), a native of the imperial city of Nürnberg. By 1508 he had moved to Basel and had become an independent printer. He earned his living prior to the Reformation by printing moralizing poetry, songs, and feast-day games. Much of the material he printed was from his own pen. When the Reformation began, he soon became an ardent Lutheran, marked by his German patriotism and religious sincerity.

Although most Reformation pamphlets are without the mark of their printers, it is possible to determine the publisher by analyzing title lines, dialects, and common misspellings. But in the case of Gengenbach, there is at least one of Eberlin's pamphlets in which his name as printer appears on the title page, a fact which has


remained unnoticed until the present writing. From January to October of 1521 he printed a series of fifteen pamphlets for Eberlin.

As mentioned before, Gengenbach was more than a printer. In terms of literature he was important as one of the earliest dramatic poets in the sixteenth century to write in the vernacular. After the completion of Eberlin's printing order, Gengenbach wrote Novella, a powerful answer to Murner's aforementioned Von dem grossen Lutherischen Narren. In 1523, he published his pamphlet the Totenfresser which severely condemned the Catholics for charging the poor high rates for funeral services. His final pamphlet, printed and written by himself, was Der Evangelisch Bürger. It was an appeal to townspeople to accept the Lutheran faith. While this work was somewhat pedantic, it was a strong statement of Lutheran theology and an important part of the pamphlet war.

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38Ibid., p. 17, part II. Götze in Part II of his volume has reproduced a series of pamphlet covers with no attempt at analysis. His Eberlin reproduction must have been the title page of the rarer 1521 edition. The Freytag collection holds a 1523 copy of the same pamphlet which lists no printer on the title page.


40Koch and Vogt, op. cit., p. 395

41Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, XVII, no. 97b.
It is not difficult to see that Eberlin and Gengenbach were men of the same mold and of almost equal caliber. The sincerity of the printer's belief mingled with Eberlin's enthusiasm and effective writing proved to be a potent combination. After Eberlin was well established, he said that "if one wants to write pamphlets, he should get a good printer like Pamphilius Gengenbach of Basel."\(^{42}\)

A number of other important Reformation printers are linked with the production of Eberlin's works. Since many of the publishers were highly partisan, a connection between the printer and the writer helps to establish the importance of Eberlin as a reformer.

Several of Luther's printers in Wittenberg were important in the production of Eberlin's pamphlets. Melchior Lotter the younger, who had learned typesetting from his father, had become by 1519 the first capable printer in the city of Wittenberg. By 1524 he had printed all Luther's major works and many of those by Melanchthon. Lotter added to Eberlin's prestige by printing his Wider die Schänder der Creaturen Gottes in 1525.\(^{43}\) When Lotter left Wittenberg in 1529 and moved to Magdeburg, Nickel Schirlenz, who had been in Wittenberg since 1521, took his place as chief printer for Luther and other reformers.

\(^{42}\)EAS, II, p. 73.

\(^{43}\)Hohenemser, op. cit., no. 3237
Schirlenz had an exceptionally good relationship with Luther and often gave him copies of his own sermons which he found useful in his voluminous writing.\footnote{44} In 1522 and 1524 Schirlenz printed two of Eberlin's major pamphlets, \textit{Eine Freundliche Vermahnung an die Christen zu Augsburg} and \textit{Wider den unvorsichtigen Ausgang vieler Klosterleute}. Another important printer connected with Eberlin was Johann Schwann of Strassburg. Leaving a Franciscan monastery in Basel, he went to Wittenberg in 1522 and learned the art of printing. From Wittenberg he went to Strassburg and in the next few years printed a whole series of Reformation pamphlets. It is certain that he printed Eberlin's \textit{Ein Schöner Spiegel des Christlichen Lebens}.\footnote{45}

A fourth printer associated with Eberlin was Ulrich Morhart. Although he was a native of Augsburg, he set up his shop in Tübingen. Between 1523 and 1535, he published eighty-three works and helped spread the Reformation through Württemberg. Of Eberlin's pamphlets, he printed \textit{Der Glockenturm} in 1523.\footnote{46}

Some Reformation printers began their careers by producing nothing but Lutheran materials and ended up on the Catholic side. Wolfgang Stöckel of Leipzig, who was

\footnote{44}\textit{Götze, op. cit.}, p. 55.\footnote{45}\textit{Hohenemser, op. cit.}, no. 3104.\footnote{46}\textit{Ibid.}, no. 2975
educated at the University of Erfurt, early in the Reformation switched from printing simple stories and riddles to printing pamphlets of Luther, Hutten, and Eberlin. In 1522 he was forced by Duke Georg to cease printing Lutheran propaganda in Dresden. Failing to obtain, via a popular petition, permission to remain in Dresden as an evangelical printer, he fled to Grimma where he printed among other things Eberlin's *Vom Missbrauch Christlicher Freiheit*. Still persecuted by Duke Georg in Grimma, Stöckel tried to escape detection by changing his printing type. Unable to make money by working underground, he became a Catholic and worked for Emser and Eberlin's enemy, Cochläus. 47

Thus a number of different printers in many different cities published Eberlin's pamphlets. The geographical range of the publication sites is further evidence as to the popularity of his writing. Aside from the fact that his printers were widely dispersed, the pamphlets were carried by traders all over Europe. On one occasion, Eberlin sent with a traveling merchant many bundles of unbound pamphlets as far east as the court of the King Louis II. 48

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As Eberlin's reputation grew, other reformers approached him for help and advice. Soon he had a hand in operations other than the writing of pamphlets. In 1524 Johann Lang (1488-1548), who was at one time the prior at a monastery in Erfurt and later a professor at Wittenberg, gave Eberlin the opportunity to oversee the publication of the Erfurter Enchiridion, the earliest of the Lutheran hymnals. Eberlin loved music and believed that "it is a lovely thing when one can go into a church...and sing." On another occasion he was asked by a printer to endorse a new catechism by Johann Brenz. As soon as it was approved by him, it was published in Ulm.

Although Eberlin was an enthusiastic proponent of the medium of the printed page and did much to foster the publication of Reformation material, he insisted upon the use of discretion by printers in refraining from printing second-rate writings for the sake of quick sales and high profits. In the satirical pamphlet Mich wundert das kein Geld im Land ist, he writes with regard to the publishing business that it seems as though "the whole world is in the hands of buyers and sellers." He went on to complain

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49 WE, I, p. 18.
50 EAS, I, p. 41.
51 Karl Keim, Schwäbische Reformationsgeschichte (Tübingen: L. J. Fues, 1885), p. 68.
that useful works such as history books, which would teach the young useful examples, and other types of decent literature were slighted in favor of sensational and misleading books and pamphlets. Further, he believed that many printers failed to differentiate between "good and bad, good and better, and decent and indecent, for the sole purpose of obtaining excess profits."^52

The importance of Eberlin as writer of some literary merit and his stimulation to the art of printing led Hans Volz, the editor of the Corpus Catholicorum, to write that "Eberlin von Gänzburg is one of the most significant writers of the Reformation."^53 Gustav Freytag suggests that Eberlin's writing pleased the reader because his work was full of poetical imagination and warmth and that from his pen "came a self-pleasing quality that made it possible for even his enemies to endure it."^54 With fewer plaudits, Gottfried von Blochwitz states that Eberlin's style was at once "naive and base, symbolic and spiritual, inspirational


and poetic, gloomy and victorious,...as were most of the Reformation pamphlets."55

Most critics commenting on the life and work of Eberlin have felt free to generalize, praise, or condemn his ideas without indicating that they made any attempt to view his thought as a whole or to study his relationship to the Lutheran Reformation. In short, although some attention has been given to him as a writer, the fact that he had a clear understanding of the basic principles of the Reformation has been overlooked by historians. By means of the pamphlet he helped prepare the way and spread the Reformation by introducing the core of Lutheran doctrine to the common man.

CHAPTER IV

EBERLIN AS AN EVANGELICAL

In order to understand Eberlin's social and political views it is necessary to investigate the nature of his faith and the relationship of his religious ideas to the doctrines of the Lutheran Reformation. Further, the interaction of sixteenth-century Lutheran thought and social movements can best be illustrated by a study of the impact of Lutheran ideas upon one individual rather than by making generalizations on the whole era. Eberlin's political and social ethics must be understood in terms of his conception of Lutheranism. His basic ethical standards, his Weltanschauung, and his eschatological position would be of little interest or significance if they were not linked to his religious outlook. That such a connection exists is part of the thesis of this study.

In the course of Eberlin's many pamphlets, letters, and sermons he develops a clear picture of what he thinks the sincere Lutheran should believe and in what manner he should live. His best statements on religious doctrine are found in Klag und Antwort von Lutherischen und Bebstischen Pfaffen über die Reformation and Wie sich ein Diener Gottes Worts in seinem Thun halten soll. Scattered throughout his
works are numerous comments on religious matters, especially in *Eine freundliche Vermahnung an die Christen zu Augsburg* and his long letters to the Christians at Ulm.

During the period from 1521 to 1530 he made many deliberate references to the fact that his thinking and his ideas were closely related and heavily influenced by Luther and other reformers in Wittenberg. As mentioned earlier, he did not hesitate to associate his doctrines with those of Luther. Altogether he lived in Wittenberg for three and one-half years, which was ample time to absorb the various currents of Reformation thought in that city.¹ It is not without justification that he writes, "Doctor Lutherus and Melanchthon have often spoken like I am writing," or "I have read Luther's books and have heard him preach often as well as living near and learning from him."²

He was careful to point out that a distinction must be made between Luther as a man and Luther as a wellspring of God's truth. Eberlin believed that "Luther does not have a monopoly on correct theology; I will tell you the truth just as Luther is a source of truth."³

¹Eberlin in a letter to the Christians in the Mark of Burgau writes that he had spent four and one-half years at Wittenberg but this figure is inconsistent with other statements relating to his career (*EAS*, II, p. 275).
²*EAS*, II, p. 54.
³*EAS*, II, p. 97.
As a reformer, Eberlin had a strong sense of urgency. He believed that the time in history had come, a moment long past due, when the true spirit of Christ would envelop the land, the whole of Germany. Although no nation had been so slow as Germany in coming to Christianity, he believed his country was now "the heart of Christianity" and would have to be the leader in bringing about reform. He lamented the fact that "God has been for many hundreds of years angry with the world.... God's work has been forgotten, his way neglected." Clearly, he sought and hoped for the return of evangelical Christianity which "prevailed one-thousand years before scholasticism."

A portion of Eberlin's pamphlets is concerned with a direct attack on the abuses of power by the Church and the corruption within it. With satire, accusation, and indictment, he lashes at and berates the bishops, priests, wandering and begging monks, and all monastic people. But he is subtle, clever, and poignant rather than hateful and bitter. During his years of wandering, he had seen a good portion of Germany and had had many first-hand experiences with the institutions which he condemned. He had a vast

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4 EAS, I, p. 80.
5 EAS, I, p. 2.
6 EAS, III, p. 131.
7 EAS, I, p. 86.
reservoir of knowledge with which to discredit the Catholic Church of his day.

The rich and omnipotent bishops in Germany became central targets for his wit. He called for a permanent ban on all secular power held by men such as the bishops of Trier and Mainz and that no members of the College of Cardinals should be allowed to reside in Germany.\(^8\) With satirical Swabian humor he writes in \textit{Mich wundert, das kein Geld im Land ist} that "the pompous and worldly bishops of Mainz, Würzburg, and Bamberg have stolen so much wealth from the people and have become so rich that there is hardly a highway robber left in Franconia."\(^9\) In short, the aristocratic bishops (\textit{Junkerbischofe}) have utilized the tithes of the common folk to increase their own power.\(^10\)

Eberlin in the stinging pamphlet \textit{Syben frumm aber trostlass pfaffen} discusses the problems of the Church as seen through the eyes of seven pious clerics who argue with one another over their ills and needs. A dialogue is developed by the speakers who call for priestly purity, comment on the laziness of the common priest, discuss the duties of the priest, and speculate on the dangers confronting the Church. The fifth, sixth, and seventh members of

\(^8\)\textit{EAS}, I, p. 11.


the group argue in respective order that the discussion at hand is worthless, worry about clerics who bicker among themselves, and decide that a referee is needed.

Herr Engelhart, the first speaker in the dialogue, states that never in his lifetime has he read the Bible. Since the tide of Lutheranism is at the moment high, he thinks he should ask some learned and pious man what a good Lutheran should read. The learned man (Eberlin) suggests that Herr Engelhart should first read the third chapter of the first letter of Paul to Timothy which states,

Now, a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money (I Tim. 3:1-4).

Amazed at the rules of conduct, the first cleric exclaims "So helff mir gott."[11] Having established the desired effect with his reader, Eberlin turns the dialogue over to the second speaker, Herr Thenge, who laments with a guilty conscience the fact that the "poor people are hungry while we are full, they work and we play, they have cares and worry and we whistle. We take their money without giving thanks and without need."[12] The third speaker enters the conversation and tells his friends that he has heard an adventuresome, persuasive, and appealing preacher by the

name of Eberlin in the city of Rothenburg. "Eberlin," says the priest, has told his audience that "he had seen two clerics bathing in public with two prostitutes." Even though sin was difficult to avoid, the third speaker concluded that he would try to resist temptation. The course of the remainder of the dialogue touches upon a wide range of subjects including a discussion of marriage of the clergy and the proper concern that the Catholic Church should have for the poor. At first thought, the reader of Eberlin's dialogue may smile but suddenly the penetrating criticism of the existing religious institution surges piquantly to the fore.

Eberlin blamed both the regular and secular clergy for the perversion of Christ's teachings with the scholastic ideas of men such as Peter Lombard who in the view of many of the reformers had turned Christian doctrine into a body of thought dominated by worldly men and had usurped Christ's place as shepherd, teacher, preacher, and martyr. Since a mortal man could not hope to replace the immortal Christ, he charged that the clergy had failed not only in their function as priests but in their work as shepherds. As a result of this failure, representatives of the Catholic

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13 EAS, II, p. 70.

14 Cited in Karl Schottenloher, Flugblatt und Zeitung (Berlin: Richard Carl Schmidt & Co., 1922), p. 100.
Church should no longer be entrusted with the care of poor folk who depended upon charity, because prists and bishops had been unfaithful to the tasks which had been given them and had lied and cheated when it suited their interests. The regular clergy, such as the Observants, he writes, "are carriers of untruth and robbers of the poor." In his view, the problem with the monks who beg is that they take money from the poor and force them to give double alms which they cannot afford.

Those who lived in monasteries were often the objects of a great deal of ridicule and criticism not only of the Lutheran reformers but of famous Catholic humanists like Erasmus who wrote in the widely read satire, Praise of Folly, that people as a whole detest this race of men to the extent "that meeting one by accident is supposed to be bad luck. Yet,...they are representing to us the lives of the apostles...." In Germany, critics such as Kettenbach write, "Three birds in a birdhouse love God with more energy than a hundred monks in a monastery." In an

15 EAS, I, p. 125.
16 Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, XVII, no. 76.
18 Cited in Schottenloher, op. cit., p. 72.
attempt to impress readers with the great need for reform within the Church, the fault-finders often resorted to gross oversimplification and exaggeration to prove their points.

It is interesting to compare Eberlin's comments with the trends set by Erasmus or the popular Kettenbach. Though Eberlin did not hesitate to turn his caustic wit against monks and nuns, he did prefer to write about them with words full of concern and consternation. He did not pour out unqualified invective in the impassioned manner of many of the opponents of monastic life. With all candor he realized that categorical denunciation and sensational propaganda were as deceptive and dishonorable as some of the people about whom he was writing. He writes in the pamphlet *Wider unvorsichtigen Ausgang vieler Klosterleute* that he is not an unmitigated enemy of all the men and women who spend their lives in the cloisters. With all due respect he maintains, "I have many good friends among the cloister people and I have found much good among them and many are good Christians."\(^{19}\) With an even temper and a sense of fair play he adds, "One could perhaps find a number of good cloisters where the members live according to Christ's way."\(^{20}\) As for the secular clergy, he believed that since they were not all going to disappear at once,

\(^{19}\) *EAS*, II, p. 135.

\(^{20}\) *EAS*, II, p. 136
"They should travel about with honor and carry themselves with dignity and take pity on others."21

Although Eberlin was surprisingly tolerant of the monks and nuns, his basic belief was that it was not necessary to live under the rules of a monastery to be a better Christian than those who lived normal lives. In short, the rules of the cloister "are human foolishness."22 A useful life to him was one of practical work whether it be farming, handicraft, or some other service. He concluded, "Since the best life is one which serves the Lord in a practical way there is no need for cloisters."23

Eberlin's position implied an immediate abandonment of the monasteries but he did not demand that all the cloistered folk flee from their shelter and enter directly into the secular world. Imbued with a strong sense of social responsibility and foreseeing the terrible plight that thousands of refugee monks and nuns would encounter if they suddenly changed their mode of life, he admonished them by writing, "Do not run out of the cloister if you are unprepared because you will have to eat, clothe yourself, and find your place in society." For those who have no friends or family on the outside or those who are sick he suggested

21 Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, XVII, no. 427.
22 EAS, III, p. 7.
23 EAS, II, p. 125.
they become "spiritual Lutherans" while physically remaining inside Catholic walls. He understood that the institution of monasticism was deeply entrenched in many areas, especially in southern Germany. Realizing that it would take several generations to abolish the monastic "blight" on the land, he was content to wait until the time when the older monks and nuns and those who had no other place to go died from natural causes. He was, however, adamant in insisting that young men and women be discouraged from entering religious orders by their parents. "I warn all you people to be very careful with your children and never stick them into a cloister; if you do, do it with great forethought." Having a practical mind and a knowledge that old ways die slowly, he offered a suggestion for those who insisted on a monastic life. "If a person over thirty is foolish enough to elect cloister life, he should be allowed to enter; and once he has taken his final vows, there he must remain forever."

The large numbers of Germans in religious orders at the outbreak of the Reformation and the immense amount of wealth which it took to support them were, in Eberlin's view, the chief causes of economic depression, human misery,

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24 EAS, II, p. 130.
25 EAS, II, p. 130.
26 EAS, I, p. 112.
and deprivation. He viewed the great costs of supporting the many establishments of the Catholic Church as one of the main factors to be remedied before "we can have a paradise on earth."27

One of the major contributions of Eberlin to the Lutheran Reformation was the fact that he helped to organize Lutheran religious ideas into clear and concise statements which enabled the lay reader to grasp the basic points of Lutheran theology. Although he was not a theologian, he indicates in his pamphlets that he had a genuine understanding of Reformation religious thought. The central points of Lutheran doctrine such as the instrumentality of the Scriptures, the centrality of Christ in Christian faith, and the theology of the cross, justification by faith, the Lutheran view of the sacraments, the priesthood of the believers, and the authority of sola scriptura are all clearly stated in his pamphlets.

Of the many slogans of the Reformation, one of the most common was Das Wort sie sollen lassen stan ("we depend on the Word of God"). In the same spirit, Eberlin points out that if the Christian would read the Bible in its pure form, it would be daily bread for all hungry souls.28 As far as he was concerned, the Bible alone contained all the

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28 EAS, III, p. 19.
necessary articles of belief and was a supreme work and not a human institution. "I have heard Doctor Martin Luther preach that the Bible is all that is necessary for a Christian who has a strong faith." In interpreting the Bible, he accepted Luther's ideas on the priesthood of the believers. Scholars, clergy, peasants, townsmen, and knights "shall decide in common on matters pertaining to the wisdom and laws of the Gospel." Since he would not tolerate abuses in the freedom of the individual to draw conclusions from the Bible, he urged that the unlearned should be guided by scholars; nevertheless, a new dignity now rested with the common man.

A topic of vital importance and bitter controversy during the Reformation was the proper interpretation of the sacraments. Eberlin's definition of a sacrament as an "event in which God gives us an outward sign of his promise that mankind will be forgiven by God's grace and holiness" fits nicely with Luther's explanation. However, over the disputatious rite of the Lord's Supper, Eberlin, who leaned toward the position of Zwingli, writes, "no miracle takes place but rather the sacrament of holy communion is a vehicle for God's Word and is a symbol of his suffering." 

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29EAS, II, p. 167.
30EAS, I, p. 201.
31EAS, I, p. 131.
32EAS, III, pp. 223-224.
But, unwilling to make an issue with Luther out of his stand on the sacraments, he suggests that his readers study Luther's pamphlets on the subject.\textsuperscript{33} No person rich or poor, healthy or sick, should be prevented from partaking of the Last Supper, a celebration of the greatest importance; but, in Eberlin's view, it is meaningful only when accompanied by faith.\textsuperscript{34} In sum, equality of laity was the \textit{sine qua non} of his position and a basic part of the Reformation.

Just as faith was one of the cornerstones of Luther's religious thought, so it was for Eberlin who emphasized the vital importance of a strong faith as the key to being a true Christian. In his pamphlet \textit{Ein Büchlein worin auf drei Fragen geantwortet wird}, he comments at length upon what he thought an evangelical life should rest. He insists that all men from all strata of society can be Lutherans if they accept the idea that faith is a gift from God and that it is not within an individual's power to believe what he will. If the faith is to be rock hard, as it must be, then the believer must be a good Christian in

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{EAS}, III, p. 224. Eberlin's clearest statement on the nature of the Lord's Supper is found in \textit{Wie sich ein Diener Gottes Worts in Seinem thun halten soll}, which was a letter to his cousin Jacob Wehe and was not intended for publication. Moreover, the letter was published at least four years prior to the climax of the Sacramentarian Controversy which came at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. Eberlin's reaction to Luther's split with Zwingli is unknown.

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{EAS}, I, p. 21.
his heart since the heart is incapable of being misled by reason. A strong faith in Christ alone places a great responsibility on the shoulders of every Lutheran but at the same time gives him a new freedom. He advises the Christians in Augsburg to rejoice since now you are Lutheran and "free from the old laws and are responsible only to Christ. But, as Paul warned the Romans and Galatians, be careful not to misuse your freedom."

Permeated with the spirit of St. Paul, Eberlin paraphrased much of what the Apostle had written in his letters. As Paul wrote to the Galatians and Philippians, so Eberlin wrote to the people of Ulm, Augsburg, Burgau, and to the masses throughout Germany. "You are free from death, hell, and the devil as long as you believe in Christ." Further, "if something is worthwhile, think about it, love it...then God will be with you."

Many Lutheran reformers frequently were questioned by their followers or those thinking seriously of becoming evangelicals on the problem of the relationship of Christianity and predestination. When the question was posed to Luther, he often replied that in Christ were all treasures and none could be had without Him. As a result, "we should

36 EAS, II, p. 149.
37 EAS, II, pp. 149-150.
give no place whatever to any argument concerning the subject of predestination." Eberlin in his first letter to the people of Ulm comments on the matter of predestination in a manner somewhat inconsistent with Luther's position but not necessarily contradictory. He apologizes in the Ulm letter for not developing the issue further and prefaces his remarks by giving Luther's position on the paramount importance of faith in gaining salvation. He proceeds to explain to his reader that God will give a sign to those having achieved a genuine faith. "When a true belief comes, God will show the believer a sign which may be in the form of temptation by the devil; therefore, temptation is sometimes a good sign." Then follows the statement that "the Christian Church is a community of predestined people who believe that Christ is the head of the Church." He concludes by writing that "God does not allow some people the grace to come to the Christian faith." Apparently he remained closer to the spirit of the Augustinian concept of predestination than did Luther. The thread of predestination thought among some of the

40 EAS, I, p. 85.
41 EAS, I, p. 27.
reformers was not unusual since many had reacted strongly to the semi-Pelagian currents operating in many of the late medieval nominalists and Franciscans. One final note of explanation as to his interest in predestination is that he was not one to leave any topic of popular interest untouched.

In another area, Eberlin clearly understood Luther's assertion of the absolute uniqueness of Christ and His overwhelming dominance as the central figure in the Christian religion. In the pamphlet Wider die Schänder der Creaturen Gottes, he told his readers, "Through Christ alone comes to us help, protection, honor, and good. All other ways are poor wine." Quoting I Corinthians 4:19, he writes, "Christ is our priest and leader and we ourselves are the temples of God." His arguments, based largely on Luther's interpretation of the Pauline letters, are powerful and clarion calls for his readers to disregard the dictates of the pope, his bishops, and the established hierarchy. With great sincerity he believed "when the masses have the true faith, then the godlessness fostered by the pope will be swept away." In short, the power of true faith can be

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42 EAS, II, p. 19.
43 EAS, I, p. 173.
44 EAS, III, p. 40.
45 Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, XVII, no. 427.
overwhelming and give the laity the strength to reform themselves. 46

Toward the proper organization and the efficient running of the congregation, Eberlin had a number of definite ideas and opinions which were consistent with Lutheran doctrine and at the same time illustrate his practical mind and penchant for detail. Since a basic part of the Reformation was a drastic reduction in the great number of church holidays, he suggested a plan for special days in the new church. All holidays would be useless and shameful except the seventh day each week, the four holidays during the Christmas season, New Year’s Day, Three Kings Day (Epiphany), Maundy Thursday, Holy Week, Easter Day, Saint Peter’s and Saint Paul’s Day, and finally All Saints’ Day. 47 With respect to religious fasts, he concluded that all varieties of food and drink should be allowed to all people at all times. He asserted that no cleric had any right to interfere with any of the eating habits of the people. 48 “We work hard in Germany; consequently, I am against long fasts. However, long fasts for the fat monks who do not work will not hurt them.” 49

46 EAS, I, p. 12.
47 EAS, I, p. 108.
48 EAS, I, p. 125.
49 Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, XVII, no. 76.
As for the proper dress of the clergy, Eberlin recommends secular clothing such as any citizen might wear. He thought that Lutheran clergymen should be thrifty and sober and should not be paid more than two-hundred guilders a year from the *gemeinen seckel* (city treasury).  

In the main, Eberlin thought of the Reformation Church as an evangelical one which fostered the preaching of the Word of God. The concept and nature of an evangelical church had to be explained for the average man since it was a different approach to worship. He often referred to the Catholic Church as "*der alten manier,*" and of the Lutheran Church he said, "*Wir sind Lutherisch, oder Evangelisch.*"  

In a long series of declarations upon what he thought the nature of the new church should be he stated that "firstly, we are committed to evangelism and we stand with the old church fathers, St. Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory." He continued, "We learn from the Word and become wise (*klug*)."

Fearing the damage the radical visionaries and prophets who were known as the "Schwärmer" could do to a sincere and honest reform movement, Eberlin made every effort to warn his readers of the dangers of following them.

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50EAS, I, p. 110.

51EAS, III, p. 205.

52Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, XVII, no. 427.
Radicals such as Markus Stübner and Nicholas Storch of Zwickau claimed to have direct revelations from God and their alleged claim to special knowledge of an impending millennium caused a great amount of confusion among the lower classes. As a result, Eberlin helped his readers by making a careful distinction between a true evangelical and these enthusiasts. In a letter which he wrote to the Margraviate of Burgau he said that the true evangelical preacher was not as common as one might think because it takes a very long period of training to become one. "It is a costly but worthwhile thing to become a true preacher of the Gospel." Specific requirements of the evangelist were that he base his sermons on a Bible text, believe in God through Christ, and live according to Christian doctrine. "One often thinks," he writes, "that evangelism is the same as the 'Schwärmereische Wesen' but Nein, Nein, dear friends, for theirs is not Gospel preaching but a tribute to the devil and the devil laughs." Then he added, "the enthusiasts cover themselves with God's word and then shame Christianity by spewing forth doctrine made by themselves to indoctrinate other people." Even though he hated the radicals of Stübner's or Storch's mold, he said if the time ever came

53 EAS, III, p. 275.
54 EAS, II, p. 89.
55 EAS, III, pp. 63 and 209.
when "I had to borrow from the radical visionaries or from the pope, I would choose the former."\textsuperscript{56} 

In the conclusion of his letter to cousin Wehe, Eberlin reiterates his strong belief in the evangelistic way by reminding him to "go and preach to your people with determination (mutwillig) and they will lose their radical and unscriptural ways."\textsuperscript{57} But Wehe and his flock had chosen to use violence to force religious and political changes. In the spring of 1525, Wehe, as head of the peasant armies near Ulm, was captured and beheaded after the rout of the Swabian peasants by the well equipped armies of General Wilhelm Truchsess of Waldburg.\textsuperscript{58} In short, Eberlin warned all of his audience that resort to mob action, war, and violence was not the way of the evangelicals, but rather the furtherance of simple preaching and strong faith.

The intense zeal, devotion, and sincerity of Eberlin might lead one to suspect that he was intolerant of all those who opposed him on theological and philosophical grounds. As noted, he had little bitterness toward those who remained in the cloisters; similarly, he had kind words

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{EAS}, III, p. 165.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{EAS}, III, p. 212.

to say about that which was of worth and honorable in the Catholic tradition. Of the work of the Dominicans and Franciscans of the fourteenth century who had preached the Word of God and had asked for nothing in return save their daily bread which they had earned, he exclaimed, "Certainly, God was with them."59

The sixteenth century was full of superstition, hatred, and violence and many a sword was drawn in blind anger. However, in the thought world of Eberlin there is a certain reasoned and calm sense of balance with much tolerance and good-will. To the devil he attributed the fact that evangelicals and Catholics often failed to resolve their differences. Hate and war result because one makes "...ein berg aus einer bonen." He advised the German people to live together without fighting among each other. In the concluding section of Ein Freundlich Zuschreiben an alle Stände deutscher Nation he states that in the writings of Paul are ample rules which if followed will enable knights and lords, old people and young, priests and common people, poor and rich to live together in peace and tranquility.60

59 EAS, I, p. 81.
60 EAS, III, p. 138.
In the spirit of Luther at his best, Eberlin wrote during his earliest period as a reformer that as far as he was concerned all men of all creeds should live together. "Jews and unbelievers who desire to live amongst us shall not be ill-treated but shall be treated as kindly as our own citizens." The non-Christians, however, in Eberlin's mythical land of Wolfaria were to be denied civic honors and the right to criticize the social and legal systems of the day. For the rest, "no man or woman would be declared a heretic if he or she upheld the Gospel as commonly interpreted in Germany." He claimed to have a higher indulgence than those sold by Johann Tetzel, namely, "that of doing good to your neighbor and forgiving your enemy."

Eberlin, who was heavily influenced by Luther's thought, understood clearly the theological content of the Reformation as it was known in Wittenberg. In the main, he viewed his job as one of the dissemination of Lutheran doctrine to the masses rather than as one of an original theological thinker. On the one or two points in which he

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61 EE, LIII, p. 265. Luther in his 1524 letter to the Saxon princes expressed his hope that those who are bold preachers will be allowed to preach what they are able and against whomever they wish. In short, Luther is advocating tolerance.

62 EAS, I, p. 139. Wolfaria is the name for Eberlin's utopia which he develops in his early pamphlets.

63 EAS, I, p. 12.
deviated from Luther's position, he, in the end, chose to accept the majority view at Wittenberg rather than cause dissension. As a result, he must be classified as a reasonably orthodox Lutheran insofar as this is possible in the early years of the Reformation.

As a writer of pamphlets, Eberlin performed a vital and important service in helping organize and spread the ideas of the Reformation. He perceived early in his career as a reformer that there was an entity known as "the masses" which was a vast, formless group of men and women crying for light. He sought for and found a viable method of reaching these people. Writing without bitterness, gross intolerance, or hatred for the old Church, he utilized his enormous literary skill and his fund of knowledge to crystallize the spirit of complaint in Germany and seriously to undermine the faith of the masses in the status quo.

Fortunately, Eberlin liked to pursue his ideas and reduce them to concrete practical suggestions which were easily comprehensible by the average reader. As seen, he explained his position on what he thought the nature of religion should be. He also left rather detailed descriptions of what in his view would be the perfect society. What is significant for us is that he was commenting as a Lutheran reformer even though he was also in tune with currents of English and continental humanism.
CHAPTER V

"ZEIT BRINGT RÖSSLIN"

The rapid transformation in Germany during the late Middle Ages of the political and economic atmosphere became a topic of major interest for Eberlin. Through his eyes, the modern reader is able to look closely at the major political and economic issues of the sixteenth century. Not only are his writings an opening to the past but they reflect the ideas and observations of a contemporary Lutheran.

Many of Eberlin's observations on political and economic conditions are found in his first fifteen pamphlets which appeared in 1521. There is much additional information in the sermons, lectures, and pamphlets which he published in the later part of his career. When the pieces are put together, one can see a complete political structure which he thinks would be conducive to a happy life on this earth. He gave the name of Wolfaria to the ideal state, a place in which the social and political conditions formed a striking contrast to his contemporary Germany. With deliberation he set out to inform the reader of the ills of the German nation in order that the masses could readily compare their own conditions with those found in Wolfaria.¹

¹EAS, II, p. 148.
Reform of the existing political institutions was an important issue for Eberlin even before the outbreak of the Reformation. He hoped that much injustice could be alleviated and that the revolutionary conditions which were ripe and ready to explode by 1521 could be ameliorated by peaceful action and Christian love. It is necessary to understand that he thought the power of God was limitless and that He was a prime causal factor in the determination of the course of events in history. Without hesitation he called to his readers' attention pertinent verses of the Bible such as those from Ezekiel (14:14): "When a land sins against me, I will send famine against it..., even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they would deliver only their lives by their righteousness...." For him the power of God was a peaceful force and could be a positive factor in the working of good in society. Believing the German nation must ask God for deliverance, he writes, "All that we ask of God we get." He attempts with God's help to supply precise and coherent answers to political problems; the resulting corpus of his political thought becomes both significant and interesting.

During the early years of the Reformation, Eberlin, like many reformers, looked to the Holy Roman Emperor to

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2EAS, III, p. 281.
deliver Germany from the political and religious clutches of Rome. Dedicating his first pamphlet to Charles V, King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, he hoped and expected he would be a just ruler and that all his subjects would have good fortune and much success in the future. He writes to the new emperor, "We know of no one better than you to whom we could send our grievances." He explained further that even though recent years had been difficult, there were many Christian hearts in Germany and most of them were loyal supporters of the "long desired and duly elected emperor." There were, however, those of doubtful loyalty such as the "begging monks who are sworn knights of the pope and disloyal to you." Although he had raised hopes of finding solid support and sympathy for German political problems in the imperial court, he was disillusioned with the emperor after Luther was placed under the imperial ban and declared a heretic in the spring of 1521. He concluded that even though Charles V was a good man, he had "unfortunately taken a seat with the pope and the bishops and together they rule our land."

Turning his attention from the imperial government, he began to attack the failures of the territorial princes.

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4 EAS, I, p. 2.
5 EAS, I, p. 7.
6 EAS, III, p. 158.
He accused the great lords of being "greedy warmongers" who imposed wars on unwilling townsmen. Moreover, "war drains the city treasuries dry and brings hardship to those who work hard at a legitimate job for a living." He concludes, "God wishes us a peaceful life and the devil wishes us war, which he accomplishes through our princes." Because the great lords destroy the poor people in their attempts to gain wealth and power..., "I publicly scold them."  

War, violence, and revolution were opposed by Eberlin who tried to prevent the use of force to obtain changes on this earth. He believed the cost of war in terms of blood and money was too high. One of his favorite sayings was, "My father says 'Young warrior means old beggar.'" To some extent he was a pacifist even though he had emerged from the warrior class. His belief in the futility of war and his philosophy of peace are borne out in his discussion of the tribulations of the Danish king, Christian II (1513-1523). He observed that this monarch had had trouble maintaining the power behind his throne. Somewhat discouraged, the king declined to fight for his crown when he was challenged and he abdicated without any bloodshed in 1523. Eberlin heartily approved of the king's

7EAS, III, pp. 152-155.
8EAS, III, p. 152.
action because peace, not war, was the result. After the bloody peasant revolts of 1525, he reiterated his long-standing view that fighting was in the long run fruitless. Just as Luther had written in his pamphlet, *A sincere Admonition to all Christians to Guard against Insurrection*, he appealed to all classes of German society whether they be knights, townsmen, or peasants, to realize that "there is no hope in revolution." Both Luther and Eberlin repeatedly spoke against any war fought with the spirit of revenge or conquest. For Luther, combat reflected a lack of trust in God: "Stick to prayer, for it is only by praying that we can vex the devil." Yet neither of the reformers was a complete pacifist but rather held a position closely akin to that of the humanists Desiderius Erasmus and Thomas More. At times, countries had the right to make war for defensive purposes and then a war could only be waged if declared by and with the consent of duly constituted authorities.

What was Eberlin's idea of the perfect state and how did he propose to bring his ideas into effect? He conceived of a body politic consisting of ten great cities

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11 Smith, op. cit., p. 88.
12 *EAS*, I, p. 126.
each of which would have jurisdiction over the areas around it. The smaller villages, called manors, would control their immediate surroundings and be of a lesser status.\textsuperscript{13} Carrying out his plans in minute detail, he suggested that the cities and manors should have wide and clean streets which should be lined with solid but not gaudy or expensive edifices. All public buildings such as town halls, shops, schools, dance halls, and public baths should be built out of the best materials. The bathing facilities were to be segregated according to sex and have ample room for steam as well as water baths.\textsuperscript{14} Although not a townsman in the true sense of the word, he, like many Germans, had a proud sense of civic pride.

In the formulation of the theory behind the Christian utopia, the problem immediately arises whether the individual should obey worldly powers or God or both. Luther had written that it is the duty of the subject to obey his prince even if it is necessary to suffer. As far as Luther was concerned, suffering was part of the cross which every man must bear while on this earth. On the other hand, he on a number of occasions stated that the Christian

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{EAS}, I, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{EAS}, I, p. 127.
must obey God rather than man. Inherent in his thought is a political dualism that does not clearly solve the question of man's relationship to the state. One finds a similar situation in the political thought of Erasmus who at times touches on the paradox of secular authority versus divine. For him, Christ is above all others and must be any ruler's prototype. All Christians should follow the example of Christ but in the same sentence he admonishes his readers to learn and live by the ethical principles of the Greeks and Romans. Allowing for a combination of the two sets of ethics into a tertium quid, there is still no clear answer or guideline in the writings of Erasmus for men to follow.

Eberlin attempts to solve the problem of authority in political matters by developing his ideas along two lines; first, by placing political power in the hands of the lesser nobility who in turn must be directly responsible to the will of the masses. Sovereignty must be guaranteed to all by a contract of mutual consent. Second, all citizens must exercise and obey God's will by maintaining a

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true and sincere concern for the "common good" of their neighbor.

Each of the ten great cities in Wolfaria would be grouped into a loose confederation of regional units. A king was to be elected from one of the princes of noble blood who had been chosen to rule one of the ten districts. The king was to be limited in his powers since he could not act without the advice and consent of the other nine princes who in turn were limited by an organized assembly of the people elected by universal male suffrage. In the assembly townsmen, peasants, and nobles were equally represented. If the will of the people demanded action, the king could act effectively in the name of the state of Wolfaria while at the same time local actions and autonomy were to be guaranteed.

Eberlin's political philosophy shifted to the left as the Reformation progressed. Initially, he advocated the maintenance of the imperial system in Germany and the enhancement of the centralized state. Becoming disillusioned with Charles V and losing hope in the advantages of the empire, he changed his plans for political reform. He favored the creation of a loose confederation of German cities. Even though the nobility would have dominated Wolfaria, there would have been enough opportunity for other classes to participate in government. Accordingly, one is
justified in labeling Eberlin's mythical state as a nascent form of democracy.

The officials of the new state, whether they be mayors, bailiffs, princes, or kings, had to have as a primary consideration for office a strong conception of and desire for the safekeeping of the common welfare. To insure the proper attitude on the part of public office holders, the law of Wolfaria prevented any official from holding two positions or otherwise having a conflict of interest with the state. He subordinated the office holder to the state to the extent that, if necessary, all public officers must be ready to contribute their own funds to help run the government in time of emergency. The latter suggestion is not confiscatory but stems from an overwhelming desire to protect the common interests of the community. Further, the citizens and rulers had constant checks upon each other. No one person was allowed to build a family dynasty or to create a hereditary position unless a special election allowed an exception. He believed a viable method of making life on this earth more pleasant was the creation of an honest and responsible government whose officials pursued policies consistent with the general welfare.

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Eberlin clearly defined his position on the vital question of the separation of church and state. For example, no clergyman could sit on a city council, engage in politics, or sit on the Council of Princes. \(^{18}\) He did, however, expect, even though there was a distinct division by law between the religious and secular world, that Christian ethics would be practiced by the princes in the administration of their official duties. In sum, his faith in the character and the integrity of the individual Christian was sufficient to insure the proper behavior of public officials, at least in Wolfaria.

An integral part of society, whether it be a real one or utopian, is the body of laws by which men live. Social, economic, and political development in the late Middle Ages made the codes of old Germanic justice and the body of common law obsolete. The old laws were local and variegated with no central source of authority other than custom. Gradually there arose in Germany a number of young lawyers trained in the recently recovered codes of Roman law. Many of these young lawyers worked their way into positions of influence and authority. For example, by 1500 half of the judges in the Reichskammergericht were trained in Roman civil law which cut a clear and logical path and was highly favorable to the increased authority of a

\(^{18}\)EAS, I, pp. 111 and 128.
centralized government and the prerogatives of the wealthy. Dislike of Roman jurists became fairly widespread among large segments of German society. Trials became long and drawn out and often involved long and abstract legal arguments. The simple and direct common law, although frequently violent in administration, phased out. Many of the members of the lower nobility such as Ulrich von Hutten grew bitter over the fact that the jurists were gaining more power and prestige than the knights who had earned part of their living by settling legal problems through private vengeance according to ancient custom. It was not uncommon for the jurists to be denounced by spokesmen for the affected classes in the pamphlet literature of the times. With much vitriol the jurists were called by pamphleteers "heathen, thieves, and bloodsuckers."  

Another aspect which was linked closely with Roman Law and criticized as vehemently in Germany was the great power of the ecclesiastical courts and canon law. To the lay observer it seemed unfair and unjust that the clergy were exempted from the jurisdiction of the civil courts. The benefit of the clergy (privilegium fori) symbolized a


sharp distinction between the clergy and the laity and was in the eyes of the reformers, especially Eberlin's, inimical to the general welfare of society. As early as 1521, he called to his readers' attention the fact that Roman and canon law were working economic hardships upon the German people and the lawyers and jurists had brought to Germany a law which "offers no justice in the land."\textsuperscript{21}

In Wolfaria, Eberlin clearly defines the nature of what in his mind would be the ideal legal system and the proper execution of justice. With a bold stroke of the pen, he declares that imperial and canon law be made null and void in his Lutheran utopia. He suggests that men in the new state live according to a body of common law made up of that which is reasonable not drawn from old legal systems. As a result, there will be little or no need for jurists and lawyers. If a citizen is indicted or otherwise involved in a lawsuit, he "either may speak for himself or allow a fellow citizen to speak for him." At first sight, his legal ideas seem naive but in reality they were sensible. He insisted that all members of the community have a working knowledge of what is customary and of what the common law consists. To stimulate the study of the law by the citizenry, he insisted that the holding of tangible

\textsuperscript{21}EAS, I, p. 10.
property in the state of Wolfaria depended upon such knowledge, thereby placing a large burden of responsibility upon the shoulders of each individual.

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In the understanding of the relationship of Eberlin's political and socioeconomic thought to the sixteenth century and the Reformation, one must be cognizant of the fact that the late Middle Ages was a period of fomenting ideas. It was an age which contained a mixture of new cosmographic schemes and old eschatologies. In the medieval thought world there were powerful currents of millennial thinking. Others reacted strongly in a positive sense to the astronomical revolution of Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543). Although mathematical proof of the heliocentric theory was of immense interest to those concerned with natural phenomena, it was also of a great significance to others because it suggested a new position for man relative to his physical environment. The medieval geocentric, cosmographical system had the general effect of relegating the earth to the lowest rung of creation, a place of murder, robbery, and debauchery, and mean existence to be escaped by death and salvation by God. Further, since the bottom of creation was earth, the center of the universe

22EAS, I, p. 10.
was hell. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries men such as Nicholas of Cusa and Copernicus rejected the assumption that the earth was the worst part of the cosmos. Cusa, for example, declared that death and corruption were not peculiar to earth. This suggestion that the earth had lost part of its monopoly on evil and suffering and was no longer the center of a hostile universe appealed to a number of people. In short, some men found a new interest in earthly events and the improvement of worldly conditions.23

Running astride of the new cosmography was the omnipresent current of millennial eschatology, a mode of thinking which to a large number of people was real. Probably nothing tormented the folk of the late Middle Ages more than the knowledge and belief that the world was coming to an end and the natural elements and Hades would give up their dead to be judged.24 The frequent promises in the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Book of Revelation that the end of the world was imminent affected people in different ways and in varying degrees. Often those who became overly haunted with the notion of the millennium and vague promises of a "new earth and a new


24 Willy Andreas, Deutschland vor der Reformation (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1959), p. 182.
heaven" were members of the lower classes such as laborers, artisans, and peasants who were spurred on by priests and monks who imparted their visions and fears to the masses.

In 1474, Hans Böhm, the "Drummer of Nicklashausen," emerged as a social revolutionary proclaiming the forthcoming equalitarian millennium which would be based upon natural law. What Böhm meant by "natural law" amounted to little more than the restoration to the peasants on the "new earth" of the right of the commons and the renewal of hunting and fishing rights. Followers of Böhm attempted to storm the walls of the city of Würzburg and were repelled at great cost to the insurgents. The Würzburg episode is a salient example of the great power generated in Germany by currents of eschatological and millennial belief.  

One of the best examples of popular eschatology in the late medieval period is found in the unpublished book by the anonymous "Revolutionary of the Upper Rhine" who, after he had received a communication directly from God, set out to write the "Book of a Hundred Chapters." The author was familiar with the mass of medieval apocalyptic writings and believed he was the man chosen by God to prepare the sinner for the final end of the world according to the revelation to John. Further, he believed violence

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was necessary to purify the world on the eve of the millennium. In short, he thought an equalitarian social order which would be utopian in nature was the answer to the salvation of a doomed world. All church and private property was to be confiscated by the powerful "emperor" for the benefit of the poor and the general welfare of the community.\(^{26}\) The rise of a powerful secular ruler at the expense of the Church was a fairly widespread hope in the utopian thought of the late medieval period.\(^ {27}\) Although the "Book of a Hundred Chapters" was never published and probably had little or no influence, it is indicative of the troubled intellectual world in upper Germany prior to the Reformation.

There was a strong current of utopian thought in pre-Reformation times which was not related directly to the eschatological and millennial category but rather to philosophic, moralistic, and humanistic considerations. Humanists such as Sir Thomas More had examined their contemporary society and deplored what they saw. Social, political, and economic abuses were believed to be factors which dishonored the church and made the environment of the

\(^{26}\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 118.

\(^{27}\)\textit{Wilhelm Stolze, "Der gemeine Mann und seine Bestrebungen vor der Reformationzeit," Schriften des Vereins f"ur Reformationsgeschichte, XLIV (Nr. 144: 1926), p. 45.}
The classic example of utopian writing is More's *Utopia* which was published in Latin and circulated in 1516; it was read by humanists all over Europe. It was not particularly unusual for humanists to write about or to be interested in dreams of the ideal state. In their study of the classical world they had uncovered the utopian writings of ancient Greeks. For example, scholars read with avid interest the work of Diordorus Siculus who had summarized in the second century A.D. many of the common equalitarian phantasies of the type inherited by the Middle Ages. The description of the "Blessed Island" given by Siculus was translated twelve separate times by humanists during the Renaissance. The "Blessed Island" was a paradise with a good climate, four tribes of healthy people, organized in groups of four hundred each. Each tribe periodically performed services to the state which, in the end, was for the benefit of the other tribes. Thus, many humanists of the sixteenth century addressed their attention with great vigor to the stimulation and discussion of ideas which would ultimately lead to the creation of a moral and physical climate suitable for humanity.

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28Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
When the Reformation occurred, many reformers thought that the anti-christ had appeared in the form of Pope Leo X; further, the threatening war clouds generated by the Turks in the east combined with the appearance of the anti-christ were taken as certain apocalyptic signs of the impending end of the world. The gloomy portent affected large segments of the population and also the reformers in either one of two ways. Some were stimulated to seek at once the "new earth" while others believed that time was too short to accomplish any changes before the final catastrophic event. Tens of thousands of peasants became impatient for the millennium and resorted to mad bursts of violence and revolt to fulfill the ancient prophecies.

The standard interpretations of Luther's position on the impending end of the world indicate that he believed the world could not drag on much longer than 1550. For the solution of day to day problems of a social nature, he tried to do what he could but his gloomy eschatological point of view and the fact that he was primarily interested in theological problems restrained him from offering any grandiose and detailed scheme for the reorganization of society based on Christian ethics. Scholars such as Ernst

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Troeltsch and Justus Hashagen point out that a social quietism is inherent in Lutheran doctrine because of the effects of a "Welt pessimismus" among the reformers. Consequently, the energy of the Church turned inward into the realm of the soul and mind and away from the mundane problems of politics and everyday matters. Yet the tremendous effects of Reformation doctrine on various strata of society—a problem beyond the limits of this study—indicate that much more work needs to be done on the nature of and the impact of Luther's eschatology.

Those who had extreme reactions to the promise of the millennium were Lutheran deviates such as the educated and creative thinker, Thomas Müntzer, who had, early in his career as a reformer, been recommended by Luther for the pastorate at Zwickau. Müntzer broke with Luther over the question of the authority of the Bible; Luther broke with him over the use of violence. In reality, he did not wholly accept Scripture and was a thorough skeptic. He believed his prophecies were ordained by God and that he was to make use of the peasants to accomplish the goal of killing the godless. Unwilling or unable to wait peacefully for the

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32 Karl Holl and George Forell have led the way in attempting to establish in positive terms the effects of the Reformation on society.
millennium, he preached a strong sense of equalitarian thought to thousands and led them in the disastrous uprisings in 1525. The armies of Philip of Hesse and the Duke of Brunswick combined their forces and dealt a death blow to the peasant armies led by Müntzer at Frankenhausen. Müntzer was tortured and beheaded in May, 1525.

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Where among the various currents of thought do the utopian ideas of Eberlin fit? He seemed to suffer little from the world pessimism of his day and he never advocated violence or revolution to prepare for the millennium. Perhaps the underlying principles of Wolfaria rest upon a set of ethical standards permeated with Lutheran doctrine. As George Forell points out, Luther had an ethical standard which was directly germane to secular problems. Further, it was an ethical system which had behind it a motivating force of God's love, and the divine charge to love one's neighbor, a love made possible because God loves man. Thus Eberlin's approach to social and political questions was similar to Luther's in that they were existential and that their ethical standards were meaningful only in life. A Christian social ethic was essential to the preservation of

men from self-destruction and at the same time conducive to the general welfare of the state. Accordingly, the fact that he was primarily concerned with the behavior of a Christian in society and not complex theological problems is one of the chief reasons for his significance both in his own day and for our time.

Although Eberlin in the main paid little attention to millennial thought in his pamphlets, he lost some of his optimism after the bloody suppression of the peasant wars of 1524-1526. During the last year of his pamphlet writing, he made a number of references to the Old Testament character of Nimrod that are of some eschatological significance. Nimrod, the descendent of Ham and the legendary founder of many of the cities of Babylonia and the builder of the Tower of Babel was a popular figure in the folklore and legend of the late medieval era. To Eberlin's contemporaries such as Müntzer, Nimrod seemed to be the destroyer of the desired primal equalitarian state of society since he was the first builder of cities and the originator of private property and class distinctions. In a letter which Müntzer sent to his followers in Allstedt (1525) he demanded that they crush Nimrod's tower of Babel, that is, smash the old institutions of society and set up the "new earth" with the

\[34\] LW, II, p. 211.
blessings of God. Using Nimrod as a starting point, he launched into a discussion of the apocalyptic prophecies in Scripture such as those forecast in Ezekiel and the promise of the second coming in Matthew.

Luther and Eberlin approached Nimrod in a related but in a far less extreme manner than did Müntzer. Luther in his commentary on the book of Genesis discusses at length the character of Nimrod and the nature of his followers. He writes that it is not evil in itself to be a mighty man on earth but Nimrod, who had encroached on his neighbor's lands and who wanted to be a tyrant over religion, was "as vicious as the pope who hunts, traps, and kills all those who are dear to God." As far as Luther was concerned, Nimrod and his flock had separated from the Word of God and lived in accordance with their own devices and desires. Similarly, Eberlin liked to compare Nimrod and his tribe with the hordes of revolutionary peasants of the type led by Müntzer. Just as the peasants disregarded the teaching of the evangelical preachers so "Nimrod went against God's words which had promised his good fortune and victory." Although the positions of Müntzer on the one hand and Eberlin and Luther on the other were

35 Cited in Cohn, op. cit., p. 267.
36 LW, II, p. 197.
separated by a wide gulf, they had a thread of thought in common. For Müntzer Nimrod was a symbol of what was preventing the advent of a radical reformation. For Luther and Eberlin, the word Nimrod was synonymous with the evil done by those who turned away from God.

In conclusion, Eberlin had clear and definite ideas on the nature of the ideal state. He understood the principle of popular sovereignty even though his conception of it was somewhat limited. All his political thought was consistent with Luther’s emphasis on the dignity of man, the concept of the priesthood of the believers, and the new role of the relationship of the individual to God. Just as Eberlin was quick to perceive the political implications inherent in Lutheran doctrine so were some of his enemies. As early as 1520, Thomas Murner of Strassburg, a critic of both Eberlin and Luther, wrote in his pamphlet *An den grossmächtigen...Adel...* , "If you accept the principle of priesthood of the believers then you remove the distinction between clergy and laity before God." He continued, "Where do you stop? Soon many will be applying this to the election of kings and princes." Without a doubt, those

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who wished to retain the status quo had no wish to precipitate religious or political change.

The sum total of Eberlin's political thought does not add up to a sophisticated body or system. Yet the fact that he was a Lutheran reformer and commented upon political problems to the extent to which he did is of some importance. Though part of his political position stems from his class origins and his sympathy for the depressed segments of the lower nobility, he appeals to all parts of society from the basis of a Lutheran ethic rather than from some vested interest. One conclusion which is evident is that there was inherent in Lutheran doctrine of the sixteenth century, at least, the germ of democratic government.

EBERLIN ON ECONOMICS

Basic to an organized political state is some rationale for an economic system. For Luther, economic problems were on the periphery of his thought; yet there were some men around him who, like Eberlin, took a direct interest in methods of buying, selling, and producing goods in Germany. Eberlin's interests were essentially three-fold; first, he was concerned with the financial plight of his class; second, he wanted an economic system consistent with the basic principles of Christianity; and third, he had an inherent love of what was practical and sensible.
During the first quarter of the sixteenth century there occurred in Germany a sharp rise in the prices of luxury items, basic foods, and domestic and foreign wares of all kinds. According to the report of a committee on monopolies for the city of Frankfurt am Main in 1523, the price of a necessity such as spice had risen four-hundred per cent in ten years. At the time, many people blamed the price rise on the great merchants who were thought to be monopolists bent only on satisfying their greed. Eberlin writes in his second letter to Ulm, "O people...set a limit to the covetousness of the merchants." On repeated occasions he demanded that the "merchants purify themselves" as the first step in the creation of more favorable conditions for the spread of the Reformation.

In the 1520's the great merchants had gained monopolies on such items as spices. Gradually, the smaller merchants lost their independent status to big business that had ranging interests and large warehouses along with complex distribution systems. Further, imported goods became available in large quantities and a good deal of German gold and silver went into coffers outside Germany.

40 EAS, III, p. 39.
41 Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, no. 3106.
Eberlin, in his pamphlets, comments at length on the state of affairs in the business world in Germany. Even though he had little direct contact with problems faced and risks taken by merchants, he nevertheless felt entirely free to criticize the wealthy and powerful businessmen. Yet he was not hostile to honest business activity and approached the whole topic from the viewpoint of a Christian rather than from a position of bitterness or from any particular class interest. In short, he wanted what would be best for the general welfare of the German economy as a whole. He believed that "soon the merchants will have won the upper hand, the nobles will be ruined, the townsmen will have nothing, and the peasants will go begging."  

The welfare of the German nation seemed to be threatened at its base. One possible remedy which had in it the seeds of a nascent economic nationalism was the restriction of imports. Eberlin writes, "We have the people to make all the necessary handicraft items and we have the materials, such as eiderdown, sheep wool, iron, gold, silver, copper, wine, grains, fruit, fowl, fish, and sausage." Further, "no foreign grapes should be used in wine making and no foreign cloth should be bought unless necessary."  

He concludes his statement with the

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42 *EAS*, III, p. 160.
43 *EAS*, I, pp. 124-125.
following reference to the economic potential of Germany: "No land in Christiandom can equal us."\textsuperscript{44}

Aside from import restrictions and the self-reform of the merchants, Eberlin urged several other restrictions. He condemned the lavish spending of those who bought clothes which they did not need except for reasons of keeping up with the latest fashions. Secondly, since the immorality and deceit practiced by large corporations could not be covered up in a smaller company, he suggested that in Wolfaria the merchant associations be limited to no more than three members. Control and not abolition of private enterprise was his desire.

With characteristic vigor Eberlin did not hesitate to link the faults and the abuses of the great merchants with the Catholic Church. He on one occasion accused Johann Eck, Luther's famous adversary at the Leipzig debates, of supporting the merchant class for the purpose of keeping Germany weakened in order to allow Rome to maintain its firm grip. "People such as Eck do nothing but harm the country and Christianity."\textsuperscript{45} Eberlin's final statement on the unfavorable balance of trade was that "our money leaves us and goes to foreign lands, especially

\textsuperscript{44}EAS, III, pp. 158-159.

\textsuperscript{45}EAS, III, p. 169.
to the Low Countries; they become rich and we grow poorer.\(^46\)

After the castigation of the business community, Eberlin outlined some specific remedies for the economic problems of the Germans. Of primary importance was the unification of the chaotic coinage system. Although the problem was not a new one, he sensed that Germans needed a universal monetary plan with every coin having a specific legal weight and value. He went as far as proposing just values for common coins. For example, the kreutzer should equal the cost of one bottle of ordinary wine and a helblin should buy as much bread as a healthy man could eat at one meal. In the area of banking, he advocated the penalty of reed lashing for those who took interest for money loans.\(^47\)

Eberlin's attitude toward the holding of private property is both interesting and significant. Looking to the bygone days of the Middle Ages, he hoped in Wolfaria the woodlands, pastures, and meadows would be open to men of all classes for hunting, woodgathering, grazing, or whatever. He believed public lands "should be held common," serving each person only insofar as his need demands. Although he argued for great commons, he welcomed great

\(^46\)EAS, III, p. 159.

\(^47\)EAS, I, pp. 125-129. It is interesting to note that the penalty for interest taking was mild compared to the one for public drunkenness, which was death.
private estates if the owners were familiar with and lived according to the laws of the land. However, there was one more restriction on land held in fee simple. If the property was valued at more than one hundred gulden, the owners would be required to pay a weekly tax of one heller \(^{48}\) to the common treasury.\(^{49}\) Private property was held sacred and inviolable but the owner must keep the welfare and interest of the community in mind even though the "welfare" was sometimes expensive.

In many of the cities swept by the Reformation the institution of what amounted to a "community chest" or common treasury was set up to act as a means for providing the welfare of the citizens. The whole conception of the treasury was a direct response to a serious need in the towns. Prior to the advent of the Reformation, charity had been dispersed by Catholic organizations. After the break with Rome, many people neglected their donations to either church for purposes of helping the poor. As a result, the welfare systems in many places broke down. As noted above, Eberlin wanted land taxes to pour directly into the

\(^{48}\) One heller equals one gulder. It is difficult to determine exact values of sixteenth-century coins in terms of present values. A luxury item such as one pound of sugar cost one gulder in Frankfurt in 1523. A minimum wage for Lutheran ministers was set at two hundred gulden per annum by Bugenhagen in 1528.

\(^{49}\) *EAS*, I, pp. 125-129.
money they should give it "voluntarily." "The merchants who have money must pay." Eberlin's friend and co-worker, Johann Bugenhagen, incorporated into the "Church Disciplines" in Brunswick identical ideas regarding the community chest. Those who could afford it were ordered by him to sustain a community treasury "not for ourselves but for the common good."51

Another means of fostering what is best for society was, in Eberlin's view, the reduction of waste and conspicuous consumption to moderate levels. In the Lutheran utopia of Wolfaria, he suggested the citizens live in modest houses and save their desire for splendor for public buildings which all could enjoy. If a person spent money beyond his income, he would be reported to his superiors. In short, the state would interfere directly in his life and prevent the individual from voluntarily becoming a poor man.52 Thrift was not only a private virtue but one which the community as a whole should keep in mind. He advised church congregations to resist building lavish altars and instead to spend their monies to help the living temples of

50 Flugschriftensammlung Gustav Freytag, no. 3106.
52 EAS, I, pp. 127-129.
God, that is, the poor people.53 Moderation not austerity, dominates the main body of his economic thinking.

One of the most important qualities in society as far as Eberlin was concerned was the great emphasis which should be placed upon the dignity and usefulness of hard labor. He comments at length on the merits of industry and the shamefulness of idleness. Insisting that each man shall earn his own way on this earth, he writes, "Every person in Wolfaria shall labor in the trade of his choice." To him nothing was more admirable than an industrious worker who produced commodities beneficial for society which were pleasing to look at and at the same time useful.54 His attitude toward labor was in part a response to his dislike of what he called parasites on society, that is, the begging monks and members of various religious groups who performed no visible useful tasks. He writes, "When the begging monks are converted from their Catholic faith, they should be set to work as laborers or orderlies in the local hospitals."55 On another occasion he told his readers that the difficult thing here on earth is that "one man must work for fifteen including the old, young, and monks...the

54EAS, I, p. 130 and EAS, II, p. 159.
55EAS, III, p. 27.
just thing is that everyone makes his own way." The most honorable and rewarding of all professions in his view were agriculture and blacksmithing. The rationale behind the words, "no more honorable work shall there be than agriculture," has several viable explanations. Certainly, farming is a practical occupation and one in which many of his own class were engaged or on which they depended for their livelihood. Secondly, his heightened view of agriculture parallels that found in the second part of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. On More's mythical island all men and women were trained in agriculture and none were allowed to escape at least an initial acquaintance with it. In general, Eberlin was consistent in his attitude toward work with Luther who believed work was part of the responsibility of every Christian who until the final judgment day would have to carry part of the burden of the cross by working at some job. In short, work was part of the struggle man must endure as long as he lives on earth. In heaven there will be no cross to bear.

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56 *EAS*, III, p. 167.
57 *EAS*, I, p. 126.
It would be incorrect to evaluate Eberlin's ideas for political and economic reform as entirely new and original. Prior to the Reformation demands of reform, or grievances, known as gravamina, were evident among the knights, nobles, and peasants during the reigns of Emperors Sigismund and Frederick III in the fifteenth century or in the twelve articles of Memmingen issued by the peasants in the sixteenth century. The manifestos of the peasants and complaints of the nobility primarily demanded the restoration of old feudal rights. Although some of Eberlin's ideas resemble those in the gravamina, it would be wrong to say that he "stood not on a new path of progress but rather only looked backward." Indeed, his concern and desire to maintain the dignity of the individual and the sovereignty of the people as well as the hope for a better Germany indicate something much more than the nostalgic yearning for a return to the corpus christianum.

Eberlin's political and economic ideas reflect many of the major problems of his day and give the modern reader a picture of the storehouse of sixteenth-century folklore and tradition. His moderation is to be commended since he lived in an age of extremes. Further, his thoughts indicate he was motivated by some factor much greater than narrow

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class interests or a hope for the return to a society which had already collapsed. Although it is not possible to explain all his utopian ideas in terms of a religious ethic, it does appear he had an overwhelming faith in God and in his ways to effect a better society on this earth. His discussion of social problems presented in the next chapter serves to illustrate further the contention that the spirit of the Lutheran Reformation motivated him and influenced his observations and comments on the burning issues of the day.
Eberlin was one of the first of the Lutheran reformers to devote considerable thought to secular life and its related problems. In the course of preaching and writing, he offered many suggestions on how a Christian should live in society. He took his ethical standards from the Bible rather than from scholastic theologians. He was convinced the ethics of the gospels must be the ethics of a Christian culture. As a result, many of the biblical injunctions against sexual immorality, theft, idleness, drunkenness, and other common vices form the basis of his thought. For the most part he was convinced the demands of God must be obeyed before one can be called a true Christian. Inherent in this doctrine is the dictum that man must express his social ethic through Christian love and service to his fellow man in this world.

Much has been written arguing the relative merits of Luther's ideas on social problems; it has been difficult for scholars to evaluate properly his social thought because he believed the world was drawing to a close and, as a result, constructed no formal plan for the reorganization of the social order. Yet he agreed some reform of society
was necessary even if it only served to maintain order in life until the second coming of Christ.¹ His ideas and plans for a better society, though not voluminous, were preached from the pulpit and spread via pamphlets.

Eberlin, as had been stated above, was closely associated with and influenced by Luther. Yet much of his social thought goes beyond that of Luther, indicating that he went the second mile with respect to the problem of social reorganization. His conclusions comprised a sound body of Lutheran social ethics. The fact that he had an interest in a planned society permeated by the gospel and that he viewed the state as the promoter of better environmental conditions as well as the restrainer of evil sheds much light on his approach to social issues.

One of the areas in which the interaction of Eberlin's social thought and his religious faith can be demonstrated is in his overwhelming concern for the poor. During the early years of the Reformation there was a great amount of poverty in Germany. The Catholic Church in the Middle Ages collected funds from townsmen and peasants and used the money for distribution according to need among hardship cases. After the Reformation began, numerous sources of Catholic income in Germany withered away as many of the secular princes confiscated Church lands

¹Forell, op. cit., p. 159.
and failed to appropriate a proper amount of this income for poor relief. Others avoided making welfare contributions. Moreover, the Church had become somewhat lax in the administration of remaining funds.

Luther had warned early in the Reformation that every city must support its own poor and, if necessary, exhort surrounding villages to contribute funds to help the needy. He maintained that since every community is nothing other than the sum total of its many households, it is conducive to the general welfare to heal the sick and feed the hungry. Influenced by the biblical injunction found in Matthew to feed the poor and clothe the naked, he helped to write the famed "Ordinance of a Community Chest" for the city of Leisnig in 1523. In it he suggested that all property taken from closed monasteries be devoted to a common fund for community needs. He knew some would cheat by taking more than a fair share and a number of people raised this point. He answered, "So what?...it is better to have greed take too much in an orderly way than to have a general plundering, as happened in Bohemia." For Leisnig he wanted the community chest to be kept in a safe

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2PE, II, p. 134.
3LW, XLV, p. 328.
4Ibid., pp. 172-173. His reference to trouble in Bohemia concerns Hussite wars from 1420 to 1433.
part of the church and free access to it to be allowed by the nobility, townsmen, and peasants. Although he voiced a strong concern for public welfare, Eberlin advocated similar opinions at least two years prior to those of Luther.

Eberlin wished to alleviate as much suffering as possible and wanted all men to fulfill their duty to their neighbors; he asked that on each holiday, at least once a month in Wolfaria, there be a collection to be given to those with the greatest need. If there were any surplus of gifts in money or kind, it should be given to the common treasury of the city and used at the discretion of the secular officials. The recipients of relief were all required to carry identification cards to prevent cheating. In Wolfaria all Christians were admonished to give cheerfully to the community chest. Failure to give was for Eberlin as well as for many reformers a sign the devil was ruling the individual. Eberlin writes, "He who has plenty

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5 Ibid., p. 183.

6 EAS, I, p. 125. It is interesting to note that Luther made an identical suggestion seven years later in the preface of a pamphlet in which he wanted "each city to keep a register of its poor and if someone needs aid and is generally unknown he must produce a proper identification card" (EE, LXIII, p. 270).

7 EE, LXIII, p. 270.
and yet does not wish to aid his neighbor shall be publicly punished."\(^9\)

In Wolfaria concern for humanity was to be extended beyond the limits of the city walls. Any traveler on legitimate business who passes through any of the cities in the land "shall be treated kindly by all men." If the wayfaring person is destitute, "a Wolfarian citizen will take special care of him with respect and kindness."\(^{10}\) It is clearly evident that the whole basis of his social thought is deeply rooted in the ethic of the New Testament and that the poor man has as much right to physical comfort as the rich.\(^11\)

Provisions for the sick and the aged were a vital part of Eberlin's welfare plan. An example of one of his plans for the solving of the distress of the ill was his suggestion that the employer should, on ethical grounds, be obligated to care for a diseased or otherwise sick servant for a period of two months without charge.\(^{12}\) He advised Lutherans to set aside empty or unused monasteries and equip them to handle elderly people who were unable to maintain themselves or who needed hospital treatment. More

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\(^9\)EAS, I, p. 124.  
\(^{10}\)EAS, I, p. 130.  
\(^{11}\)EAS, I, pp. 173-175.  
\(^{12}\)EAS, I, p. 129.
specifically, he demanded that monks in remaining monasteries pay direct taxes to the community treasury to help defray the costs of welfare institutions. Chapter houses of the begging monks should be confiscated outright for use by the state.\(^{13}\) During his whole career as a reformer, he showed his concern for the unfortunate and the jetsam of society. He advised Christians who read his pamphlet, Warnung an die Christen der Burgausischen Mark, to "take care of the poor, unlucky, and the sick. If you do, there will be no destitute persons in any Christian city and no one will have reason to commit a crime against the common good (Gemainen Nutz)."\(^{14}\) He firmly believed that man's behavior depended in part on a proper physical environment as well as on a strong faith in God and Christ.

Eberlin and Luther were not the only Lutheran reformers to voice a strong desire to ease the lot of a suffering humanity. A number of Wittenberg reformers discussed social problems in frequent meetings and in their writings suggested solutions which reflected striking similarities. Johann Bugenhagen, who had helped to spread the Reformation in northern Germany and in the Scandinavian countries, for example, expressed, in his several codes of rules and regulations for new congregations, social thoughts

\(^{13}\) EAS, I, p. 112.

\(^{14}\) EAS, III, p. 282.
almost identical to those written a number of years earlier by Luther and Eberlin. In the church discipline which he wrote for Brunswick, Bugenhagen provided for a community chest from which poor relief would be administered to the needy by officials of the secular government. Further, as in Wolfaria, the infirm and the diseased would both be cared for in publicly owned buildings and hospitals. He outlined specific requirements necessary for eligibility for public aid: "Honest workers who have suffered misfortune and widows and waifs without money or friends will receive aid to enable them to lead honorable lives." Like Eberlin, Bugenhagen exhorted all those who had good fortune to contribute money to the common treasury, "not for ourselves but rather for the common good..." It is unlikely that the similarity of thought between Bugenhagen and Eberlin is purely accidental. Both men reflected currents of thought concerning the application of Christian doctrine to society as developed by the circle of Wittenberg reformers. The reception of God's grace acquired through faith, they maintained, carries with it an explicit command to service in this life. A believing

\[\text{\textsuperscript{15}}\text{Vogt, op. cit., pp. 300-303.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\text{Ibid., p. 302.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{17}}\text{Ibid., p. 301.}\]
Christian is bound by God's love to him to minister to mankind, to love and aid his neighbor, as Luther pointed out so well in his *Freedom of the Christian Man*.  

One of the basic ingredients in the creation of a desirable social environment, according to the Wittenberg reformers, was the establishment of a sound educational system. The burden of popular education, such as it was in the Middle Ages, had been borne mainly by the monasteries. Classes were conducted not only for the purpose of recruiting future members of the order but of educating laymen in various walks of life. By 1517 many German schools had been crippled by unsettled social conditions: a whole generation was entering into a period of gigantic religious, economic, and political upheaval with little or no education.  

The exigencies of the Reformation gave the reformers an intense interest in the training of the young not only in religious matters but also in subjects involving political, socio-economic, and cultural subjects, subjects too often neglected in the cathedral schools. Three basic principles of the Reformation favored and stimulated mass education, Luther's emphasis on justification by faith alone, his  

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18 *PE*, II, p. 328.  
doctrine of the priesthood of believers, and his idea of *sola scriptura*. Since justification by faith made Christ the center of Christianity, more responsibility was placed upon each individual, making it essential that he become better informed. Moreover, the belief that the Bible was the only true and legitimate authority made it imperative for the Lutheran to read it with skill and intelligence. Finally, the doctrine of universal priesthood of believers changed the basic conception of education. The responsibility of educating children was placed on the shoulders of lay members of the congregation. As a result, it was necessary to educate teachers and the goal of education was no longer "of, by, and for" the clergy.20

A record of most of Luther's pedagogical thoughts is found in the following two pamphlets, both of which had a wide circulation: *To the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools*, and *A Sermon Keeping Children in School*. In the letter to the councilmen Luther writes, "It is a shame that matters have come to such a pass that we have to urge and be urged to educate our children...even the heathen offer us abundant examples of it."21 He stated that one of the greatest


21*LW*, XLV, p. 323.
assets a city could have was an "able, learned, wise, honorable, and well educated body of citizens." He reasoned that if the city councils could afford large sums of money for guns and roads they should set some aside for their poor and neglected youth and engage "one or two competent men to teach school."  

Often the reformers produced slogans to advance the cause of education. On one occasion, Melanchthon wrote to Johann Agricola (d. 1566), a friend and colleague of Luther, that "a school is a temple of God whose walls are protected by angels." The following words of Luther not only raised the dignity of the teaching profession but also summed up the reformer's enlightened view toward education: "Let it be one of the greatest virtues on earth to train other people's children." Because Luther was one of the earliest men in modern times to advocate mass education, scholars such as F. V. N. Painter conclude that Luther's treatise To the Councilmen is one of the most important ever written in the field of education. 

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22Ibid., p. 355.  
23Ibid., p. 350. Also cited in Forell, et al., op. cit., p. 80.  
26Painter, op. cit., p. 143.
may, Eberlin had similar ideas to those of Luther which had been in print at least three years prior to the first edition of To the Councilmen.

In his pamphlets of 1521, Eberlin had a number of specific and definite suggestions for the improvement of education and for the role it should play in a Christian society. He advocated the idea of compulsory schools for all children of both sexes between the ages of three and eight. After the termination of the primary course of study, the best students, if they elected to do so, could continue to develop by pursuing advanced academic study. The full cost of the tuition for primary schools and part of the cost for advanced training should be paid by the city out of the funds of the community chest.27

Eberlin realized Bible reading and concomitant instruction in the ways of the evangelical church were vitally important for the maintenance and spread of the Reformation. He was keenly aware of the urgency of teaching the masses to read in their native language that they might come to know the Bible and their own church. Yet he did not minimize instruction in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew because, like Luther, he believed that without skill in these languages, "ability to interpret the gospels would perish."28

27 EAS, I, p. 127.
28 LW, XLV, p. 36.
Thus, ample space was given in his curriculum for the classical languages but not at the expense of modern German.\textsuperscript{29} His emphasis on languages, ancient as well as modern, was an indication that he realized the importance to Christian citizens of the ability to talk intelligently with their fellow man and to read the writings of great men. This, he believed, should take precedence over chatting about inanities with neighbor Hans.

Eberlin was aware of the fact that, aside from learning to read and gaining knowledge about the church, many cultural values which would raise the general level of the whole population could be gained from a systematic program of education. He thought the primary grades would be an ideal place to give all children instruction on a stringed musical instrument.\textsuperscript{30} The fact that Luther and Bugenhagen believed music instruction should be an integral part of any school curriculum indicates that most of the important reformers viewed music not only as a vehicle to glorify God but as a preoccupation with much cultural value.

In the new society envisioned by Eberlin, people would not read books by scholastic doctors. Like most humanists and reformers of his day, he reacted strongly in a negative manner to the entire body of scholastic

\textsuperscript{29}EAS, I, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{30}EAS, I, p. 130.
learning. As a matter of fact, he insisted that no philosophy whatever should be taught to the young.\textsuperscript{31} In place of philosophy, he and most of the Protestant reformers restored nature as a subject of investigation, holding the view that whatever in nature elevates and is useful for a better life should be studied and utilized. For example, Luther was happy that man had freed himself from classical science and had begun to study nature first-hand.\textsuperscript{32} Similarly, Eberlin wanted school children to be instructed in simple botany and pathology so they could learn more about themselves and the world around them. If the teachers already employed did not have the basic knowledge to handle science instruction, Eberlin advised the city councils to hire outside specialists to supplement the curriculum.\textsuperscript{33}

Indeed, the reformers in Wittenberg were interested in mass education and they were fully aware of its advantages not only in fostering the spread of the Reformation but in pleasing God. Further, training of the mind allowed individuals to perform their tasks on this earth with greater effectiveness and dignity. The educational

\textsuperscript{31}EAS, I, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{32}Forell, et al., op. cit., p. 89. It is interesting to note that the German fathers of Botany, Otto Brunfels, d. 1534, Jerome Bock, d. 1534, and Leonhart Fuchs, d. 1566, were all ardent Protestants. See R. Hooykaas, "Science and Reformation," \textit{Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale}, III (1956), p. 111.

\textsuperscript{33}EAS, I, p. 130.
philosophy of the Reformation was spread not only through the medium of pamphlets such as those written by Eberlin, but also by means of the number of church disciplines written by men such as Luther, Bugenhagen, and Brenz. In the 1520's at least fifteen cities, including Magdeburg, Halberstadt, Stralsund, Eisleben, Schwäbisch Hall, Braunschweig, Hamburg, Basel, and Nürnberg created school systems according to Lutheran specifications, at least insofar as possible. It is difficult to know the total effect of the educational theories of men such as Eberlin, Luther, and Melanchthon; but it is known that by the beginning of the seventeenth century there were at least three hundred cities and towns in Germany which had established public schools which incorporated many of their suggestions.

The advanced course of study suggested by Eberlin probably was not followed in many places, and public schools offered little more than an emphasis on memorization and comparison of Bible passages, but it was a "mental discipline of the first order" and bore fruit in later centuries to the extent that without it the "Enlightenment in Germany would have been quite unthinkable." Perhaps Luther best summed up

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34 Mertz, op. cit., pp. 162-163.
35 PE, IV, p. 102.
his feelings about the tremendous importance of mass education for German society when he declared, "On the last day an honest schoolmaster will be more honored than all of the popes." 37

Few problems connected with Christian living escaped Eberlin's attention. He tried to find a Lutheran point of view with respect to every aspect of life, whether it concerned alcoholic consumption or the daily shaving of the beard. An area of primary interest for him was the institution of marriage. Just as Luther believed that it was almost impossible for one to remain righteous outside the estate of marriage, 38 Eberlin recommended it as the best solution to the "dangerous moral condition of bachelorhood." Quoting freely from the first letter of Paul to Timothy, he built a strong case for Christian marriage as the basis of family life. He suggested several rules and regulations designed to foster morality. First, all girls must be at least fifteen years old and the male must be eighteen or more before the solemnization of the vows. Second, to prevent undue temptation and lust, he forbade any prostitutes or brothels in Wolfaria. 39 Finally, he prohibited any married man from dancing with any other woman than his own

37 Smith, op. cit., p. 97.
38 LW, XLV, p. 19.
39 EAS, II, pp. 28 and 81.
wife at public festivals and gatherings. Since he believed morality was apt to be forgotten during periods of celebration, he decreed a three-hour limit on all public dances.

The violation of the marriage vows was a serious offense in Wolfaria. An open and shut case of adultery was punishable by death. Luther held a similar view to that of Eberlin when he declared in his pamphlet, Estate of Marriage, that the "temporal sword and government should put adulterers to death, for whoever commits adultery has separated himself from God and is the same as a dead person." However, several years after his own marriage to Catherine von Bora, he was queried by a student on the proper punishment for adultery. At this later date, he answered that he preferred the penalty of excommunication to taking the life of the offender.

The institution of marriage in the late Middle Ages had been closely regulated by the Catholic Church. Luther criticized vigorously each of the various reasons why people should not marry in the eyes of the Church. Similarly, Eberlin resented and disagreed with the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{40}}\text{EAS}, I, p. 113.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{41}}\text{EAS}, I, p. 124.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{42}}\text{WE, X, pt. 2, p. 289.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{43}}\text{LM, XLV, pp. 23-24.}\]
restrictions on marriage and the fact that the necessity of obeying canon law could often be avoided by cash payments to the papacy. He writes in his eleventh pamphlet of 1521 that "all people may marry freely and without hindrance, except when they are forbidden by the law of Moses on account of blood-relationship."44

One of the major social problems in sixteenth-century Germany was the excessive consumption of alcohol. Luther, during a Table Talk session, declared, "I intend to write a book sometime concerning the vices of all the countries...to the Germans I will assign drunkenness."45 In a like manner Eberlin noted the grave social problems which often accompanied the abuse of alcohol. Drunkenness seemed to him to be the most widespread among the lower classes, particularly among servants. In Wolfaria maids and valets remained completely abstemious until the age of thirty. Any other citizen who abused his right to drink alcohol and became intoxicated in a public place ran the risk of arrest and a death sentence.46 Through most of his life as reformer, Eberlin fought for rigid controls on drinking. Soon after he had accepted his position as court preacher in Wertheim, he convinced Georg II that he

44 EAS, I, p. 123.
45 Smith, op. cit., p. 247.
46 EAS, I, pp. 123 and 129.
Eberlin's desire to maintain a limited but effective public control over private morality carried over into the area of recreation and simple amusements. One method used by the cities in Wolfaria was the provision of inexpensive recreation for all citizens. It was hoped that by keeping people busy their natural propensity to indulge in vice would be blunted. Further, gambling of all types was strictly controlled. The younger men were forbidden to play cards or throw dice for money; the older and more mature citizens, presumably those over thirty, were allowed to gamble for small stakes. Any citizen could play bratspiel (a form of backgammon) provided no money was wagered on the outcome. Those who cared little for simple games were free to enjoy themselves at a public dance held on every Wolfarian monthly holiday.

Consistent with his dislike of the gaudy excess of the rich merchants and the social climbers of his own day, Eberlin proposed for all citizens in Wolfaria a simple style of clothing. All men were to wear suits of the same color and to prove their masculinity by growing beards. The women were to dress conservatively but could use their

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47 Werner, op. cit., p. 189.
48 BAS, I, p. 124.
clothing materials (all the same color but a shade lighter than the male cloth) to dress tastefully, giving modest attention to fashion. All females were to wear their hair in a uniform manner, that is, short and unbraided. 

Infractions of the law and the subsequent penalties indicate to what extent Eberlin felt it was necessary for the government to protect men against the chaos caused by what he believed to be the inherent imperfectibility of mankind. He sought to utilize the government to act as a coercive power to enforce the law of the land. However, the state should do more than control crime. It should foster and promote public justice. The lesser offenses against the common good in Wolfaria brought swift punishment such as a lashing with reeds or a public demonstration for slanderous talk or deceit. For major crimes such as robbery, the offender was sentenced for a period ranging from a year to life, depending on the gravity of the theft. Usually the thief was forced to work for the government as a laborer or a clerk. The state demanded capital

49EAS, I, p. 129.

50EAS, I, pp. 127 and 129.

51EAS, I, p. 129. The similarity between the modes of punishment in Eberlin's Wolfaria and Sir Thomas More's imaginary island is striking. For example, More suggests that thieves must work for the government while bound around the feet with chains of gold. Eberlin demands exactly the same punishment but for the gold chains. He preferred that the prisoners wear iron ones.
punishment for murder, and, as mentioned earlier, for
drunkenness in public, and adultery.

The laws of Wolfaria were harsh and extreme; but
they represented more concern and protection for the
individual than was common in most countries of sixteenth-
century Europe. Further, the basis of the legal code
applicable to the people of Wolfaria rested upon the
ultimate sovereignty of the citizenry. He believed the
interposition of an organized state into the life of the
private person was in the interest of the common good and
would insure justice for all.

In conclusion, Eberlin's social thought reveals a
pattern consistent with a strong sense of Christian
doctrine, morality, and responsibility. His main ethical
principle is that a Christian life is one of faith. It is
expressed in part toward his fellow man as well as to God.
Thus it follows that the Christian must have as the core of
his religion a social ethic which is impelled by a desire
to serve the world as well as God. His social ethic is
reflected in his body of thought concerning the problems
of aiding the sick, poor, or otherwise unfortunate persons.
In his view, those who want to discharge part of their
obligation to God and neighbor may pay cash to the
community chest which will help the needy.

\footnote{Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, \textit{Ethics} (New York: The
currents of thought of the type held by Eberlin.}
Another important part of Eberlin's social ethic is his strong interest in mass education for cultural as well as religious reasons. He sees education as one of the most important functions of a society. He believes that without education it is impossible to improve culture or make the world a better place in which to live. His views toward other aspects of the social order such as the institution of marriage or the legal codes are not unreasonable or naive if they are considered within the framework of sixteenth-century life and thought.

Certainly Eberlin owed much to Luther as a source of knowledge and stimulation. However, in some areas he went further than his teacher in attempting to solve some of the problems of everyday life. His life and work are a bona fide part of the history of the Reformation and his name should be given at least a niche in the hagiography of first generation of Lutheran reformers.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The life of Eberlin von Günzburg has long been in need of a thorough re-examination. His career offers a salient example of how one individual reacted to the forces stimulated by the Lutheran Reformation. An analysis of the content of his numerous pamphlets gives the historian new light on the interaction between Lutheran ideas and social issues. Although the guiding social, economic, and political principles of his day were different from our own, the basic relationship of the individual to God and his ethical behavior toward other men still has validity.

As a serious preacher and writer, Eberlin lived according to the articles of Christian faith which he proclaimed. He exercised a much greater influence than the average pastor in Germany because he knew how to use the presses of the "new art of printing" to optimum advantage. The German people answered him with approbation and soon he had a reputation of significant proportion, at least in southern Germany.

Most of Eberlin's pamphlets contain a great amount of information on contemporary sixteenth-century folklore, and on the social, economic, and political problems of the
early years of the Reformation. A second important characteristic of his work is that it contains a good sample of Lutheran religious thought of the type read by the average man in his own home. Third, his many pamphlets which have survived the vicissitudes of time are an excellent example of the art of printing in the sixteenth century. Even if he had been unconnected with the Lutheran Reformation or had remained within the Catholic Church, he would have been of significant literary significance as a man of letters and as a pioneer in the utilization of movable type presses for printing material for a mass audience.

After Eberlin had read Luther's famous pamphlet of 1520, he became a convert to the Lutheran faith and dedicated the remainder of his life to the dissemination of the basic doctrines of the Reformation. He expounded Lutheran doctrine for a large body of readers, informing them of the Pauline concepts of diakonia (the function of the church is ministry) and the kerygmatic qualities of Scripture. He gave his views the aura of legitimacy by living and studying with such beacon lights of the Reformation as Luther, Melanchthon, and Bugenhagen. Further, his life-long interest in humanism, his considerable linguistic ability, and his extensive travel in Germany provided him with a rather large and overall perspective of the events and problems of his day.

In the realm of political theory, Eberlin had a number of definite ideas which reflected both his position
as a religious reformer and a social critic. For a time, he gave vigorous support to the existing political government of the German states, that is, the Holy Roman Empire, the electoral system, and the office of the emperor. Shortly after the Reformation occurred and the hostility of Charles V toward Luther was evident, he formed a plan favoring a loose federation of cities dominated by princes responsible to the people and periodically elected by them. He demanded that the officers of the state portray a genuine concern for the common welfare of the community by a complete disavowal of conflicting outside interests.

Laws in the Lutheran utopia of Wolfaria were based on the common sense of its citizenry and the injunction of Moses. Roman civil law, which gave an added impetus to imperial and centralized authority, was strongly opposed by Eberlin. He feared the ogre of a Caesar who would create conditions unfavorable for a Christian existence. His solution to the problem was the creation of a Lutheran utopia which would guarantee physical and spiritual freedom. The spirit of Lutheran doctrine as well as the essence of humanistic utopias permeate the whole structure of Wolfaria. It is important to note that his whole frame of reference is, for the most part, outside of the body of eschatological or millennial thought. He writes and
speaks as a Lutheran, that is, his political ideas are replete with the secular implications of Lutheran doctrine.

The economic situation in Germany was one of Eberlin's prime interests. He felt the rising costs of both hard and soft commodities were detrimental to the welfare of the average consumer. Further, he criticized and feared the growing power of the wealthy merchants and the great territorial princes. With a practical inclination he devised a number of remedies for what he thought were the ills of the German economy. First, he advocated a limitation on the size of large trading corporations to prevent the creation of restrictive trading monopolies. Second, he suggested for Germany a uniform coinage system which would insure fair values. Third, he was one of the first to write with a sense of economic nationalism in that he desired external tariffs to protect German wine and cloth industries from foreign competition and the reduction of internal tariffs of the type frequently levied by the princes.

He held the institution of private property sacred. Unlike many of the radicals such as Thomas Müntzer, Eberlin believed that the possession of land and other property was inviolable as long as the owner respected the common good. He thought the wealthy could serve the best interests of the community if they spent their money wisely and
contributed to the community chest which paid the necessary expenses of relief, education, and civic improvement.

Eberlin had a strong notion of the dignity of legitimate work and toil. Like Luther, he understood the nature of the Christian calling and considered it virtuous to earn one's own way and not depend on charity for the necessities of life unless one was not able-bodied. Thus, working at some trade or profession was an essential part of the life of the Christian. Since there was much land untilled in sixteenth-century Germany, he recommended to many people that they take up farming, a desirable, honorable occupation, in which one could produce goods which could be admired and utilized at the same time. Moreover, he thought the simple life was the one most pleasing to God. If a person hesitated to work at farming, he should take up the next most practical occupation, blacksmithing. Those who were parasitical and refused to work he considered enemies of the social order who should be harried out of the land. There is a simple practicality in his economic thought and it contains nothing that is contradictory to Lutheran doctrine. The added economic responsibility of the individual goes hand in hand with the greater burden in religion placed by the Reformation on the shoulders of each person.

The best area in which to study the interaction between Eberlin's faith and social issues is in the realm
of social ethics. He believed the call of the Christian
to serve God in this world could be answered by helping to
take care of the poor and the destitute. He advised men to
channel their resources into a community chest to remove
want and hunger from the lame, widows, orphans, and
unfortunate. As far as social welfare is concerned, he is
clearly in line with the positions of Luther and Bugenhagen.

Eberlin was one of the earliest of the circle in
Wittenberg to suggest practical ways to improve the
educational system in Germany. Realizing mass education
was an absolute essential in the spreading and maintaining
of the Reformation, he, as early as 1521, advocated a
system of mass education for all children up to the age of
eight. He urged further advanced study at public expense.
Linguistic, religious, musical, and scientific subjects he
considered the core of the curriculum, which indicates
that he realized fully the value of a functional as well as
a theoretical and cultural education.

The family unit in Wolfaria was held in high esteem.
In the main, Eberlin's ideas on marriage paralleled those
in Scripture and in Luther's writings. Those who violated
the sacred but divine institution of matrimony were to be
severely punished. In other areas of public morality, he
deplored the abuse of alcohol and the sin of gluttony. He
favored moderation and temperance not only in drinking but
also in one's apparel and social habits.
Luther and Eberlin are in close agreement in such matters as theology, education, economics, one's calling, and public welfare. However, there are some points in which there are significant differences. Even though both had similar backgrounds and training, they came to some different conclusions especially on the nature of politics. Luther's clearest and most coherent exposition of politics is found in his discussion of theology; he did not intend to lay the groundwork for a political and social utopia but rather he desired stopgap reforms until such time as the world would come to an end. Yet he was concerned with the leading of a good life; he hoped that a proper religious foundation and a sincere faith would enable men to live together in peace and prosperity without the necessity of external coercion in the form of a highly organized state.

Basically, the political thought of Eberlin is more in the tradition of St. Augustine who conceived both positive and negative functions of the state as it protected the good people and restrained the evil ones. The widespread permeation of the spirit of the Gospel was to be aided by the state which should act as vehicle for the closer association of the individual with God. It is possible that if Luther had chosen to develop his political ideas further, he might have followed a similar path.
Consideration of the whole life and work of Eberlin von Günzburg leads one to recognize above all his genuine concern for posterity. He hoped for periods of peace among all peoples and wanted to do his share in attempting to fashion the future. Virtually all his writings evince his desire of improving society within the framework of a Christian ethic. It may be said with certainty that he helped Luther re-evaluate and vivify the body of Christian ethics in terms which the people of his own day could understand. Moreover, as a religious, political, and social visionary, he gave the modern reader, as well as his audiences of the sixteenth century, a searching analysis of many different facets of socio-economic, political, and religious activities. In his own quaint way he penetrated beneath the surface of the complexities of the era of the Reformation and in many of his writings provided a relatively rare picture of the interaction between the Lutheran Reformation and the major social issues of the day.
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