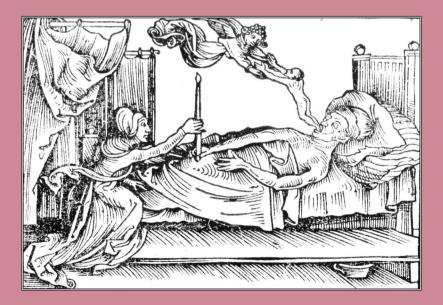# Reforming *the* Art *of* Dying

The *ars moriendi* in the German Reformation (1519–1528)

Austra Reinis

Reforming the Art of Dying

*I dedicate this book
with love and gratitude
to my mother* Ināra, *my father* Gunārs
and my sister Sigrīda

Reforming the Art of Dying
The ars moriendi *in the German Reformation (1519–1528)*

AUSTRA REINIS

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Contents

Abbreviations

BBK   Bautz, Friedrich Wilhelm, *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* (Hamm, [Westf.]: Bautz, 1970–2001). Also available from http://www.bautz.de/bbkl.

DWB   Jacob Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (16 vols, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1854–1954; reprint, 33 vols, Munich: Deutsches Taschenbuch, 1999).

LThK   *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edn (11 vols, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1993–2001).

LW   *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan et al. (55 vols, St Louis, MO and Philadelphia, PA: Concordia and Fortress, 1955–86).

OER   *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (4 vols, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996).

PL   *Patrologia, Series Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (221 vols in 222, Paris: n.p., 1844–1904).

RE   *Realenzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edn (24 vols, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1896–1913).

StA   *Martin Luther, Studienausgabe*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Delius et al. (5 vols, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1979–92).

TRE   *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977–2004).

VD 16   *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts: VD 16* (25 vols, Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1983–2000).

WA   *Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. J.F.K. Knaake et al. (68 vols, Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–1999).

WA Br   *Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Briefwechsel*, ed. J.F.K. Knaake et al. (18 vols, Weimar: Böhlau, 1930–85).

WA TR   *Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden*, ed. J.F.K. Knaake et al. (6 vols, Weimar: H. Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1912–21).

Preface

This study is a revised version of the dissertation I submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Reformation History at Princeton Theological Seminary.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

'Many books have been written … on how we are to prepare for death: nothing but error, and people have only become more downcast.'[1] Martin Luther's concise critique of the late medieval art of dying has two aspects. The first of these is cognitive: the theological teaching of the *ars moriendi* has been 'nothing but error'. The second is affective: on an emotional level the *ars moriendi* has failed to console people in the face of death. On the contrary, it has caused them to become 'more downcast'. This is a study of how Luther and thirteen other authors, writing in the period from 1519 to 1528, sought to create a 're-formed' *ars moriendi* or art of dying.[2] It employs two methods of analysis – theological and rhetorical – in order to characterize, respectively, the cognitive and the affective aspects of the reformers' teaching on dying.

The theological analysis of these first Reformation books on dying shows that the authors perceived their readers for the most part as despairing of their salvation. They sought to assure them that on account of Christ's victory on the cross they could be certain of their salvation. This constituted a radical break with traditional doctrine, according to which no one could presume to be certain of his or her eternal destiny.

The rhetorical analysis contributes to the recent research on the history of emotions by providing access to the affective dimension of the reformers' teaching on death. Having themselves found peace and joy in the certainty of their salvation, the early authors of *Sterbebücher* did their utmost to persuade the dying that they too could face death with joy and confidence. To this end, many of them put to use the rhetorical skills they had acquired along with their theological training.

---

[1] 'Multi libri … scripti, quomodo ad mortem praeparare debeamus: merus error et homines bedrubter worden.' *Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. J.F.K. Knaake et al. (68 vols, Weimar, 1883–1999), vol. 41, p. 699. This work is henceforth cited as WA. Quoted in Irmgard Wilhelm-Schaffer, *Gottes Beamter und Spielmann des Teufels: Der Tod im Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Cologne, 1999), p. 200.

[2] Most commonly translated as the 'art of dying', the term *ars moriendi* may also be rendered as the 'science' or 'knowledge' of dying; cf. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A New Latin Dictionary* (New York, NY, 1907), s.v. 'ars'. In this study, the uncapitalized *ars moriendi* will be used to refer generally to the genre of writings on preparation for death, while the capitalized *Ars moriendi* will designate a specific work in this genre, the illustrated *Ars moriendi*. The German term *Sterbebuch* is synonymous with the Latin *ars moriendi*.

Death and dying in the Middle Ages

Much of the recent research on the history of death and dying has focused on the Christian death culture of medieval Europe: the doctrine of purgatory, prayers, masses and indulgences for the dead, funeral rites, burial customs, the cult of the saints and the art of dying.[3] Social historians have argued that this medieval death culture was characterized by a web of relations between the living and the dead. Long-dead saints could be called upon to intercede for the living before the divine judgment. The living, on the other hand, could assist their deceased loved ones in purgatory by praying for them and by having masses said for their souls.[4] Some ascetic women believed that through physical suffering they could rescue souls from purgatory.[5]

The ritual of preparing for death was one of the focal points of late medieval death culture. While early Christians appear to have approached death joyfully, with confidence in their eternal salvation, over time this attitude was replaced with one of penitence and fear in anticipation of divine judgment.[6] By the Late Middle Ages no one could be assured of his or her salvation. It was believed that one's eternal fate was decided at the moment of death by one's victory over or defeat by the deathbed demons.[7] All of life came to be seen as preparation for this final struggle.

---

[3]   The two foundational studies in the history of death and dying in Europe are Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, trans. by Helen Weaver (London, 1981) and Michel Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris, 1983). A more recent and richly illustrated introduction focusing specifically on medieval death culture can be found in Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London, 1996). The continuation and development of medieval death culture in Counter-Reformation Spain is examined by Carlos Eire in his *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge, 1995).

[4]   On the early development of the relations between the living and the dead see Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), especially pp. 77–92.

[5]   Christina Mirabilis, for example, 'chose a life of dramatic and eccentric sufferings that would free souls from purgatory and at the same time make its tortures visible on earth, winning the conversion of sinners'. Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist* (Philadelphia, PA, 1995), p. 111.

[6]   On how this shift in attitudes toward death is reflected in church architecture, see Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, pp. 97–101. Éric Rebillard has shown that this shift can be dated to the time of Augustine, see his *In hora mortis: Évolution de la pastorale chrétienne de la mort aux IVe et Ve siècles dans l'Occident Latin* (Rome, 1994), pp. 18–19, 62–63.

[7]   Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, p. 109. For a discussion of the art of dying in late medieval England see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England* c. *1400*–c. *1580* (New Haven, CT and London, 1992), pp. 313–27. Recent German-language studies of the topic include Norbert Ohler, *Sterben und Tod im Mittelalter* (Munich and Zurich, 1990), Arno Borst, ed., *Tod im Mittelalter* (Konstanz, 1993), Markus J. Wenninger, ed., *Du guoter tôt: Sterben im Mittelalter: Ideal und Realität* (Klagenfurt, 1998).

During the Early Middle Ages liturgical orders were developed to help dying persons prepare for death. Forgiveness of sins was the central concern of these orders; it was provided by a priest through the administration of the three deathbed sacraments – penance, unction and communion.[8] By the High Middle Ages these orders had become quite elaborate, as can be seen, for example, in the *Rituale* of St Florian from the twelfth century. Forgiveness of sins remained the focus of the ritual, just as penance, unction and communion remained the core elements, but various sacramentals, prayers, psalms and litanies were added.[9]

Often, however, and particularly at times when the plague was rampant, priests were unable to be present at all deathbeds. For this reason they drafted guidelines for teaching laypersons how to provide pastoral care to the dying. These handbooks, which came to be known as the *ars moriendi*, inherited the penitential emphasis of the church orders. One of the earliest of these works appears to be the anonymous *Admonitio morienti et de peccatis suis nimium formidanti* or 'Anselmian questions' attributed to Anselm of Canterbury.[10] These questions seem to have been the basis for similar questions in Jean Gerson's *ars moriendi* (the third part of his *Opus Tripartitum*, written before 1408).[11] Gerson's work, one of the most influential of the early works in this genre, consisted of a series of instructions to caregivers which fell into four categories: exhortations, questions, prayers and observations.[12] The great majority of the subsequent works in this genre are textually related to the *Admonitio morienti* and Gerson's *ars moriendi*. The anonymous *Speculum artis bene moriendi* (*c.* 1414–18), one of the most widely disseminated *ars moriendi* texts, seems to have been composed by adding to Gerson's tract an introduction, a section on the temptations (*Anfechtungen*) of the dying person and

---

[8]   The development of the Christian rites for attending to the sick and the dying is traced in Frederick S. Paxton's *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY, 1990).

[9]   Adolph Franz, ed., *Das Rituale von St Florian aus dem 12. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1912), pp. 71–89.

[10]   *Sancti Anselmi admonitio morienti et de peccatis suis nimium formidanti* in *Patrologia, Series Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1863), vol. 158, pp. 685–88. The *Patrologia, Series Latina* is henceforth cited as PL. A variant, English-language text of the Anselmian questions and exhortation may be found in *De visitatione infirmorum* in William Maskell, *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (Oxford, 1882), vol. 3, pp. 413–19.

[11]   Helmut Appel, *Anfechtung und Trost im Spätmittelalter und bei Luther* (Leipzig, 1938), pp. 74, 76–77. For the original French text of Gerson's *ars moriendi* see 'La médecine de l'ame' in Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. P. Glorieux, *L'oeuvre française* (Paris, 1966), vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 404–407.

[12]   Franz Falk, *Die deutschen Sterbebüchlein von der ältesten Zeit des Buchdrucks bis zum Jahre 1520* (Cologne, 1890), pp. 1, 16–17.

a series of prayers.[13] The illustrated *Ars moriendi* in turn appears to be a condensed version of the *Speculum*.[14] Later books on dying can be divided into two categories. The pamphlets in the first category, such as Stephan von Landskron's *Die Hymelstrasz*, borrow themes and elements from the *Speculum*.[15] The works in the second category, of which the anonymous *Versehung leib, sel er vnnd gutt* is an example, draw on other sources and treat the material independently.[16] An *ars moriendi* section is also found in the *Hortulus animae*, the most popular and widely-disseminated devotional work of the early sixteenth century.[17]

Reforming death culture and the art of dying

In Reformation Germany, England and France the new theology based on the doctrine of justification by faith brought about profound changes in death culture. Social historians have suggested that these changes amounted to a separation of the living from the dead.[18] The abolition of the doctrine of purgatory placed the dead beyond the prayers of the living. Funeral rituals also reflected the new separation. Whereas previously the main function of the funeral had been to pray for the deceased, now its purpose was to instruct the living in the gospel and to point to the honour that the deceased had brought to his family.[19] The spiritual separation was accompanied in many places by a physical separation. While in the Middle Ages the dead had often been buried in churches near relics of the saints,

---

[13]   Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars moriendi* (New York, NY, 1942), p. 41.

[14]   O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, p. 47. Though Falk and Appel believe the *Speculum* to be derived from the illustrated *Ars moriendi*, O'Connor presents a convincing argument for the priority of the *Speculum*; see her *The Art of Dying Well*, pp. 14–15.

[15]   Rainer Rudolf, *Ars moriendi: Von der Kunst des heilsamen Lebens und Sterbens* (Cologne, 1957), pp. 77–78, 110.

[16]   Rudolf, *Ars moriendi*, pp. 99, 102. For a detailed list of the most common themes of the *ars moriendi* literature, see pp. 114–17.

[17]   Rudolf, *Ars moriendi*, pp. 106–107.

[18]   Thus the thesis of Craig M. Koslofsky's *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (London, 2000); in particular see pp. 19–21. Koslofsky also provides an overview of the development of post-Reformation funeral ritual in Germany. Peter Marshall in his *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002) surveys the reformation of death culture in England, including the gradual abolition of prayer for the dead, the development of funeral services and the evolution of ideas concerning the afterlife. For essays on aspects of Reformation death culture in Switzerland, France, Scotland and Transylvania see Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, eds, *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2000).

[19]   Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead*, pp. 106, 114.

or near altars where the Eucharist was celebrated, they were now interred in cemeteries on the outskirts of cities and towns.[20]

Preparation for death continued to be a focal point in this new death culture. In order to help the dying, the reformers produced both new church orders and new handbooks on dying. The most striking feature of the new handbooks was their recovery of the early Christian assurance of salvation and therefore their confident and joyful approach to death. Susan Karant-Nunn has already noted this in her summary of Martin Moller's *Manual on Preparing for Death* (first published in 1593), where she writes that this manual encourages Christians to 'give themselves over to death in a spirit of joy and happiness. The soul is God's temple and dwelling and is assured of salvation in faith. …'[21]

Though the German-language reformers were the first to 're-form' the medieval *ars moriendi*, their attempts in this area have received little scholarly attention.[22] Luise Klein's unpublished dissertation 'Die Bereitung zum Sterben' is the only existing introduction to and overview of the German-language publications in this genre.[23] Klein has characterized

---

[20] Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead*, pp. 41–46.

[21] Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London, 1997), p. 165. The reference is to Martin Moller, *Christliche Lebens- und Selige Sterbe-Kunst* (Leipzig, 1673), p. 191. Besides Luther's *Sermon on Preparing to Die*, Moller's book is the only Protestant *ars moriendi* that Karant-Nunn has examined; the primary sources for her study of Lutheran deathbed ritual are church orders, visitation protocols and funeral sermons.

[22] The *ars moriendi* of the English Reformation has been more extensively studied. For a literary approach to selected English-language handbooks on dying see Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England* (New Haven, CT, 1970). A more recent overview of the genre, with attention paid to theological emphases, can be found in Ralph Houlbrook, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 147–82. The texts of several *ars moriendi* works can be found in David William Atkinson, ed., *The English 'ars moriendi'* (New York, NY, 1992). The French Protestant *ars moriendi* tradition has recently been explored in several articles by Marianne Carbonnier-Burkard: 'Les manuels réformés de préparation à la mort', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 217 (3) (2000), 363–80; 'L'art de mourir réformé: Les récits de "dernières heures" aux xviie et xviiie siècles', *Homo religiosus* (2000), 99–107; and 'La mort réformée, à travers un livre de raison du xviie siècle', *Foi et vie* 99 (5) (2000), 45–56.

[23] Luise Klein, 'Die Bereitung zum Sterben: Studien zu den evangelischen Sterbebüchern des 16. Jahrhunderts' (Ph.D. diss., University of Göttingen, 1958). The only Reformation *Sterbebuch* to have been subjected to theological analysis is Martin Luther's *Sermon on Preparing to Die*; for a bibliography see Chapter 3, n. 3. The contents of a limited number of *Sterbebücher*, such as those by Johannes Brenz and Johannes Odenbach, are described in Hermann Beck's *Die Erbauungsliteratur der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands von Dr. M. Luther bis Martin Moller* (Erlangen, 1883), pp. 184, 190. Paul Althaus draws on *Sterbebücher* as a source for Reformation prayers in his *Forschungen zur Evangelischen Gebetsliteratur* (Gütersloh, 1927), pp. 37–39, 42–43, 48–49, 50. Günther Franz's *Huberinus-Rhegius-Holbein: Bibliographische und druckgeschichtliche Untersuchung der verbreitesten Trost- und*

the principal theme of the genre as 'consolation' in the face of deathbed temptation or *Anfechtung*.[24] She notes that the reformers in their works drew on and adapted some of the themes of the late medieval *ars moriendi* – especially that of *Anfechtung* – but she does not undertake a theological comparison of the Reformation works with their medieval predecessors.[25] The classification system which she develops for the 139 titles published in the sixteenth century points to a multiplicity of literary genres and themes. Unfortunately the convergence she posits between periods, genres and themes is not tenable upon a closer reading of the individual works.

This study focuses on the earliest *Sterbebücher*, beginning with Martin Luther's *Sermon on Preparing to Die* of 1519 and ending with Jakob Otter's *Christlich leben vnd sterben* of 1528. It proposes a new classification for the works in this early period and explores how Luther and his colleagues adopted traditional themes and motifs even as they transformed them to accord with their conviction that Christians could be certain of their salvation. Further, it points out how Luther's colleagues drew on the writings of Luther, not only his teaching on dying but also other writings, including his sermons on the sacraments, and it concludes that the assurance of salvation offered by these works represented a significant change from traditional teaching on death.

In time, the reformers' teaching on how to prepare for death found its way into the Protestant church orders. Beverly Olson-Dopffel's study of the deathbed rituals prescribed in 64 Swiss and South German church orders from the period 1520 to 1560 provides a schematic overview of these rituals. Olson-Dopffel observes an increase in the importance of pastoral exhortation in these rites relative to their medieval predecessors. Like Karant-Nunn, she notes that Protestant pastors sought to communicate 'certainty and confidence' to the dying.[26]

Erbauungsschriften des 16. Jahrhunderts (Niewkoop, 1973) is only a bibliographical study and does not deal with the content of the *Sterbebücher*. Bernd Moeller's 'Sterbekunst in der Reformation: Der "köstliche, gute, notwendige Sermon vom Sterben" des Augustiner-Eremiten Stefan Kastenbauer' in *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Franz J. Felten and Nikolas Jaspert (Berlin, 1999), pp. 739–65, explores the historical context in which this pamphlet was written and situates it in the tradition of the *ars moriendi*, but only briefly notes some of the theological themes contained therein.

[24]   Klein, 'Die Bereitung zum Sterben', pp. 1–4.

[25]   Klein, 'Die Bereitung zum Sterben', pp. 20–24.

[26]   Beverly S. Olson-Dopffel, 'Pastoral Care of the Sick, the Dying and the Bereaved in Early Swiss and South German Protestantism' (Ph.D. diss., Edinburgh, 1977), p. 253.

Theology of piety and the dissemination of Reformation ideas

The *Sterbebücher* of the Reformation, in contrast to doctrinal works or academic disputations, belong to a type of literature that seeks to address issues of direct interest to laypersons. Often this type of literature has been called devotional literature ('Erbauungsliteratur'). Berndt Hamm, in a series of publications on late medieval devotional literature, has advocated the use of the term 'Frömmigkeitstheologie' to describe this genre.[27]

Hamm defines piety ('Frömmigkeit') as the actualization of certain religious beliefs and teachings in daily life through the working out of a right way of life.[28] The theology of piety, Hamm continues, is one which reflects on and instructs Christians how to work out such a right way of life.[29] This theology seeks to address 'simple' priests and members of monastic communities as well as 'simple' laypersons. Often the authors specify that literate individuals are to instruct the illiterate in the teachings contained in their writings.[30] Because the theology of piety is concerned with the edification of souls, it focuses on themes such as penance, the ways in which individuals may benefit from the passion of Christ, the help which may be received from Mary and the saints, the art of dying, baptism, the Eucharist, the various virtues, the different types of sins and the temptations of the devil.[31] A variety of literary genres are used to teach this theology including sermons, handbooks for clergy, devotional books (many of which are concerned with devotion to the passion of Christ), explanations of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Our Father and the *ars moriendi*.[32] The theology of piety represents an adaptation of academic theology to the spiritual needs and intellectual capacity of a wider audience.[33] Hamm argues that it blossomed in the Late Middle Ages because it answered a growing demand for religious instruction on the part of an increasingly literate laity.[34] At the same time it was available for use as a vehicle for religious reform.

Mark Edwards, in his study of the publication of Martin Luther's writings by Strasbourg publishers, has demonstrated that Luther first became known in that city through the pastoral and devotional works

---

[27] See Berndt Hamm, *Frömmigkeitstheologie am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1982) and 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie? Überlegungen zum 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert' in Hans-Jörg Nieden and Marcel Nieden, eds., *Praxis Pietatis* (Stuttgart, 1999).

[28] Hamm, 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie?' in Nieden, *Praxis Pietatis*, p. 11.

[29] Hamm, 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie?' in Nieden, *Praxis Pietatis*, p. 11.

[30] Hamm, 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie?' in Nieden, *Praxis Pietatis*, p. 13.

[31] Hamm, 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie?' in Nieden, *Praxis Pietatis*, pp. 14–15.

[32] Hamm, 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie?' in Nieden, *Praxis Pietatis*, p. 15.

[33] Hamm, 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie?' in Nieden, *Praxis Pietatis*, pp. 16–17.

[34] Hamm, 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie?' in Nieden, *Praxis Pietatis*, p. 29.

which he wrote for the laity addressing lay concerns: baptism, marriage, the Eucharist, confession and extreme unction.[35] Using Joachim Köhler's research, Edwards notes that Luther was the most prolific of the evangelical authors, 'producing fully 20 per cent of the pamphlet literature of the first three decades of the century'.[36] He argues that it is a mistake to believe that the 'printed message could reach only those who were able to read'. Many of the early vernacular pamphlets, Edwards writes, contained instructions to the literate to share what they had learned with those who could not read.[37] When the readers were preachers who embraced Luther's teachings and expounded on them from their own pulpits, 'the "multiplier effect" could be large indeed'.[38]

What Edwards has observed regarding the early devotional writings of Martin Luther published in Strasbourg holds true for the *Sterbebücher* of the period 1519–28. They were devotional works intended primarily for laity or 'simple' priests which addressed a topic of relevance to everyone, lay or clergy: preparing to die. They communicated the central Reformation message of justification by faith and certainty of salvation. They propagated the reformers' new understanding of deathbed temptation, of the sacraments, and of meditation on the passion. Because many authors – both well-known and obscure – contributed to this genre, and because many of the *Sterbebücher* were published in multiple editions, they reached a wide audience. Thus, from a wider perspective, a study of the *Sterbebücher* and of the context which occasioned each writing contributes to the study of the dissemination of Reformation ideas.[39]

---

[35] Mark Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), pp. 44–45.

[36] Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, p. 39.

[37] Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, p. 38. Monika Rössing-Hager demonstrates convincingly that some authors of pamphlet literature ('Flugschriften') constructed their sentences rhetorically in such a way as to facilitate auditory reception of their writings; see her 'Wie stark findet der nicht-lesekundige Rezipient Berücksichtigung in den Flugschriften?' in *Flugschriften als Massenmedium der Reformationszeit*, ed. Hans-Joachim Köhler (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 135–37.

[38] Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, p. 38.

[39] Recent works on the transmission of ideas in the Reformation include Peter Matheson's *The Rhetoric of the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1998), Helga Robinson-Hammerstein, ed., *The Transmission of Ideas in the Reformation* (n.p., 1989), Robert W. Scribner's *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981) and several works by Miriam Usher Chrisman including her *Lay Culture, Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg, 1480–1599* (New Haven, CT, 1982) and her *Conflicting Visions of Reform: German Lay Propaganda Pamphlets, 1519–1530* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1996).

The emotional dimension of dying

Recent studies of the theology of piety have highlighted the need to recognize not only the cognitive but also the affective and experiential dimensions of piety. Martin H. Jung, for example, has noted that Luther in describing his tower experience repeatedly characterized his relationship to God in terms of 'loving' and 'hating', referring also to 'feeling', 'being angry' and 'raging'.[40] Ute Mennecke-Haustein, having studied the theology and the language of Luther's letters of consolation, has argued that the impulse behind the letters was Luther's own faith-experience that Christ is near to human beings and gives himself to them: 'This comforting and joy-inspiring ("tröstliche und freudigmachende") experience Luther sought to convey with his language, making use of the capacity of language to express emotion'.[41]

The recent work of Birgit Stolt has demonstrated that Luther's use of the craft of rhetoric was informed by his anthropology.[42] For Luther, faith was faith of the heart, and consequently had an affective dimension. 'The one who believes in his heart is justified'; thus Luther translated Rom 10:10.[43] Luther shared with Augustine and with the Bible an anthropology according to which the heart was the locus of both intellectual understanding and emotion, as well as of the will.[44] Since to believe with one's heart involved both intellect and emotions,[45] preaching had to address both of these dimensions:

> This is the goal of preaching, baptism, the sacraments, and the keys – that we know that Christ suffered for us. In addition, he writes it inwardly into the heart, for those who hear receive an inward flame [in their heart], so that the heart says: 'It is indeed true, even if I should die a hundred deaths for it. …' This is what the Holy Spirit commands, and sees to it here on earth, that one grasps it not only with one's mouth and ears, but also holds it in one's heart.[46]

---

[40] 'non amabam, imo odiebam', 'sentirem', 'indignabar' and 'furebam', WA 54:185. [= *Luther's Works, American Edition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan et al. (55 vols, St Louis, MO and Philadelphia, PA, 1955–86), vol. 34, pp. 336–37. This work is henceforth cited as LW.] Martin H. Jung, *Frömmigkeit und Theologie bei Philipp Melanchthon: Das Gebet im Leben und in der Lehre des Reformators* (Tübingen, 1998), pp. 15–16.

[41] Ute Mennecke-Haustein, *Luthers Trostbriefe* (Gütersloh, 1989), p. 9.

[42] The relationship between Luther's rhetoric and his anthropology is also explored by Helmar Junghans; see his 'Die Worte Christi geben das Leben' in *Wartburg-Jahrbuch Sonderband*, 1996 (Eisenach, 1996).

[43] 'Wer von Herzen glaubt, wird gerechtfertigt.' Birgit Stolt, *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens* (Tübingen, 2000), p. 49.

[44] Stolt, *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*, pp. 50–51.

[45] Stolt, *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*, p. 53.

[46] 'Darauff geht die predigt, tauff, Sacrament und Schlussel, das wir wissen, das Christus fur uns gelidden hat, Neben dem nu schreibt ers noch Innerlich Ins hertz, Denn die es horen, kriegen auch Inwendig eine flammen, das das hertz spricht: Das ist Je war, und solte ich

Luther taught that preaching should consist of teaching ('doctrina') and exhortation ('exhortatio'):

> For St Paul distinguishes two parts of preaching, Rom 12: *Doctrinam et exhortationem*, teaching and exhortation. Teaching consists of preaching what people don't yet know, in order that people might know or understand. Exhortation is when one spurs and urges people to [hold on to] what they already know well.[47]

For exhortation to be effective, it needed to make use of the tools of rhetoric:

> Dialectic teaches (*docet*), rhetoric exhorts (*movet*). The former belongs to the intellect, the latter to the will […] and these two constitute preaching […]. But a third thing comes in here, too, which is also rhetorical, that is the illustration (*illustrans*) of the sermon. This happens when one adduces Scripture passages, examples, parables, and other figures of speech of this kind, with which the listeners can be moved to believe and to obey your words.[48]

Of the classical rhetoricians, Luther preferred Quintilian for his emphasis on appeal to the emotions. As a result of the reforms of 1518 at the University of Wittenberg, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* was incorporated into the curriculum. Luther recommended the study of Quintilian in a letter to Johann Lang.[49]

---

hundert todte druber leyden […] Das heisst der heilig geist, der es hie auff erden anhefftet, das mans nicht allein mit mund und ohren fasse, sonder Im herzen hallte […].' WA 45:23. Cited in Stolt, *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*, p. 54. Grimm cites 'auffordern, fordern, befehlen' as the primary meanings of 'heiszen'; see Jacob Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (16 vols, Leipzig, 1854–1954; reprint, 33 vols, Munich, 1999), vol. 10, cols 908–909. This work is hereafter cited as DWB; references are to the reprint edition. Stolt cautions, however, that the persuasion attempted by the rhetor is not identical with the faith awakened by the preacher. For an awakening of the faith of the heart, the working of the Holy Spirit as well as the active assent of the listener are necessary; see her *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*, p. 54.

[47] 'Denn S. Paulus teylet das predigerampt ynn tzwey stu(e)ck Ro. 12. Doctrinam et exhortationem, lare und vormanen. Lare ist, ßo man predigt, das unbekandt ist und die leutt wissend odder vorstendig werden. Vormanen ist, ßo man reytzt und anhellt an dem, ßo yderman schon woll weyß.' WA 10 I 2:1–2. Cited in Stolt, *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*, p. 67.

[48] 'Dialectica docet, rhetorica movet. Illa ad intellectum pertinet, haec ad voluntatem … Et haec duo conficiunt modum praedicandi … Accedit autem et tertium, illustrans praedicationem, quod et ipsum est rhetorum; fit autem hoc locis scripturae, exemplis, similibus et id genus aliis floribus orationis, quibus trahi possunt auditores ad credendum et oboediendum verbo tuo, quod praedicas.' *Luther's Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden*, ed. J.F.K. Knaake et al. (6 vols, Weimar, 1912–21), vol. 2, par. 2199a; hereafter cited as WA TR. Cited in Stolt, *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*, pp. 67–68.

[49] *Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Briefwechsel*, ed. J.F.K. Knaake et al. (18 vols, Weimar, 1930–85), vol. 1, nr. 64:155; hereafter cited as WA Br. Cited in Stolt, *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*, p. 42, n. 1. Cicero, on the other hand, was preferred by the scholastics on account of his stress on reason (*ratio*).

Like Mennecke-Haustein, Stolt finds that the emotion of joy is an important dimension of Luther's faith of the heart. She writes that it is remarkable how much Luther stresses joy and joyfulness ('Freude, Fröhlichkeit'). On the basis of a study that she herself has done of the concept 'fröhlich', she concludes that both before and during Luther's time the word was used to describe a joy which was externally manifested in jumping, skipping and clapping.[50]

This study demonstrates that the reformers advocated a joyful and confident approach even to death and dying. It uses the technique of rhetorical analysis to gain access to the emotional dimension of the reformers' teaching. As a model it uses Birgit Stolt's study of the use of rhetoric in Luther's sermon *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (1524).[51]

Sources

The sources utilized in this study are 16 German-language pamphlets on the subject of preparing to die from the period 1519–28. 1519 is the date of Luther's *Sermon on Preparing to Die* – the first Reformation *ars moriendi*. The other books fall into the intervening period before the publication of Luther's catechisms (early 1529). This is generally regarded as the pre-confessional era; nevertheless, Zwinglian, as opposed to Lutheran, interpretations of the Lord's Supper are already found in the *Sterbebücher* of Johannes Oecolampadius and Jakob Otter.

On the basis of formal criteria – literary genre, subject matter and intended use – the 16 pamphlets are assigned to three categories:

1. Sermons on preparation for death. These sermons treat matters to be contemplated either in anticipation of death or directly on one's deathbed.
   Martin Luther, *Eyn Sermon von der bereytung zum sterben* (1519)
   Johannes Oecolampadius, *Nunc dimittis Oecolampadij* [1521]

---

[50] 'Für die Zeit vor Luther und die Tradition der Psalterübersetzung gilt dagegen, daß "fröhlich" zu den Bezeichnungen für die Freude gehört, die sich äußerlich zeigt, durch Aufspringen, Herumhüpfen, Händeklatschen, Jubeln etc. Es entspricht im Latein der Vulgata *exultare*, während "sich innerlich freuen" mit *laetari* bezeichnet wird.' Stolt, *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*, p. 105. See also her ' "Mit fröhlichem springenden Geist": Ethnolinguistische und sprachhistorische Notizen zu Ausdrücken für "Freude" in Martin Luthers Bibelübersetzung' in *Sprache als lebendiger Kulturspiegel*, ed. M. Todtenhaupt and I. Valfridsson (Stockholm, 1994), pp. 185–93.

[51] Birgit Stolt, 'Docere, delectare und movere bei Luther' in *Wortkampf: Frühneuhochdeutsche Beispiele zur rhetorischen Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974).

Steffan Castenbaur (Agricola), *Ain koestlicher / guotter notwendiger Sermon / vom Sterben …* (1523)

Georgius Mohr, *Eyn Christliche vormanunge auß dem Euangelio …* (1524)

Georg Spalatin, *Eine Troestung an Hertzog Friderich Churfuersten zu Sachssen …* (1525)

Thomas Venatorius (Geschauf), *Ein kurtz vnterricht den Sterbenden menschen …* (1527)

Johannes Bugenhagen, *Ein vnderricht deren / so in kranckheyten vnd tods noeten ligen …* (1527)

2. Handbooks or manuals intended for use at the deathbed, either by dying persons themselves or by persons ministering to them. Several genres are represented here, including prayer books and liturgies.
   Johannes Oecolampadius, *Ain Lettaney …* (1520 or 1523)
   Euangelisch lere vnd vermanung / eines sterbenden menschen … [1523]
   Johannes Oecolampadius, *Form vnd Gstalt …* (1525 or 1526)
   [Wenzel Linck], *Troestung was bey eynem sterbenden menschen zuhandeln sey* (1527)
   Johannes Odenbach, *Ein Trost Büchlin fur die Sterbenden* (1528)

3. Instruction on dying in summaries of Reformation teaching. These pamphlets treat a variety of topics and thus, strictly speaking, should not be termed *Sterbebücher*. However, they are included in this study because they give significant attention to the topic of preparing for death.
   Johannes Diepold, *Ain Nützliche Sermon …* (1522)
   [Kaspar Güttel], *Ein troestliche Sermon …* (1523)
   Johannes Borner, *Anfangk eines rechten Christlichen lebens* (1526)
   Jakob Otter, *Christlich leben vnd sterben …* (1528)

Genre

As is evident from the classification proposed above, several different literary genres are represented among the *Sterbebücher*. These genres are difficult both to name and to distinguish from one another. The titles of the *Sterbebücher* do not facilitate this process because the authors designated their works variously, for example 'sermon', 'vormanu(n)ge' and 'underricht'. Scholars of German literature have noted that literary genres were in flux at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[52]

---

[52] 'Ein wesentliches Strukturmerkmal der spätmittelalterlichen Literaturgeschichte ist der Auf- und Untergang von Gattungen'. Thomas Cramer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im späten Mittelalter*, vol. 3, *Deutsche Literatur im Mittelalter* (München, 1990), p. 43. 'Seit etwa 1520 hat man in Deutschland eine Literatur vor sich, die sich vorerst gattungsmäßig

In this study the English term 'sermon' will have the same meaning as the German term 'Sermon' according to the way Martin Luther used it. Susanne Dähn argues that for Luther 'Sermon' was a term encompassing, but not limited to, 'Predigt'. While 'Predigt' was the term for a sermon delivered orally, 'Sermon' could be either a 'Predigt' or the thematic exposition of a particular theological problem. According to Dähn, for Luther a 'Sermon' is in most cases a written form of instruction. It is characterized by a clear structure, understandable language and logical argument. It does not use the scholarly argumentation of a treatise, since the addressees are laypeople, both educated and uneducated. Generally, the language of a 'Sermon' is German.[53]

The *Sterbebücher* of the first category generally fit Dähn's definition of 'Sermon': all of them represent thematic expositions of a particular theological problem – preparation for death. The second category, which may be designated handbooks or manuals for pastoral care to the dying, are either liturgies or collections of materials from which caregivers may construct their own liturgies.[54] The *Sterbebücher* of the third category are also sermons in the sense of being thematic treatments of a particular theological problem. In this case, however, the theme is a general overview of selected aspects of Reformation teaching and preparation for death is one of several problems treated.

---

nicht darstellen läßt'. Hans Rupprich, *Die deutsche Literatur vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Barock*, vols 4.1 and 4.2, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (München, 1973), p. 2. Both works cited in Susanne Dähn, *Rede als Text: Rhetorik und Stilistik in Luthers Sakramentssermonen von 1519* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), p. 56, n. 226.

[53] Dähn, *Rede als Text*, pp. 68–69.

[54] A 'handbook' in sixteenth-century English usage may be 'A small book or treatise, such as may conveniently be held in the hand; a manual … FOXE A. & M. (1596) 130/1 A booke of his owne making in his owne toong, which in the English speach he [K. Alfred] called a handbooke, in Greeke called it Enchiridion, in Latin a manuell.' *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, s.v. 'handbook'. Helmar Junghans has suggested that an equivalent German term for these short pamphlets might be 'Handreichung', as distinguished from the more extensive 'Handbuch'. Consultation, May 29, 2001. Here it must also be noted that the distinction between the first two categories is not hard and fast. Certain writings placed in the first category contain, besides a sermon, shorter texts as well. Thus Georgius Mohr's *Sterbebuch* contains a sermon and a formula of confession. On the other hand, certain writings assigned to the second category contain short exhortations on proper preparation for death. In some cases, these exhortations differ from the sermons of the first category only in their length.

Overview

Chapter 2 briefly presents the theological doctrines which inform the late medieval *ars moriendi*. Chapter 3 demonstrates how Martin Luther broke with these doctrines while retaining many traditional themes and motifs. Particular attention is paid to the manner in which the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith informs Luther's deathbed exhortation and his teaching on the deathbed sacraments. Rhetorical analysis identifies the affective dimensions of his teaching.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 each treat, respectively, three different groups of Reformation *Sterbebücher*: Sermons on preparation for death; Handbooks or manuals for use at the deathbed; Instruction on dying in summaries of Reformation teaching. In each chapter one *Sterbebuch* is subjected to detailed theological and rhetorical analysis, while the other works are presented more briefly. An examination of the *topoi* which the authors draw from the *ars moriendi*, liturgical manuals and prayer books such as the *Hortulus animae* demonstrates the degree of each author's either continuing reliance on or independence from the tradition. Again attention is paid to how the authors phrase the Reformation teaching of certainty of salvation, how they instruct dying persons regarding the deathbed sacraments, and how they use rhetorical means to offer comfort and consolation to their readers. Themes which these authors appear to be adopting from writings of Luther are also noted. In the works of Johannes Oecolampadius and Jakob Otter dependence on the thought of Ulrich Zwingli is demonstrated. In each case an attempt is made to discover the historical setting which occasioned the writing. Chapter 7 presents a summary as well as suggestions regarding the contribution of this study to current avenues of Reformation research.

Finally, a note on inclusive language. Of the 16 *Sterbebücher* studied here, 14 use exclusively masculine designations for the dying person ('der Sterbende', 'er'). The other two, while suggesting in passing that they might also have dying women in mind, nevertheless for the most part refer to the dying person with a masculine pronoun.[55] The exclusive use in this study

---

[55] Near the beginning of his sermon Johannes Bugenhagen addresses both genders: 'Wann wir fu(e)len das wir su(e)nder vnd su(e)nderin sind …', but in his concluding paragraph reverts to an exclusively masculine reference: 'Nach solche(m) allen fragt man den krancken …'; see his *Ein vnder // richt deren / so in // kranckheyten vnd tods no(e)= // ten ligen / Vnd von dem heyligen // Sacrament des waren leibs // vnd blu(e)ts Christi / seer // gu(o)t vnd nu(e)tzlich al / len Christen zu(o) // lesen. // Johann Pomer. // M.D.XXVII. //* [Nürnberg: Friedrich Peypus.], aij^r, [avi]^r. Johannes Diepold generally speaks of the dying person in the masculine singular ('Ain gu(o)tter Christlicher mensch', 'So der mensch kranck ligt'), but does in a single instance address both genders: 'Lieber sun / liebe tochter / lieber bru(o)der / liebe schwester / liebs kind mein …'; see his *Ain Nützliche // Sermon zu(o) allen // Criste(n) mensche(n) / von der rechte*

of masculine designations for the dying person reflects this characteristic of the sources.

This page intentionally left blank

Between Fear and Hope: Uncertainty of Salvation in the Late Medieval *Ars moriendi*

On the surface, it appears that the advice given by the late medieval illustrated *Ars moriendi* is paradoxical, even contradictory. Some passages engender hope and confidence, others seem to incline one to despair. For example, on the one hand the reader is assured that if he has confessed his sins and believes that Christ died for him 'then he is to be counted among those who will be preserved'.[1] On the other hand he is warned that 'no one knows whether he is worthy of the hate or of the love of God'.[2] A study of late medieval consolation theology reveals that such apparently paradoxical advice is a deliberate part of late medieval consolation strategy.

Uncertainty of salvation in the *Sancti Anselmi Admonitio*, Jean Gerson's *Opus tripartitum* and the illustrated *Ars moriendi*

In the final chapter of his dissertation, *Heilsungewißheit und Scrupulositas im späten Mittelalter*, Sven Grosse provides a theological analysis of three works in the *ars moriendi* genre: the *Sancti Anselmi Admonitio*, Jean Gerson's *Opus tripartitum* and the illustrated *Ars moriendi*.[3] He argues that the consolation offered to the dying in each of these works must be interpreted in the context of certain doctrines held by the late medieval church, namely the doctrine of the uncertainty of salvation, the teaching

---

[1] '… so ist es [sic!] anzezellen vnder denen die behalte(n) werden sollend.' Ernst Weil, [ed.,] *Die deutsche Übersetzung der Ars moriendi des Meisters Ludwig von Ulm um 1470* (facsimile reprint, 1922), bʳ.

[2] 'Wan(n) kainer waist / ob er des gottes haß / oder liebi [sic!] wirdig sy. …' Weil, *Die deutsche Übersetzung der Ars moriendi des Meisters Ludwig von Ulm um 1470*, eʳ.

[3] Sven Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit und Scrupulositas im späten Mittelalter: Studien zu Johannes Gerson und Gattungen der Frömmigkeitstheologie seiner Zeit* (Tübingen, 1994). Grosse chooses these three works because they were available in print around 1500 and because in them the questions to the dying person and the devilish temptations are treated in an exemplary fashion; cf. Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 225. Unfortunately Grosse is not aware of Mary Catharine O'Connor's work, in which she demonstrates that the illustrated *Ars moriendi* is derived from the older and more widely disseminated *Speculum artis bene moriendi*; cf. O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, pp. 11–17.

that the Christian must do what is in him (*facere quod in se est*) in order
to earn his salvation, and the teaching that human beings have free will
(*liberum arbitrium*). In his analysis of late medieval consolation theology,
Grosse draws principally on the writings of Jean Gerson, while pointing
out how Gerson's thought is consistent with Augustine, Gregory the Great,
Bonaventure, Aquinas and other prominent medieval theologians.

Grosse's book begins with two chapters dealing, respectively, with late
medieval writing on religious scruples and the doctrine of the uncertainty
of salvation. Since these themes are central not only to the *ars moriendi* but
also to the Reformation *Sterbebücher*, a summary of Grosse's discussion
will be presented here.

A religious scruple, in Gerson's words, is 'a vacillation, a doubt, a fear
which arises out of weak and unsure speculations' concerning one's own
behaviour or actions.[4] Scrupulousness is an expression of inordinate or
too much fear.[5] The most common religious scruples are those related
to preparation for worthy reception of the sacraments. Every dying
person needs to assume that through a mortal sin he has fallen out of the
state of grace conferred on him by baptism. Therefore the sacrament of
penance is of crucial importance to him, because only through it can he
be restored to a state of grace. Scruples regarding penance take the form
of doubts about whether one has felt true contrition and whether one has
confessed all of one's sins.[6] Another focus for scruples is the sacrament
of the Eucharist. If one receives the sacrament in a state of mortal sin,
one becomes guilty of a further mortal sin. A third focus for scruples is
the question of predestination – whether one belongs to those elected to
salvation or to the damned.[7]

While scruples are to be dispelled, the doctrine of the uncertainty of
salvation has to be maintained.[8] According to this doctrine three things
are uncertain. The first concerns being sufficiently prepared to receive the
grace offered by the sacraments. Individuals are required to confess all of
their sins, but they cannot be certain either of having recognized all of their
committed sins, or of the standard according to which God will judge them.[9]

---

[4]   'Est enim scrupulus vacillatio quaedam, dubitatio vel formido, consurgens ex aliquibus
conjecturis debilibus et incertis', Jean Gerson, *De consolatione theologiae*, bk IV, pt 2, in
Opera Omnia, ed. Louis Ellies du Pin (5 vols, Antwerp, 1706; reprint, Hildesheim, 1987),
vol. 1, col. 173; quoted in Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, pp. 9, 11.

[5]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 9.

[6]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, pp. 11–12.

[7]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, pp. 12–13.

[8]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 35.

[9]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 36. For a survey of late medieval teaching on penance
see Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ,
1977).

The second uncertainty concerns whether or not, having done penance, one has reached a state of grace.[10] There are certain signs, such as the experience of sweetness, which can offer one a conjectural certitude of being in a state of grace, but these signs can be deceptive. In exceptional cases a person can be granted a special revelation according to which he may be assured that he finds himself in a state of grace.[11] The third uncertainty concerns one's predestination. This uncertainty cannot be removed, unlike that concerning the state of grace, which can be lifted by a special revelation. Whether or not one has been given the gift of perseverance to remain in the faith until the moment of one's death is not given to anyone to know.[12] This doctrine of the uncertainty of salvation has a practical purpose: to help the Christian avoid the two extremes of despair and over-confidence. Hope is to preserve him from despair, while the fear that arises out of uncertainty is to save him from a false confidence. In the words of Gregory the Great: 'The disquieted spirit trembles between hope and fear.'[13]

Grosse's third chapter deals with Gerson's application of these precepts in his principal writings on consolation. Gerson's consolation for consciences indeed aims at keeping the individual in the middle between the two extremes of hope and fear. Gerson presupposes that the individual has a free will (*liberum arbitrium*). This free will has its locus in will more than in ability. Human beings need to will to overcome evil; but only God is able to actually overcome it. Thus human beings, with the aid of their free will, are to do what is in them (*facere quod in se est*) to obtain the reward of salvation at the same time as they are to trust in the grace and mercy of God alone, without any thought of reward.[14] The person assaulted by religious scruples has the feeling that too much is being asked of him. Gerson's consolation for such a person consists of two steps. First, he assures him that he can indeed fulfil what is asked of him, and clarifies for him what is required. Second, he exhorts him to place his hope in the mercy of God alone. Paradoxically, in humbly throwing himself on the mercy of God without thought of reward, the assaulted person ends up doing what is required of him (*facere quod in se est*) and contributes toward earning his salvation.[15]

---

[10] Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 37.

[11] Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, pp. 37–39.

[12] Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 39.

[13] 'Inter spem ac formidinem sollicita [mens] trepidat', Sancti Gregorii Magni, *Moralium libri*, pt 1, bk IV, ch. 36 nr 71, PL 75:677; quoted in Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, pp. 40–41.

[14] Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 49.

[15] Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, pp. 49–50.

   This interpretive framework is necessary for understanding the illustrated *Ars moriendi*. The *Ars moriendi* teaches that the dying person by means of patient suffering may merit a lessening of the punishment that awaits him in purgatory. However, according to Gerson's *ars moriendi*, with true contrition he may merit not only a reduction of time in purgatory but also forgiveness of guilt and therefore admission into paradise.[16] Following Gerson, the illustrated *Ars moriendi* assures the dying person that the one who is contrite surely enters paradise. Concerning the questions which are asked in order to ascertain the dying person's contrition and his willingness to better himself it is said: 'If he should respond with a good heart to these, it is a *sign* that he is among the number of those to be saved.'[17]

   This doctrine of the uncertainty of salvation is also the interpretive key to the series of five *Anfechtungen* found in the illustrated *Ars moriendi*. An examination of the two spiritual *Anfechtungen*, the temptation of despair and the temptation of spiritual pride, shows this most clearly. In the former the devil tells the dying person that he has sinned so much it is impossible for God to forgive him. He accuses him of having committed all seven mortal sins and of having failed to perform the seven works of mercy. Furthermore, he points out that even people who have been much better than he cannot presume to believe they are saved, for 'no one knows if he is worthy of hate or love [Eccl 9:1]'.[18] Against the devil's temptation of despair the angel assures the dying person: 'The goodness of the Lord is greater than any wickedness'.[19] He admonishes the dying person not to give in to despair, but rather to keep on hoping. He shows that hope will save the dying person by citing the examples of Peter, Paul, Matthew and others.[20] Thus the dying person of the illustrated *Ars moriendi* finds himself in a state of uncertainty. The one who has done many good works cannot be certain of his salvation, but the one who is

---

[16]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 217.

[17]   'Ad quae si bono corde responderit, *signum* est quod sit de numero salvandorum'. *Ars moriendi*, in Tenenti, *La vie et la mort a travers l'art du xvᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1952), p. 98, quoted in Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 221. For English translation see Jeffrey Campbell, 'The Ars Moriendi: An Examination, Translation, and Collation of the Manuscripts of the Shorter Latin Version' ([MA thesis], University of Ottawa, 1995), p. 22.

[18]   'quia nullus scit an odio vel amore dignus est'. *Ars moriendi*, in Tenenti, *La vie et la mort a travers l'art du xvᵉ siècle*, p. 104, quoted in Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 231. For English translation see Campbell, 'The Ars Moriendi', p. 35.

[19]   'Maior est Dei pietas quam quaevis iniquitas'. *Ars moriendi*, in Tenenti, *La vie et la mort a travers l'art du xvᵉ siècle*, p. 105, quoted in Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 231. For English translation see Campbell, 'The Ars Moriendi', p. 40.

[20]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, pp. 231–32.

assaulted by his past sins cannot be sure of his damnation either. All are uncertain of their fate and therefore must and can have hope.[21]

The counterpart of the temptation of despair is the temptation of spiritual pride. With this the devil assaults the dying person who believes he has lived so well that he cannot justly be denied the kingdom of heaven. Here it is an angel – rather than the devil – who cites Eccl 9:1, warning the dying person that he must humble himself 'by recognizing his sins because he does not know if he [is] worthy of hate or love'.[22] The situation of the dying person confronted with the temptation of spiritual pride is the same as that of the person tempted to despair: neither can be sure of his salvation. While the person tempted to despair is counselled to hope in the mercy of God, the individual tempted to spiritual pride is exhorted to humility. Thus hope and humility are two different aspects of one and the same attitude.[23] The value of good works is not placed into question by this strategy of consolation. Indeed, hope and humility themselves become good works in a context in which the dying person cannot be certain of his salvation. The exclamation, 'I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between you and me!', which appears at the conclusion of the Anselmian questions, is thus to be understood as a gesture of hope, while the confession of sin required of the dying person is a gesture of humility.[24] Both are good works with which the dying person may merit salvation.[25] The teaching that through good works one may contribute to one's salvation is in turn predicated on the teaching that human beings have free will. In facing the five temptations of the illustrated *Ars moriendi* the individual must decide whether he will give in to each temptation or resist it. The dying person of the *Ars moriendi* cannot be certain of his salvation, but, in properly using the free will given to him, he may hope that he will be saved.[26]

---

[21]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 232.

[22]   'sua recogitando peccata quia ignorat an odio vel amore dignus sit.' *Ars moriendi*, in Tenenti, *La vie et la mort a travers l'art du xve siècle*, p. 114, quoted in Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 233. For English translation see Campbell, 'The Ars Moriendi', p. 60.

[23]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 233.

[24]   'Si dixerit quod tibi iratus est, dic: Domine, mortem Domini N.J.C. oppono inter te et me.' *Sancti Anselmi admonitio morienti et de peccatis suis nimium formidanti*, PL 158:687; quoted in Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, pp. 233–34.

[25]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 234.

[26]   Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, p. 234. For a discussion of the doctrine of *facere quod in se est* in its application to the relation between free will and grace in another context, that of the relation betwen reason and revelation, see Heiko Augustinus Oberman, 'Facientibus quod in se est deus non denegat gratiam: Robert Holcot, O.P. and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology', *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962), 317–42.

In sum, Grosse has analysed three important works belonging to the *ars moriendi* genre: the *Sancti Anselmi Admonitio*, the *ars moriendi* of Jean Gerson and the illustrated *Ars moriendi* which is based on the first two. He has demonstrated that each of these must be interpreted in the context of three theological doctrines: the doctrine of the uncertainty of salvation, the teaching that human beings may earn their salvation by doing what is in them and the doctrine of free will. Furthermore, he has shown that the consolation offered by these books corresponds primarily to the second step of consolation in the two-step structure taught by late medieval authors such as Gerson. Having been instructed throughout his life that he must do good works to earn his salvation (the first step of consolation), the dying person is advised on his deathbed that he must now confess all of his sins and place all his hope in the mercy of God (the second step of consolation). He is not to despair of his sins, but he is not given any certainty of salvation either. Paradoxically, these deathbed gestures of humility and hope amount to good works that restore the dying person to a state of grace at the moment of death, enabling his soul to proceed directly to heaven.

Fear and hope in other works of the *ars moriendi* genre

Two further works in the *ars moriendi* genre, Stephan von Landskron's *Die Hymelstrasz* and the anonymous *Versehung leib sel er vnnd gutt*, suggest that Grosse's findings may be supplemented.[27] Whereas Grosse

---

[27]   Landskron's *Die Hymelstrasz* and the anonymous *Versehung* were selected for analysis after a consultation of the following other works: *Ein nuczbar Edell // Buchleinn von be= // reytunge zum sterbe(n) / mit vnder= // richt wie sich in de(n) anfechtu(n)ge(n) // doselbst zu haldenn sey / auß // dem latein / mit eyll vnd // eynfeldig gedeutscht* ([Breslau]: Valentinus Krautwaltt von der Neysse, [1524]); Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg, *Wie man sich halten sol by eym sterbenden menschen* and *Wie man sich schicken sol zu(o) einem seligen tod*, in *Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Bauer (Berlin, 1989), vol. 1, pt 1, sec. 1, pp. 5–13 and 101–10 respectively, the latter work also published as Geiler von Kayersberg, *Ein ABC, wie man sich schicken sol / zu(o) einem kostlichen seligen tod*, in *Geilers von Kaysersberg 'Ars moriendi' aus dem Jahre 1497*, ed. Alexander Hoch (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1901); Geiler von Kaisersberg, *Das Buch vom guten Tode*, in *Geilers von Kaisersberg ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. Philipp de Lorenzi (4 vols, Trier, 1881–83), vol. 1, pp. 239–365; Johannes von Kastl, *Ars moriendi*, in *Die Geistliche Theologie des Johannes von Kastl*, ed. Josef Sudbrack (2 vols, Münster, Westf., 1966–67), vol. 2, pp. 138–39; Johannes von Paltz, *Die himlische Funtgrub*, in *Johannes von Paltz: Werke*, vol. 3, *Opuscula*, ed. Christoph Burger et al. (3 vols, Berlin, 1983–89), pp. 155–253; Johannes von Staupitz, *De imitanda morte Jesu Christi libellus*, in *Johann von Staupitzens sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 1, *Deutsche Schriften*, ed. J.K.F. Knaake (Potsdam, 1867); Thomas Peuntner, *Kunst des Heilsamen Sterbens*, in *Thomas Peuntners 'Kunst des Heilsamen Sterbens'*, ed. Rainer Rudolf (Berlin, 1956).