

## Why was there no Reformation in Cologne?<sup>1</sup>

THE IMAGE of the city of Cologne during the age of the Reformation is more sharply defined than that of any other German town. It alone of all the imperial cities never experienced a crisis of faith, nor deviated from the path of Catholic orthodoxy. It became indeed the citadel of Catholic resistance to Protestantism in Germany. It was and remained, as its oldest seal proclaimed, 'the faithful daughter of the Roman Church'.<sup>2</sup> The current interest in the urban origins of the Reformation emphasizes the interaction between the new religious movements of the sixteenth century and the urban milieu in which they took root.<sup>3</sup> Was Cologne an exception, or was its Catholicism as much a product of the urban environment as the Lutheranism of Nuremberg, the Zwinglianism of Zurich, or the Calvinism of Geneva?

The most striking feature of the fate of the Reformation in Cologne was the decisiveness with which the city government opposed the evangelical movement from its earliest days. The reception of the Reformation depended on a relatively unhindered dissemination of the new religious ideas, and on the allowance of a certain freedom for them to strike their roots.<sup>4</sup> This was ensured within most cities during the initial years of the Reformation by general non co-operation with the Edict of Worms, the major weapon with which Luther's opponents hoped to check his influence. Cologne was significantly different here, for from the very beginning it gave active support to those opposed to Luther. It staged the burning of his books in November 1520 and actively enforced the terms of the Edict of Worms.<sup>5</sup>

Two questions suggest themselves: why was the Cologne government so co-operative, and how did it avoid the popular religious ferment which characterized the appearance of the Reformation elsewhere in Germany? It is tempting to explain such questions in terms of the Catholic mentality of the populace, to argue that they were deeply imbued with the tradition of Cologne as the holy city sanctified by the blood of its martyrs.<sup>6</sup> But this

<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledges the generous assistance of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for a research fellowship enabling archival research in 1973/4.

<sup>2</sup> A. Franzen, *Die Kelchbewegung am Niederrhein im 16. Jahrhundert* (Münster, 1955), pp. 14, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. G. Dickens, *The German Nation and Martin Luther* (1974), chs. vii-ix.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. v, esp. p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> L. Ennen, *Geschichte der Stadt Köln* (5 vols., Cologne and Neuss, 1863-80), iv, 176 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Franzen, *Kelchbewegung*, p. 15. On *das heilige Köln* cf. A.D. von der Brinken, 'Das Rechtfertigungsschreiben der Stadt Köln wegen Ausweisung der Juden im Jahr 1424', in *Köln, das Reich und Europa. Abhandlung über weiträumige Verflechtungen der Stadt Köln in Politik, Recht und Wirtschaft im Mittelalter* (Cologne, 1971), p. 335.

explanation is inadequate by itself. An analogous tradition in Regensburg, for example, proved no obstacle to a sudden change of view among the masses.<sup>1</sup> Moreover at the time of the government's firm commitment to opposition to Luther it could scarcely have had any close knowledge of his ideas. A different line of investigation is suggested by the current awareness that the Reformation was not purely a religious event, but was profoundly influenced by the social, political and economic currents of the time. Above all, it is no longer seen as a decisive break with the medieval past and as the beginning of a 'modern' age: the elements of continuity were a predominant feature of the environment in which the Reformation struggled to assert itself.<sup>2</sup> Considered from this viewpoint the answers to these questions must be sought on a broader front, in the dominating concerns of the Cologne government at the time of the appearance of the new religious ideas, and in the social and political fabric of the great Rhine metropolis.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century public policy in Cologne was dominated by three concerns, by trade, security, and the preservation of civic independence. The city's economy depended largely on trade, but had experienced a period of steady decline since the last decade of the fourteenth century, which levelled off around the middle of the fifteenth to a prolonged period of stagnation.<sup>3</sup> Towards the close of the century the government tried to cope with this stagnation by an active and conscious economic policy aimed above all at ensuring unimpeded access to its major markets, and a steady flow of trade through the city.<sup>4</sup> A basic principle of this policy was the promotion of good relations with the rulers of the territories to the north and north-west, the direction of the city's major lines of trade.<sup>5</sup> In the north-west the vital link was that with Antwerp, where Cologne provided the most important group of foreign merchants at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Antwerp was the base for trade with England, where Cologne merchants were major exporters of English cloth, as well as the point of departure for trading activity in the Baltic, via the sea route to Hamburg and Lübeck. It was a point of exchange for Cologne silk and Swabian fustian, which Cologne merchants brought direct from the area of production or else over the Frankfurt Fairs. Cologne also controlled the greater part of the lucrative trade in Rhine wine, which was sold in Antwerp or reshipped from there as far afield as Reval. Besides English cloth, the Cologne merchants took from Antwerp Dutch herring, for which

<sup>1</sup> B. Moeller, *Reichsstadt und Reformation* (Gütersloh, 1962), pp. 23-4.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most important feature of Moeller's study of the imperial cities as cradles of the Reformation is his emphasis on the links between civic tradition and attitudes to the Reformation.

<sup>3</sup> W. Schonfelder, *Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Kölns von 1370 bis 1513* (Marburg, 1970), p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> Illustrated with reference to England and the Hansa by H. Buszello, 'Köln und England (1468-1509)', in *Köln, das Reich und Europa*, pp. 431-67.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 450.

they were major distributors, both to their local markets and to south Germany.<sup>1</sup>

The line of the Lower Rhine and the Yssel to Kampen formed the major route to the north. The substantial 'eastern' trade, to Denmark, Sweden, Livonia, Prussia, Pomerania and Mecklenberg, followed the water route to Kampen, by sea to the Elbe, to Stade and Hamburg, and then overland to Lübeck.<sup>2</sup> The routes Cologne–Antwerp–England, and Cologne–Lower Rhine–Yssel–Hamburg were thus the major arteries of the city's economic lifeblood. If these were cut it had to resort to transporting by a slow and expensive land route, as well as losing access to some of its most valuable markets in the Netherlands. This was most cogently demonstrated during the second half of the fifteenth century when Cologne faced continual disruption of its northern and north-western connections. Conflict between England and the Hansa, the campaigns of Charles the Bold, and troubled relations between England and the Netherlands under the rule of the Archduke Maximilian continually plagued Cologne's trade.<sup>3</sup> To choose but one example, in 1486 and 1493 England prohibited exports to the Netherlands, on the latter occasion because of Maximilian's support of Perkin Warbeck. The prohibition included the bishopric of Utrecht, Friesland, Gelderland and Kampen, and Cologne merchants in England had to provide substantial sureties not to ship to these areas. They were forced to use the expensive detour over Hamburg and the land route to Cologne.<sup>4</sup>

The city government was determined to counteract such threats at all costs, its attitude being best illustrated by its policy during the disputes between England and the Hansa during the fourteen-sixties. Under the influence of the astute Gerhard von Wesel, Cologne was convinced that this conflict was essentially a matter of the eastern Hansa towns, while it stood to lose a great deal by alienating England and its ally of the time, Burgundy. Thus in 1468 Cologne acted unilaterally to secure separate trading privileges in England, provoking a fridity towards it from the Hansa which continued until the end of the century. The England trade was nonetheless more important than the good opinion of the Hansa, and Cologne persisted with the policies of Gerhard von Wesel at least until the first decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> For the same reasons it was no less determined to avert hostilities between the Habsburgs and the Burgundian Netherlands during the years of Maximilian's rule there. In 1488 for example it pleaded with Frederick III not to resort to force to free Maximilian when he was im-

<sup>1</sup>H. Pohl, 'Köln und Antwerp um 1500', in *Köln, das Reich und Europa*, pp. 469–552.

<sup>2</sup>G. S. Gramulla, *Handelsbeziehungen Kölner Kaufleute zwischen 1500 und 1650* (Cologne and Vienna, 1972), pp. 8–24.

<sup>3</sup>Buszello, pp. 448, 462. This is confirmed by the analysis of the wine trade by Schonfelder, pp. 15–16.

<sup>4</sup>Buszello, pp. 455, 458–9.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 431–49.

prisoned by the citizens of Bruges. At no time could it afford disruption of its trade.<sup>1</sup>

Closer to home the question of preserving trade was linked to that of security. Cologne was a regional capital as well as a centre of European trade. Unlike other great imperial cities it did not create a landed territory of its own, but depended for its regional functions purely on its economic domination over the surrounding territories. It provided the market for their produce and raw materials, and mediated all business and commerce that required contacts well beyond their bounds.<sup>2</sup> This economic unity was as important to the city as its lines of trade. Without any surrounding buffer territory Cologne faced a formidable problem of economic and political security in an age of consolidation by territorial princes. During the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries it had been solved by the policy of taking up 'associate citizens'. By this means Cologne built up a system of regional alliances based on the most important members of the Lower Rhenish nobility. The citizenship agreements protected local and long-distance trade connections, and supplied military aid in time of emergency. Politically the system was directed against the major threat to the city's security in this period, the archbishop and elector of Cologne.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of the fifteenth century the changing pattern of politics on the Lower Rhine had forced Cologne on to the defensive. The decline of the lower nobility and the emergence of more powerful princes such as the dukes of Jülich and Cleves nullified the value of the system of associate citizens. The Neuss War of 1474 marked a turning-point, the last occasion on which the city made effective military use of its honorary citizens. The signs of change were seen in the refusal of several, not least the duke of Jülich, to fulfil their military obligations. The city had sensed this change and sought to develop a new pattern of honorary citizenship by taking up officials and councillors of the territorial princes, but the political value of these agreements was by no means equal to the military value of the old.<sup>4</sup> By the beginning of the sixteenth century Cologne faced a wholly new situation as a new territorial great power emerged to dominate the Lower Rhine. The marriage arranged in 1496 between the offspring of the dukes of Cleves and Jülich-Berg led by 1521 to the union of the lands of Jülich, Berg, Ravensburg, Cleves and Mark in one hand. Alongside this concentration there stood the equally powerful block of the Habsburg territories in the Netherlands. The contest implicit in the confrontation of these two powers did not come to a head until 1543, with the war of succession for the duchy of Gelderland. Its outcome in favour of the Habsburgs had decisive results for the geo-

<sup>1</sup>Ennen, iii. 629.

<sup>2</sup>E. von Ranke, 'Köln und das Rheinland', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, xlvii (1922), pp. 26 ff.

<sup>3</sup>H. J. Domsta, *Die Kölner Aussenbürger. Untersuchungen zur Politik und Verfassung der Stadt Köln von der Mitte des 13. bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn, 1973).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 89, 95; Ennen, iii. 512.

politics of the Reformation by ensuring that the Lower Rhine would remain Catholic.<sup>1</sup> Until that time the politics of the area remained in flux, a situation readily exploited by France, especially under Francis I, who saw it as a conveniently unprotected flank of the empire in his personal struggle with Charles V.<sup>2</sup>

Cologne's position was exceptionally vulnerable amid this shifting pattern. It had lost its political dominance of the Lower Rhine, but as the only great imperial city in the area it was a bulwark of the empire on its north-west frontier. By the same token it was also a desirable prize for the opponents of the empire, as was clearly shown during the campaigns of Charles the Bold in 1473-7. It was the siege of Neuss which fired the imagination of contemporaries, but Neuss was important only as the stepping-stone to a seizure of Cologne. Above all it was Cologne which carried the burden of organizing resistance to the great duke and of arousing the lethargic emperor to action.<sup>3</sup> The fall of Charles the Bold only replaced one danger with another, the king of France, and in 1488 and 1492 Cologne trembled at fears of French invasion.<sup>4</sup> Given its importance for this corner of the empire, Cologne ought to have been assured of firm support from the emperor, but the weakness of Frederick III and the unreliability of Maximilian I made this a thin staff to lean on. The city had however one other important concern which made imperial favour indispensable, namely its desire to remain free of the archbishop of Cologne.

Cologne had freed itself from the overlordship of the archbishop in 1288, and since then had allowed him a formal entry only as a spiritual lord, and only after redress of grievances and recognition of its freedoms. But it was never free from the danger that the situation might be reversed, especially as the archbishop still had a powerful position as head of the high court of criminal justice.<sup>5</sup> The importance of this jurisdiction was seen after the election to the archbishopric of the Count Palatine Ruprecht in 1463. Frederick III refused him the regalia, and was loyally supported by Cologne refusing Ruprecht entry to the city. Consequently there was no formal installation of the court's officers, and criminal justice ground slowly to a halt. By 1467 over 400 accused were in prison awaiting criminal trials and the council feared a collapse of public order. In response to its urgent pleas the emperor decreed on 8 May 1467 that the court could act without awaiting the archbishop's confirmation, and allowed the council to fill vacant juror positions. But when Ruprecht received the regalia in 1471 the situation reverted to the *status quo*.<sup>6</sup> For all its claims to freedom, Cologne was by no means autonomous.

<sup>1</sup> Domsta, p. 97; S. Skalweit, *Reich und Reformation* (Berlin, 1968), pp. 311, 314-15.

<sup>2</sup> F. A. M. Mignet, *Rivalité de François Ier. et de Charles-Quint* (2 vols., Paris, 1875), i. 247, 272.

<sup>3</sup> Ennen, iii, chs. xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 628-9, 633.

<sup>5</sup> K. Dreesman, *Verfassung und Verfassung der Kölner Ratsgerichte* (Cologne, 1959), pp. 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Ennen, iii. 437-8, 464 ff.

In 1475 as reward for its role in the Neuss War Frederick III issued a clear statement of Cologne's direct subjection to the empire and its independence of the archbishop's sovereignty. The imperial mandate expressly forbade the archbishop to designate Cologne as 'his' city,<sup>1</sup> but this recognition of its position as an imperial city could not disguise the fact that there was ample material for future conflict with the archbishop. Despite initial good relations with the administrator and later archbishop, Hermann von Hesse, the customs tariffs granted Cologne by the emperor to cover the costs of the Neuss War provoked him to stiff opposition. There were numerous conflicts over usufructs which fell rightly to the archbishop, but which had been farmed to the Cologne council and which it now regarded as belonging to the city. The city was thus engaged in continual strife with its erstwhile overlord for decades after 1480. Hermann von Hesse was allowed his formal entry only in 1488, but it was refused his successor Philip von Daun (1508-15), while Archbishop Hermann von Wied had to wait until 1522.<sup>2</sup> The pressure the archbishop could bring to bear in these disputes was shown in 1497 when Cologne was forced to yield the Rhine customs granted in 1475—in spite of the fact that the emperor himself received 1500 gulden annually from the proceeds! The opposition arrayed against it revealed how exposed Cologne had become to the surrounding territorial princes: the electors of Trier, Mainz and the Palatinate, the landgrave of Hesse, and the duke of Berg, whose own customs concession clashed with Cologne's. Without the emperor Cologne was defenceless, for the overwhelming military strength lay with its opponents. Its only resort was the pyrrhic weapon of a prohibition of trade with their lands.<sup>3</sup>

Imperial support was a legal and political, rather than a military asset. In 1497 the city was involved in a dispute with the archbishop over the right to farm beer-grits. The archbishop tried to use the spiritual court to enforce payment of his own levy on these, and this opened up a variety of disputes concerning the use of spiritual jurisdiction. In particular it revived an old ambiguity over the archbishop's spiritual and criminal jurisdiction which would have strengthened his claims to secular authority. Hermann cited the case to Rome, despite Cologne's appeal to its privilege *de non evocando*, and the decision fell in the archbishop's favour. Cologne appealed to Maximilian, knowing too well his weakness for appeals which promised financial aid for his numerous military schemes. He was further influenced in the city's favour by his pique at Hermann's refusal to recognize a citation of the dispute before the imperial court. On 18 September 1505 he declared the Roman decision null and void, and confirmed for good measure Cologne's staple rights. A settlement was finally arranged through Jacob of Croy, provost of Bonn and bishop-elect of Cambrai, which nevertheless left the definition of jurisdiction vague.<sup>4</sup>

The disagreements continued under Hermann's successor—over Cologne's staple rights, its share of the customs leases at Bonn and Ander-

<sup>1</sup> Ennen, iii. 563.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 636; iv. 11, 13 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 621-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 640-52.

nach, and over the council's rights of arrest and torture. The most sensitive issue was the archbishop's use in letters of the address to 'his city and citizens', a form which Cologne took as an implicit denial of its status as an imperial city. The case was again cited to Rome, and Maximilian repeated in 1511 his confirmation of the staple privilege and the invalidation of Archbishop Hermann's Roman decision. The city did not conceal its fears that the use of the form 'his citizens' by the archbishop aimed at reducing it to an episcopal territorial city. It stolidly refused to accept correspondence bearing this form of address, and obstructed all attempts by Philip von Daun to arrange a formal entry.<sup>1</sup> At the same time it had few illusions about the constancy of imperial support, which was increasingly governed by Maximilian's need for money. One of the repercussions of the 1513 disturbance in Cologne, in which six members of the council were executed, was that the imperial fiscal was commanded to enquire whether the executions involved any infringement of imperial prerogatives. The council was cited to appear before Maximilian to explain its behaviour, and its experience taught it well enough how to read the signs. By November 1514 immunity from any reprisals had been purchased for the sum of 11,400 gold gulden.<sup>2</sup> It was however a precarious existence. If the emperor suddenly had more need of the archbishop's money and his support than of the city's, Cologne had lost its last defence.

Such a situation arose in 1518, as Maximilian began to gather support for the election of his grandson as king of the Romans. At the Diet of Augsburg Hermann von Wied promised his support, and in return Maximilian was to ensure Hermann's formal entry. When the archbishop's envoys arrived in Cologne in 1518 to negotiate the entry they carried an imperial mandate from the Diet, empowering Hermann to make his formal entry within forty-five days of receiving the regalia, even against the will of the council.<sup>3</sup> The government managed to postpone this event, helped by the death of Maximilian and the imperial election, but Hermann was no less assured of the support of Charles V. He had demonstrated his imperial loyalty by giving his vote to the Habsburg without reservations, and by hurrying into the Netherlands to greet the young emperor immediately he landed from Spain. By October 1520 the city's resistance to the entry had become an embarrassment for the emperor, who wished his arrival in Germany and coronation to be as impressive as possible. Danger of plague in Aachen led to the suggestion that the coronation be transferred to Cologne, but Hermann threatened not to attend the ceremony if this were done.<sup>4</sup> The dispute had attained proportions such that the electors of Mainz, Trier, Saxony and the Palatinate were appointed to mediate.

The four electors presented their report to the emperor in December 1520, who decided that the archbishop should be allowed his entry and the enjoyment of all his rights. He was to confirm the freedoms of the city and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 657; iv. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. 3-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. 12.

<sup>4</sup> A. Franzen, 'Hermann von Wied, Kurfürst und Erzbischof von Köln', in *Der Reichstag zu Worms von 1521*, ed. F. Reuter (Worms, 1971), pp. 301, 304.

use the form of address 'the worthy, wise, our dear truemen the Mayor and Council of the city of Cologne'. This was to be taken explicitly to refer only to spiritual rights in Cologne and not to infringe imperial rights. Cologne found this no more acceptable, and Charles V responded by taking an even firmer line at the Diet of Worms. He appointed the archbishop of Trier as adjudicator, and stipulated that if the disputes were not settled the archbishop was to be allowed his entry using the traditional oath of allegiance alongside a confirmation of the city's freedoms. As it felt that it was losing ground, Cologne agreed to accept the form of address proposed by the emperor in December 1520. However the archbishop now refused to accept it, while the city rejected the proposal of the archbishop of Trier, 'the worthy, wise and dear truemen, and others of our dear citizens of Cologne'. Following his instructions, the archbishop of Trier set the date for the entry for 5 November 1521.<sup>1</sup>

Cologne began a feverish campaign against the entry. It appealed again to the emperor, and sought to gain court favour by generous gifts to imperial councillors. In Nuremberg the Cologne envoy Peter Bellinghausen was set to work to influence the cities and the imperial government.<sup>2</sup> That the Cologne council now feared the worst was shown by its suspicious reaction to a demand of 22 September 1521 to supply military aid to the emperor against the Turk. The Cologne envoy was instructed to investigate whether other estates of the empire had been asked for such aid, or whether it was a pretence.<sup>3</sup> Clearly the council feared that it might be used as an excuse to take action against the city. In any case the emperor's patience was at an end, for he assured Hermann von Wied that there would be no further postponement of his entry. On 8 February 1522 he commanded Cologne to accept the form of address proposed by the archbishop of Trier. On 26 February he further ordered that the entry take place on the day requested by the archbishop under threat of the loss of imperial favour, imposition of the imperial bann and a fine of 1,000 marks gold. Cologne had no other choice, and the entry occurred on 15 July 1522.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of the continuity of its interests during the decades prior to the appearance of Luther, Cologne's support of the campaign against him in the early fifteen-twenties is no surprise. Preservation of its trade dictated a good relationship with the ruler of the Netherlands. The insecurity and unrest on the Lower Rhine, where Francis I sought every opportunity during these years to needle his Habsburg rival, inclined it further towards Charles V. He alone, more than any previous emperor, had the power as well as the will to create stability in the north-west of the empire. Finally relations with the archbishop attained an urgency during the years 1518-22 which made Cologne especially compliant to imperial wishes. The inter-

<sup>1</sup> Ennen, iv. 14 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, iii, ed. A. Wrede (Gotha, 1901), pp. 26, 184. Georg Hackenay alone received a gift of 1,000 gulden, and Nicolaus Ziegler, Johann Hannart and Gregor Lampart were approached to mediate on Cologne's behalf.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ennen, iv. 17 ff.



vention of the four electors in October 1520 came at exactly the moment when Aleander was seeking to organize a significant demonstration of official opposition to Luther's heresy.<sup>1</sup> It was a trivial matter for the council to approve the burning of Luther's books on 20 November. To support the condemnation by the highest authorities of an unknown monk must have seemed a small and inconsequential price to pay if it helped to stave off the potentially dangerous claims of the archbishop. The ironic twist appeared only after the affair was seen to be of greater importance than it had appeared in 1520. Once committed to opposition to the new unorthodoxy, Cologne could not change course without exposing itself to the same dangers it had always sought to avoid. In 1525 a prominent councillor sympathetic to the evangelical movement pointed out that there were many councillors who might show favour to the Gospel, but they were held back by the number and power of the surrounding princes who would use any excuse to act against the city.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt about the truth of this observation. Hermann von Wied displayed a fervour to enforce the Edict of Worms which found its clearest expression in 1524 in an agreement with the electors of Mainz and Trier for a common campaign against Lutheranism.<sup>3</sup> Vulnerable as its position was, Cologne could not afford a confrontation over religion. Cologne chose Catholicism therefore under the impetus of traditional policies, and the momentum of these policies held it in the straight line of orthodoxy.

Besides the concerns of civic policy discussed above, there were also internal influences which ensured that Cologne's official opposition to the Reformation would continue beyond the years 1520-2, when it was most under external pressure. The university, and especially the faculty of theology, took up most diligently the task of opposing the new ideas, and lost no opportunity to spur the government to action against them. Intellectually this is explicable by the theological conservatism of the university, and its pride in the scholastic heritage of Aquinas and Albertus Magnus.<sup>4</sup> But it does not explain how its influence came to be so significant in the city as a whole: this can be understood only in terms of the relations between the university and the government in Cologne.

The university of Cologne, more than any other institution apart from the town council, exemplified the civic consciousness of the city. At the beginning of the sixteenth century it was unique within the empire in having been founded and maintained by civic initiative, and in having its

<sup>1</sup> Aleander was in active contact with the Cologne theologians from 22 Sept. 1520, and was himself busy in Cologne from 28 Oct.-12 Nov. arranging the book-burning, P. Kalkoff, *Aleander gegen Luther* (Leipzig, 1908), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Johann Caesarius to Johann Lange, 20 Dec. 1525, *Briefe und Dokumente aus der Zeit der Reformation*, ed. K. and W. Krafft (Elberfeld, 1876), p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> A. Franzen, *Bischof und Reformation. Erzbischof Hermann von Wied in Köln vor der Entscheidung zwischen Reform und Reformation* (Münster, 1971), p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Franzen, *Kelchbewegung*, p. 14.

posts controlled by the city government.<sup>1</sup> The town council financed the concession of the papal charter under which the university was founded in 1388, provided the university buildings and mostly paid for their upkeep. It created a professoriate salaried by the town, supporting between nine and twelve positions throughout the fifteenth century. It also provided the finance to acquire in 1394 a right of presentation to a lectoral prebend in each of the city's eleven chapters, the 'Prebends of the First Grace'. These were presented by the university rector and the provisors, a four-man college, usually appointed for life from among senior members of the town council.<sup>2</sup> The provisors enabled the government to exercise a direct control over the university. Their task was to watch over university affairs and to mediate between university and government, and they embodied the conception that the university was a civic institution which could be treated as though it were merely another branch of the civil administration.<sup>3</sup> Thus the council not only appointed the salaried professors with a frequent disregard for the university statutes, but it also reserved a claim on their services. They took an oath to the council promising to do nothing against the interests of the city, to enter no service outside Cologne without the council's express permission, to provide advice and counsel on request, and to serve in a diplomatic capacity at home and abroad as demanded by the government.<sup>4</sup>

The council sought to extend this substantial control even further during the course of the fifteenth century. In 1437 it financed the reservation of another eleven canonries, the Prebends of the Second Grace, the presentation right again being shared by the rector and the provisors. The chapters obstructed the filling of these positions, and in 1450 the council sought a confirmation of the privilege from Nicholas V, with the significant difference that the provisors alone held the right of presentation. Renewed opposition from the chapters thwarted this scheme also. The council was granted only a right of devolution, with the presentation as in 1437; but it managed to achieve its aims by more direct means. In 1499 disagreement between the rector and the provisors over the filling of a prebend led to Alexander VI's accepting the council's suggestion that in cases of disagreement the prebends should be filled by a majority decision.<sup>5</sup>

The council thus gained an effective control of appointments which made the university an important tool of civic policy. The collegial clergy par-

<sup>1</sup>G. Kaufmann, *Die Geschichte der deutschen Universitäten* (2 vols., Stuttgart, 1888-96), ii. 44-5. Basel (1460) and Erfurt (1392) were also civic-founded universities, but only in Cologne did the government gain so complete a control of posts.

<sup>2</sup>H. Keussen, *Die alte Universität Köln. Grundzüge ihre Verfassung und Geschichte* (Cologne, 1934), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 95-9.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. the oath of the civic professor Jacob Sobius, 13 Oct. 1523, H. Keussen, 'Regesten und Auszüge zur Geschichte der Universität Köln 1388-1559', *Mitteilungen aus dem Stadtarchiv von Köln*, xxxvi, xxxvii (1918) (cited hereafter as 'Regesten'), no. 2848.

<sup>5</sup>Keussen, *Universität*, pp. 31 ff.; 'Regesten', no. 2222.

ticularly saw it as a Trojan horse through which the government hoped to increase its control over spiritual affairs. They complained in 1453 that the council had lay legal advisers, and besides its advocates had twenty-two of the learned doctors sworn to it. The nineteen parish priests were all named by laymen, and the council had forced priests to read and practise civil law and medicine. The demand for priests' prebends in the chapters meant that the council would learn their secrets and create disunity between the clergy.<sup>1</sup> Two examples show that this was no unfair assessment of civic policy.

In 1476 on the recommendation of Frederick III, who in turn was doubtless acting on a Cologne request, Sixtus IV conceded that six of the eight prebends of the cathedral chapter which could be filled by non-noble priests should be filled by doctors or licentiates in theology or law. Since two of these prebends were already reserved for professors of the university, the entire eight now fell to the university's use.<sup>2</sup> The second example concerned censorship. In 1477 attempts to subject the clergy to civic taxes led to the posting of anonymous pamphlets attacking the government. Shortly afterwards a dialogue composed by the dean of St. Andreas was published, criticizing the council's claim to jurisdiction over the clergy. The council took action against the printer and publisher of the dialogue, and by March 1479 a papal bull had been obtained granting the university an unlimited right to censor books. When this censorship was transferred to the ecclesiastical ordinary by a more general bull of 1487 establishing a censorship throughout Germany, the council began to exercise its own censorship.<sup>3</sup>

These institutional links were reinforced by the social bonds which tied the university to the government. By the end of the fifteenth century the status of the academic profession had attained a sense of rank more than equal to that of the urban patriciate. The dignity of learning was regarded as akin to the dignity of the magistracy, and the patricians came to see it as another means of attaining honours.<sup>4</sup> At the end of the fifteenth century the number of relatives of town councillors enrolled at the university of Cologne

<sup>1</sup> H. Keussen, 'Die Stadt Köln als Patronin ihrer Hochschule von derer Grundung bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters', *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst*, ix (1890), 398-9.

<sup>2</sup> 'Regesten', no. 1623; cf. also nos. 1604, 1611. In 1459 Pius II had already ordained that the seven priest's prebends in the cathedral should be conferred only on graduates of the theology, *ibid.*, no. 1178.

<sup>3</sup> O. Zaretsky, *Der erste Kölner Zensurprozess. Ein Beitrag zur Kölner Geschichte und Inkunabelkunde* (Cologne, 1906). It is not quite clear from Zaretsky's discussion whether the council was responsible for the bull, although it may be inferred from the activity of the city syndic Dr. Johann von Hirtz in Rome in 1479, cf. 'Regesten', nos. 1660, 1696, 1697.

<sup>4</sup> L. Boehm, 'Libertas Scholastica und Negotium Scholare—Entstehung und Sozialprestige des akademischen Standes im Mittelalter', in *Universität und Gelehrtenstand 1400-1800*, ed. G. Franz and H. Rössler (Limburg, 1970), pp. 48-9.

reached a peak.<sup>1</sup> Although many disappeared without trace in the university records, those who decided on academic careers found their progress to be smooth and assured. Most chose law, a career from which one moved easily into princely courts as an adviser and counsellor, and perhaps attained personal nobility.<sup>2</sup> Since the Cologne government had no hesitation about allowing its legal officers to take seats in the council on expiry of their contracts, the ties of university and government were strengthened well beyond that implied by the institutional relations, and the university acquired an influence in the government no less great than the government's control over it.

An example of how far this process could go was shown by the case of Dr. Johann von Hirtz, son of an old-established patrician family. He became a doctor in the faculty of law in 1469 and held a salaried professorship from 1472 to 1486. He entered the council in 1484 and rose in ten years to hold the highest offices of treasurer and mayor. While in the council he continued for some years to officiate as a doctor in the university, and appeared at council meetings attired in doctoral robes and using his academic title of *Meister*. When the council finally protested about his behaviour it was less because of the intermingling of academic and magisterial rank, but rather because he appealed in two disputes with fellow councillors from the court of the council to that of the university conservators, where he hoped to gain a more favourable judgment.<sup>3</sup> His was an exceptional case, but both provisors and other councillors had few scruples about using university positions to advance their relatives.<sup>4</sup> These connections were more than apparent to popular opinion in the city. There was continual conflict between students and citizens throughout the period 1457-1510, with incidents varying from single fist-fights to pitched battles indistinguishable from riots.<sup>5</sup> Despite its numerous attempts to avert the clash of town and gown, the council faced the continual hostility of the populace which held

<sup>1</sup> In the matriculation register, *Die Matrikel der Universität Köln*, ed. H. Keussen (3 vols., Bonn, 1919-31), the following can be identified as (a) sons of councillors, (b) possible relatives of councillors, 1389-1520:

|           | a  | b  | Total |
|-----------|----|----|-------|
| 1389-1420 | 2  | —  | 2     |
| 1421-1440 | 3  | 1  | 4     |
| 1441-1460 | —  | —  | —     |
| 1461-1480 | 12 | 13 | 25    |
| 1481-1500 | 9  | 37 | 46    |
| 1501-1520 | 19 | 17 | 36    |

<sup>2</sup> In the lists of the professors of law 1460-1520, Keussen, *Universität*, pp. 454-61, 12 are traceable (nos. 93, 101, 110, 114, 121, 134, 138, 157, 167, 190, 193-4) and possibly 2 others (nos. 133, 135) from a total of 100 professors.

<sup>3</sup> 'Regesten', nos. 2021-2; *Akten zur Geschichte der Verfassung und Verwaltung der Stadt Köln im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert*, ed. W. Stein (2 vols., Bonn, 1893-5), i. 543-6.

<sup>4</sup> Examples in 'Regesten', nos. 1447, 1530, 1580, 3009.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 'Regesten', nos. 1177, 1389, 1519, 1902, 2051, 2063, 2088, 2118, 2120, 2332, 2337-8, 2557.

that the government was far from impartial. In 1459 a cobbler, witness to a student-citizen brawl, declined to give evidence before the council with the comment that the provisors 'and other gentlemen' had children amongst the students and protected them in their knavery.<sup>1</sup>

The university was thus the most powerful interest group in Cologne, and it was dominated in turn by the rigorous orthodoxy of the faculty of theology. The theologians had established themselves as arbiters of orthodoxy since the middle of the fifteenth century. After a flirtation with conciliarism at the Council of Basel, the faculty had by 1445 been won over to a strong advocacy of papal power. In 1445 it threatened with charges of heresy those of its members who still professed disbelief in papal superiority, and in 1446 attacked the Spaniard Ferdinand of Cordova for denying free will.<sup>2</sup> Two of its members were involved in the 1479 condemnation of the Erfurt theologian Johann Rucherat von Wesel, who claimed Scripture to be the only authority in theology.<sup>3</sup> It took proceedings against astrological books in 1489, and in 1492 recommended that the astrologer Johann Lichtenberger be arrested by the Inquisition.<sup>4</sup> In December 1496 it followed a decision of the Sorbonne in decreeing that all those promoting in theology were to uphold the Immaculate Conception in lectures, disputations and sermons until the church should decide otherwise.<sup>5</sup> In 1507 it initiated proceedings against the visiting Italian jurist-humanist Peter Ravenna for scandalous sayings, and in 1509 issued an open letter attacking the study of pagan poets, stating that only Virgil and the earlier Christian poets were acceptable for study.<sup>6</sup> Its sustained campaign against the Hebraist Johann Reuchlin was only the last stage on a long road of intransigence and dogmatism in religious issues.

The only potential opposition to the theologians was provided by humanism, which was established in Cologne as early and as strongly as in other German cities. It enjoyed above all powerful patronage. From 1500 to 1509 Cologne paid a civic poet, Andreas Kanter, and when Peter Ravenna fell foul of the theologians in 1507 and left Cologne in disgust, the council sent him two letters of high praise welcoming his return.<sup>7</sup> One of the wealthiest of Cologne's merchant families, the patrician Rincks, took a special interest in humanism. Peter Rinck, a doctor of law from Pavia and professor in Cologne 1459-1501, acted as patron to the humanist scholar Raimund Mithridates when he visited Cologne in 1484. His second cousin, Johann Rinck, mayor in 1513, was a friend of Peter Ravenna. Both his sons, Johann junior and Hermann, attended the university in Cologne, the former becoming doctor and professor of law 1518-60. The humanist Ortwin

<sup>1</sup>'Regesten', no. 1191.

<sup>2</sup>Keussen, *Universität*, pp. 74 ff., 79, 211.

<sup>3</sup>E. Kleineidam, *Universität Studii Erfordiensis* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1964-9), ii. 114.

<sup>4</sup>'Regesten', nos. 1901, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>'Regesten', no. 2016a; Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln (hereafter HA Köln), Univ. 229 fo. 59.

<sup>6</sup>HA Köln, Univ. 11 ('Liber rectoralis') fos. 12v-13; 'Regesten', no. 2539.

<sup>7</sup>J. Hashagen, 'Hauptrichtungen des rheinischen Humanismus', *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein*, cvi (1922), 19; 'Regesten', nos. 2513, 2544.

Gratius spoke of the two brothers as patrons of letters, and Hermann von dem Busche dedicated epigrams to the younger Johann, who was also an admirer of Erasmus. The family was probably responsible for the coronation of Heinrich Glarean as poet laureate at the imperial Diet in Cologne in 1512.<sup>1</sup> Connected to this family was another powerful patron of humanism, Johann von Reidt, a councillor from 1514 and mayor in 1522, whose second wife was a niece of the elder Johann Rinck. He was a pupil of the Greek scholar Peter Mosellanus, a friend of the humanists Johann Caesarius and Jacob Sobius, and an admirer of Erasmus, whom he asked to advise him on university reform in 1528. He became university provisor in 1529 in succession to his father-in-law Gottfried Kanngiesser.<sup>2</sup>

Given such connections the humanists should have been able to exert considerable influence in Cologne, yet it was the theologians who struck the dominant note. The fault lay in the nature of Cologne humanism, which was weak and looked outside the city for its inspiration. It was essentially a school humanism, and lacked the theological and critical dimension developed by thinkers such as Mutian or Erasmus.<sup>3</sup> It was an easy matter for the theologians to seize the initiative in the Reuchlin affair, and to exclude the humanists from any significant influence in the university in its wake. In 1513 the theologians prevented the humanist Johann Rhagius Aesticampianus from holding lectures on Pliny and on Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, and in 1516 were able to debar the humanist Johann Phrissem from promoting in theology.<sup>4</sup> The publication of the *Epistles of Obscure Men* worsened the situation, for its attack on the Cologne faculty of arts ensured firm support for the theologians. Thus by 1520 humanism in Cologne was timid and underdeveloped. There was a marked interest in humanist ideas, but this was cautious and confined to linguistic and textual work. No one dared, as in Erfurt or Wittenburg, to venture into the field of theology. Heinrich Bullinger, who studied there from 1519 to 1522, acquired a deep interest in humanism, especially the works of Erasmus. But to add a theological dimension to this he was forced to rely on private reading.<sup>5</sup>

The intellectual climate was thus dominated by the theologians who were able to snuff out any spark of unorthodoxy before it could be said to have appeared. With their accustomed alertness to heterodox ideas, they had scrutinized and condemned Luther's works by August 1519.<sup>6</sup> The Roman

<sup>1</sup>F. Irsigler, 'Hansekaufleute—die Lübecker Veckinhausen und die Kölner Rinck', in *Hanse in Europa* (Cologne, 1973), pp. 313, 318, 323.

<sup>2</sup>J. Kuckoff, *Johann Reithius, der Organisator des katholischen Schulwesens in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert* (Düsseldorf, 1929), pp. 8 ff.; Keussen, *Universität*, p. 383, nos. 46, 49.

<sup>3</sup>On humanism in Cologne cf. Hashagen, pp. 11–14; *Briefe und Dokumente*, pp. 118–201; C. Krafft, 'Mitteilungen aus der niederrheinischen Reformationsgeschichte', *Zeitschrift des bergischen Geschichtsvereins*, vi (1869), 193–329.

<sup>4</sup>*Briefe und Dokumente*, p. 141; C. Krafft, 'Mitteilungen', p. 211.

<sup>5</sup>C. Krafft, 'Mitteilungen', pp. 202 ff.

<sup>6</sup>'Regesten', nos. 2766, 2766a, 2776.

condemnation of both Luther and Reuchlin increased their confidence and prestige, so that in 1520 the papal legate Aleander found them willing allies. Under their influence the university received the papal bull condemning Luther on 10 November, and on 12 November the rector and the faculty of theology supervised the burning of his books.<sup>1</sup> With the publication of the Edict of Worms the theologians began a sustained campaign, especially against the circulation of Lutheran books.<sup>2</sup> They called on the government to take action where they discovered instances of heterodoxy—or even rumour of it. In 1522 they received a letter from a monk in Erfurt, warning that Jacob Sobius and Johann Phrissem were trying to sneak Lutheranism into Cologne as had been done there. The letter was laid before the council at once, and the two mayors Johann von Reidt and Adolf Rinck attended the *quodlibet* held that December under the presidency of Phrissem to check the orthodoxy of the opinions expressed.<sup>3</sup> Nothing suspicious was discovered on this occasion, but the theologians were proved correct in another case, that of the teacher of Hebrew, Diederich Fabricius. Fabricius had studied at Wittenberg under Melanchthon, and was therefore so suspect that he was prohibited from lecturing in the university immediately on his arrival in Cologne in 1526. The theologians appealed successfully to the council to confirm and extend this ban, and although Fabricius continued to teach covertly by 1528 he was exposed through their activities as the leader of an embryonic conventicle.<sup>4</sup>

The theologians' most successful action was to stifle the evangelical movement within the Cologne house of the Augustinian Hermits, which had close contact with Wittenberg. In 1509 under the leadership of a new prior, Johann Huysden, a close friend of Johann Staupitz, it had left the Lower German province and attached itself to the Saxon congregation. Staupitz supervised the setting up of a *studium generale* there, and the Cologne house saw a regular exchange of its members with Wittenberg during the following decade. Wenzeslaus Linck conducted a visitation of the house in summer 1521, and that October a Wittenberg theologian, Heinrich Humel of Emmerich, arrived with intentions of teaching Luther's views in both university and monastery. By November the university had forbidden him to lecture, preach or teach Luther's ideas in public or private, and his activities were restricted to the monastery. Here he gathered around him a band of almost a dozen followers, one of whom, Hermann of Bonn, preached against the intercession of the saints and emphasized Christ's role as sole mediator. Determined to suppress even this small corner of unorthodoxy, the theologians urged the archbishop to take action, and brought the

<sup>1</sup> HA Köln, Univ. 11 fos. 49v–50 notes that Aleander did not present the bull to the entire university, but merely to the rector, the deans and selected representatives of the 4 faculties. In the book-burning of 20 Nov. the theologians played the leading role, Keussen, *Universität*, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> 'Regesten', nos. 2821, 2890a; Ennen, iv. 190; Keussen, *Universität*, pp. 83–4.

<sup>3</sup> HA Köln, Univ. 481 fos. 146v–147.

<sup>4</sup> 'Regesten', nos. 2899, 2899a, 2911, 2938; HA Köln, Reformation 1 fo. 16; Ennen, iv. 266–7.

matter before the council. Under pressure from the university, the archbishop, and finally from the Archduchess Margaret, the emperor's regent in the Netherlands, the council sent three commissions to investigate the house between June 1523 and September 1524, as well as requesting the vicar-general of the German congregation to carry out a visitation. The monks had to sign an undertaking not to defend heretical teachings in lectures or sermons, nor expound the Scripture in any sense other than that of the church. On breach of this promise they were to be imprisoned or to be exiled from the city for ever.<sup>1</sup>

Such cases give a clear impression of the influence wielded by the theologians. It is necessary however to draw a distinction between the attitude of the faculty of theology and that of the government towards the evangelical movement, for by no means could it be said that they co-operated to repress heresy. Two examples illustrate the distinction, that of the Augustinians and that of university reform. In 1522 Charles V and his regent in the Netherlands had tried to remove the Wittenberg influence in Lower Germany by having a separate vicar appointed over the seven reformed Augustinian houses of the area. Four of these voted to accept the new vicar, Johann von Mecheln, while Cologne and two others refused. Adrian VI confirmed the election in November 1522 but exempted the Cologne house from this jurisdiction at its special request. However he then placed it directly under the apostolic see and the Cologne faculty of theology. The monks appealed to the town council to save them from this fate, which promptly took over the supervision of the house itself. When Johann von Mecheln arrived in May 1524 to conduct a visitation, armed with letters of recommendation from the archduchess, the council turned him away.<sup>2</sup> The council were led here by the same restless desire to control ecclesiastical institutions which had led it to extend its control over university appointments, and which caused it in 1525 to force civic taxation on an unwilling clergy.

The same tendencies were apparent in the question of university reform. The council had long been dissatisfied with the inactivity of the university prebend-holders, and this was aggravated by the university's poor response to calls for aid for the city's ailing finances. In 1517 the council decided to curtail the number of salaried professors, and to force all teachers to rely on the university prebends.<sup>3</sup> About the same time it also decided to institute a reform of the university, and when this was proposed to the faculties in 1525 it elicited two broad responses. The conservatives, led by the theologians, argued that humanism was responsible for the decline of studies, that students were being lured away to back-street schools or else to those in other towns, where their heads were filled with heresy. The best means of reform was to extend university privileges and to increase salaries sufficiently to attract competent and conscientious men.<sup>4</sup> The opposing argu-

<sup>1</sup>Ennen, iv. 180-8.

<sup>2</sup>Ennen, iv. 184-5; 'Regesten', no. 2846.

<sup>3</sup>'Regesten', no. 2755.

<sup>4</sup>HA Köln, Univ. 74 fos. 7-10, the reform proposals of the 4 faculties.



ment came from the humanists, that the university was simply not providing what the students demanded, namely humanist studies. For this reason they were flocking to humanist schools such as those at Deventer and Münster, which were gaining reputations equal to that of the university itself.<sup>1</sup>

The council's sympathies were clearly with the humanist argument. The theologians' views were unlikely to find a favourable response from a government preoccupied with reducing clerical privilege and anxious to restrict public expenditure.<sup>2</sup> Moreover under the influence of Johann von Reidt it had shown clear favour to the humanists. Despite the suspicions raised against him in 1522, Sobius was appointed in the following year as a civic-salaried professor of rhetoric, and in 1525 Johann von Reidt asked him for advice about the proposed university reform.<sup>3</sup> This humanist contact tempered the government's outlook. Although susceptible to the theologians' pressure to act against heterodoxy, it was not as concerned as they were to pursue it to the point of accusation, condemnation or recantation. It wished merely to prevent its too obvious display. This attitude was changed by the disturbance which occurred in Cologne in 1525, when the council began to associate Lutheranism more closely with social unrest, and to take more vigorous measures against it. The death of Sobius in 1528, and of Johann von Reidt in 1532 saw a weakening of the humanist influence. Nonetheless the humanists were assured of sufficient goodwill throughout the fifteen-twenties to enable them to survive in a hostile environment. Many were sympathizers of the Gospel, if not of Lutheranism, and they developed a form of covert dissent which provided substantial support for Hermann von Wied's attempt to introduce a Bucerian Reformation into the archdiocese in 1542. The failure of this attempt at a synodal reformation also spelt the end of the tenuous humanist influence in city and university. The leading humanists were unmasked as crypto-Protestants, and thought it safer to leave Cologne.<sup>4</sup> The council fell thereafter more completely under the theologians' influence, exemplified by its unhesitating support for their resistance to Hermann von Wied. By 1545 it was the council which was commanding the university to punish aberrations from the old faith.<sup>5</sup>

One could summarize the decisive first decade of the Reformation in Cologne as follows: from the very beginning the advocates of orthodoxy held the initiative, for there was no strong and vigorous group which might have spoken out in Luther's favour. The strong institutional and social links between the government and the university enabled them to use

<sup>1</sup>HA Köln, Univ. 31 I fos. 25-8, the reform proposals of the auxiliary bishop Quirin von Wilich, Provost Count Hermann von Neuenahr and Arnold von Wesel.

<sup>2</sup>As early as 1519 the council began to negotiate with the clergy over reduction of their privileges, cf. the articles of 3 Dec. 1519, Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, Kurköln II, 3764.

<sup>3</sup>'Regesten', no. 2845.

<sup>4</sup>Keussen, *Universität*, pp. 85-8.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 88.

effective pressure for official action against any signs of an evangelical movement. These same links also favoured the influence of humanism, which however was too weak to take advantage of the goodwill shown to it. Humanism was but a feeble brake which held the government back for a while from a rigorous anti-Lutheranism, and this influence had faded by 1530. A parallel restraint, the government's anti-clerical outlook, was offset after 1525 by fear of social unrest. Thus by the end of the fifteen-twenties council and university were co-operating as opponents of heresy. Thereafter Cologne was to gain and confirm its reputation as the faithful daughter of Rome.

The failure of the Reformation to take root in Cologne has been examined so far only in terms of two small if powerful segments of the city, the council and the university. What of the broader mass of the population? Why was there no popular upsurge of interest in the new ideas? The evangelical movement occurred in its most imperative form as a manifestation of popular feeling, outrunning official opinion and forcing the hand of the authorities. Why did this not happen in Cologne? A partial explanation can be found in the effective official censorship. The government's experience of censoring unacceptable ideas dated back to the last quarter of the fifteenth century. In 1499 it prohibited the sale of the great city chronicle published by Johann Koelhoff because it contained passages critical of public policy.<sup>1</sup> In 1516 the printer Hermann Schaeff was arrested for producing a work which gave offence to the council.<sup>2</sup> Another printer was imprisoned for two weeks in 1521 for unauthorized publication of an attack on Reuchlin by Johann Pfefferkorn.<sup>3</sup> It was a relatively simple matter to extend this occasional censorship to a more general system. In 1523 the council requested three officials to investigate all printers in Cologne, and to catalogue their names, residences and guild membership. They were to be forbidden to accept or print any works concerning the pope, the emperor, princes or other lords, or any other secular or clerical persons without seeking prior approval from the council.<sup>4</sup> This prohibition was repeated in the following year, and extended in 1525 to include a supervision of the sale of Lutheran books by retailers.<sup>5</sup>

In the long run Cologne was too large a city, with too much movement in and out of its walls for a complete repression of ideas to be successful. Some printers, whether from sympathy to the Reformation or from pure business sense, defied the censorship and printed and sold Lutheran literature clandestinely. The enterprising Eucharius Cervicornus even established a branch in Marburg to print uncensored material.<sup>6</sup> From the late fifteen-

<sup>1</sup> *500 Jahre Buch und Zeitung. Ausstellung vor allem aus den Beständen der Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln* (Cologne, 1965), p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. G 204 fo. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* fo. 191v.

<sup>4</sup> HA Köln, Ratsmemoriale IV fo. 169v.

<sup>5</sup> HA Köln, Ratsmemoriale V fos. 215, 288v, 309v.

<sup>6</sup> *500 Jahre Buch und Zeitung*, p. 31.

twenties there is plentiful evidence of easy access to evangelical literature, whether through private circulation, or from local printers and booksellers. Government vigilance nonetheless prevented this from growing to significant proportions. Breaches of the censorship were briskly dealt with, and in the latter half of the fifteen-twenties a more careful watch was kept on individual displays of unorthodoxy. Loose talk in inns, or even at home before neighbours, was sufficient reason for an invitation to explain one's views to police officials.<sup>1</sup> Such cases, where they were not mere gossip about Lutheran ideas, were the more easily dealt with in that they were isolated individual cases. But to develop into a substantial movement the Reformation ideas depended on public proclamation, and on finding some corporate or institutional footing. There was little chance of the Gospel taking root in a parish community. Many of the parish priests were teachers at the university, while the Dominicans, the most active supporters of orthodoxy, held the right to preach in all parish churches except the cathedral.<sup>2</sup> The university, which played so important a role in Wittenberg and Erfurt, was hostile territory. The religious houses offered the only other opportunity for such a movement to establish a bridgehead, but the ease with which the Augustinians were dealt with reveals how limited this possibility was.

If no institutional focal point for a religious movement could be established, the only other chance was that it might take root as a wider movement of opposition within the civic commune. The history of Cologne for more than a century before the Reformation was marked by struggles between the commune and the governing élite, which reached highpoints in 1370, 1396, 1481/2 and 1513.<sup>3</sup> In 1525 Cologne faced another communal disturbance which seemed to promise a conjunction of religious innovation with social and economic grievances, as in other cities at this time. The communal feeling found expression in articles which demanded that the clergy should bear their share of civic taxation, that the citizens should not be burdened with payments for the administration of the sacraments and other spiritual services, that religious houses should not take trade away from citizens, that Beguine houses should be dissolved, that abuses of spiritual jurisdiction should be reformed, and that the valuables of all churches and religious houses should be inventoried by the city.<sup>4</sup> Beside

<sup>1</sup> HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. G 205 fos. 34v, 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, p. 159. Examples of professors holding positions as pastors: Peter Sultz, professor of theology 1511-25, pastor of St. Laurence until 1525; Peter Kannegiesser, law 1534-53, St. Laurence from 1525; Johann de Venraed, theology 1510-30, St. John the Baptist from 1514; Johann Dusseldorp, law 1518-34, St. Martin Minor 1523-30; Diedrich von Halveren, theology 1534-50, St. Peter from 1534. Keussen, *Universität*, pp. 44, 428-9, 462; Ennen, iii. 270, iv. 365.

<sup>3</sup> *Revolutionen in Köln, 1074-1918. Ausstellung Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln, 25 Apr.-13 Juli 1973* (Cologne, 1973), pp. 31, 35, 41, 46.

<sup>4</sup> W. Holtschmidt, 'Kölner Ratsverfassung vom Sturz der Geschlechterherrschaft bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters, 1396-1513', *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Niederrheins*, xxi (1907), 81-96, the 153 articles of 1525; cf. esp. arts. 7, 9, 13, 22, 28-9, 32, 35, 41, 47-8, 88, 135, 137, 143-4.

this broad range of anti-clerical articles stood two demands which seemed to indicate that the opposition movement had some connection with Lutheranism. Each parish was to elect a wise pastor to expound the Word of God aright, and the four preaching orders were to be commanded to preach nothing other than the right Word of God, to avoid fables, or else to be wholly silent under pain of loss of the city's protection.<sup>1</sup> On the defeat of the 1525 movement such questions disappeared, and were not voiced in Cologne again.

It was the nature of the Cologne commune and its relations with the council that ensured that this embryonic movement of Reformation would be unable to survive and grow. Throughout the fourteenth century Cologne's governing patrician families had faced a growing threat from the guilds, which first became an important political factor in the weavers' rebellion of 1370.<sup>2</sup> Previously the patrician rulers had regarded them with paternal benevolence and intervened little in the guilds' autonomous control of their own affairs. The temporary success of the weavers, supported by other craft guilds, in seizing control of the city in 1370, led the patricians on restoration of their dominance to place the guilds under tight control. They lost their right of free assembly, while guild jurisdiction was controlled by masters appointed by the council.<sup>3</sup> In 1396 the patrician rule was overthrown and replaced by a new and outwardly more democratic constitution, the *Verbundbrief*, in which merchants and artisans held the balance of political power. This written constitution introduced a period of stability into the political and social structure of Cologne which was not challenged until the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

The structure established in 1396 rested on twenty-two political corporations called *Gaffel*, through which the Cologne council was elected. Of these only five were *Gaffel* in the narrower sense, i.e. mutual interest associations of merchants or wealthy guildsmen.<sup>5</sup> The other seventeen united artisans from various trades into major 'guild' groupings, so that Cologne's forty-four to forty-five guilds were reduced to seventeen political corporations.<sup>6</sup> Each *Gaffel* elected members to the council according to size and importance. The woollenweavers elected four councillors, eleven other *Gaffel* elected two councillors each, and the remaining *Gaffel* only one each.<sup>7</sup> The council held all powers of government, but was joined for certain decisions by a body composed of two representatives from each *Gaffel*. This group, the Forty-four, had to give their approval to declarations

<sup>1</sup>Holtschmidt, arts. 76, 150.

<sup>2</sup>*Revolutionen in Köln*, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>*Die Kölner Zunfturkunden nebst anderen Kölner Gewerbeurkunden bis zum Jahre 1500*, ed. H. von Loesch (2 vols., Bonn, 1907), i, introduction p. 63.

<sup>4</sup>*Revolutionen in Köln*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>5</sup>On the nature of the *Gaffel*, cf. *Die Kölner Zunfturkunden*, i, introduction pp. 44-5; L. Arentz, *Die Zersetzung des Zunftgedankens nachgewiesen an dem Wollenamt und der Wollenamts-gaffel in Köln* (Cologne, 1935), pp. 24-5.

<sup>6</sup>*Die Kölner Zunfturkunden*, i, introduction p. 44.

<sup>7</sup>*Verbundbrief*, art. 3 in *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte*, xiv. iii: *Köln* (Leipzig, 1877), p. ccxxii.

of war, treaties of state, the taking up of civic debt, and items of expenditure above 1,000 gulden. Each resident of Cologne had to belong to a Gaffel and swear to uphold the *Verbundbrief*.<sup>1</sup> In theory this structure seemed to provide a government with broad participation of the commune organized in the Gaffel. In practice it provided the basis for a system of tight political control by a merchant oligarchy.

The basic structure of elective representation was vitiated at two points. The Gaffel elected only thirty-six councillors, while the constitution prescribed forty-nine as the full membership of the council. The remaining thirteen were co-opted annually by the newly-elected council, and were known as the *Gebrech*.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the Gaffel were not allowed a free election of their representatives. Rather a committee of the more prominent members chose a small number of candidates from which the Gaffel assembly had to make the final choice. Despite numerous complaints during the second half of the fifteenth century, the council refused to alter the practice to allow a free election.<sup>3</sup> The council thus fell all too easily into the hands of a small circle of the well-to-do, who elected one another regularly into the government. During the disturbance of 1481/2 the Gaffel attempted to remedy these defects by introducing free election of councillors, and by doubling the representation of those Gaffel which elected only one councillor each. The *Gebrech* was correspondingly reduced to three.<sup>4</sup> These reforms were abolished with the overthrow of the rebellion in February 1482. A further erosion of the formal provisions of the constitution occurred around the Forty-four, who gradually came to be a body of regular representatives, undoubtedly through the same process by which the councillors came to be drawn from a small oligarchy of the Gaffel. During the second half of the fifteenth century even this body fell into disuse, the council rather calling for its advice on a group of 'friends and capable men' from all the previous councils and the Forty-four.<sup>5</sup>

In theory the *Verbundbrief* had established the commune, through the twenty-two Gaffel, as the sovereign body within Cologne, but it had introduced an element of ambiguity by transferring all authority to the council, as the political authority to which the Gaffel swore allegiance. This enabled the council to develop into a *de facto* sovereign body, so that by the end of the fifteenth century it was making policy without reference to the commune. In 1481 and 1513 the commune complained of the government functioning as a 'secret council', and both disturbances saw it as a major aim to restore the commune's role in government that corresponded to the 1396 constitution. The guilds used the disturbance of 1513 to reassert some of their claims to sovereignty, but the gains were illusory.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ccxxi, *Verbundbrief*, arts. 1, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ccxxiii, *Verbundbrief*, art. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Kölner Zunfturkunden*, i, introduction p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> *Akten zur Verfassung*, i, no. 263, art. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Die Kölner Zunfturkunden*, i, introduction p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> Illustrated in terms of the woollenweavers' Gaffel by Arentz, pp. 143 ff.

This development was but the formal reflection of a process of social stratification which operated throughout the Gaffel. Many Gaffel had early sifted their membership out into two levels—the ‘prominents’ and the communality. The prominents, or the *Verdiente*, were those who had performed a service for the corporation, either as a master of the Gaffel or through the donation of cash or a feast. They formed a privileged stratum, being able especially in the larger Gaffel to take decisions binding on the whole body. This led in some of the Gaffel to the masters being drawn only from the circle of the prominents, in others to this circle alone electing the master and corporation committees.<sup>1</sup> Consequently both government and guilds passed into the control of a narrow stratum of the well-to-do. Since the trend in Cologne was for rising artisans to turn to trade, rather than to enlarge their production, by the second half of the fifteenth century the upper stratum of the society could be said to be a merchant aristocracy.<sup>2</sup>

This élite maintained its political influence by well-developed practices of electioneering, called in the local jargon ‘greasing the wheels’.<sup>3</sup> Public resentment of such practices was responsible for a series of prohibitions passed by the council after 1460, especially of the more blatant, such as bribery, solicitation of votes and the promising of favours. How unsuccessful these bans were is revealed by the frequency of their repetition—in 1479, 1482, 1483, 1490 and 1491.<sup>4</sup> In the wake of the disturbance of 1481/2 a standing committee of four councillors was appointed to preclude irregularities at elections. This committee was still in existence in 1513 but seems to have exercised little constraint on electioneering.<sup>5</sup> One of the major charges against the councillors brought to trial in 1513 was manipulation and influencing of elections, and it was openly recognised that a small circle of the élite had used such practices to establish themselves as a ruling faction in the council.<sup>6</sup> The exclusion of this faction did not alter the social face of the government, for control passed merely into the hands of the opposition faction in the council, no less dominated by merchant aristocrats.<sup>7</sup>

The pervasiveness of the Gaffel constitution allowed the governing élite to maintain effective control of the society at large. All residents of Cologne, in as far as they could afford to provide their own arms, were obliged to belong to a Gaffel, thus falling under their corporate discipline.<sup>8</sup> Conciliar decisions were proclaimed at Gaffel assemblies, and attendance

<sup>1</sup> *Die Kölner Zunfturkunden*, i, introduction pp. 80–1; Arentz, pp. 60 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Kölner Zunfturkunden*, i, introduction pp. 144–5.

<sup>3</sup> The best colloquial translation of the original, *Karrenschiieren*, HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. V 61 fo. 207.

<sup>4</sup> *Akten zur Verfassung*, i, nos. 196, 257, 290, 298, 393.

<sup>5</sup> The committee to supervise the elections was still elected regularly in all the councils up to 1513, cf. the council lists, HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. C 5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Transfixbrief*, art. 1 of 15 Dec. 1513, *Chroniken*, XIV. iii, p. ccxxxiii.

<sup>7</sup> The execution of the 6 councillors led to no significant change in the council, merely to a reshuffling of the existing members.

<sup>8</sup> *Die Kölner Zunfturkunden*, i, introduction p. 32.

at all such assemblies called at the command of the council was obligatory. Assemblies of the Gaffel could be called only by the master, and any individual who called an assembly 'for light cause' was liable to severe punishment.<sup>1</sup> The Gaffel also provided the basis of the watch and the citizen militia. Each Gaffel in turn provided the watch from its ranks, under the supervision of the master of the watch and executive members of the council. As the basic unit of the militia, each Gaffel had to rally to its standard on the command of the government.<sup>2</sup> The Gaffel standardbearer was obliged to keep the standard in a secret place and most strongly forbidden to reveal its whereabouts. Military command over the Gaffel resided with the council, which appointed captains from professional soldiers or from the citizenry, often former councillors.<sup>3</sup> The provision for the safekeeping of the standards reflects a fear of misuse of the Gaffel by an opposition movement, and by the middle of the fifteenth century this danger was lessened by a change in the militia arrangements which reflects a further decline in the independent power of the Gaffel. In 1467 it was stipulated that in time of alarm the citizens were to assemble by parishes, where they were under the command of a captain appointed by the council.<sup>4</sup>

The Gaffel constitution thus evolved into a structure of public order which provided the maximum political stability, and effectively limited the possibilities of any movement of opposition arising against the government. Criticism of government policy might be voiced within any Gaffel, but it was easily nipped in the bud before it could spread. Thus the disturbance of 1513 began with opposition within the stonemasons' Gaffel to government influence on the election of their master. Within a short time the council had been informed and an immediate attempt was made to arrest the offenders. Only the failure of the arrest sparked off the wider disturbance.<sup>5</sup> In 1525 the danger of a similar disturbance was averted by the council acting against the ringleaders, again on information received from the Gaffel masters.<sup>6</sup> Grievances within a Gaffel could spread to others only by a circular request for all the Gaffel to consider grievances. However these had to be submitted in the normal course of events to the government, so that unless events developed sufficient momentum, as they did in 1513, to create a joint committee of Gaffel representatives, the possibility of a commune-wide exchange of views was limited. The success of the movement in 1513 depended largely on the factionalism within the council itself, through which the communal movement gained the co-operation of the opposition faction to remove their political opponents.<sup>7</sup> The other impor-

<sup>1</sup> *Chroniken*, XIV. iii, p. ccxxxv, *Transfixbrief*, art. 10.

<sup>2</sup> T. Heinzen, *Zunftkämpfe, Zunfttherrschaft und Wehrverfassung in Köln* (Cologne, 1939), p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-51.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> G. Eckertz, 'Die Revolution in der Stadt Köln im Jahre 1513' *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein*, xxvi, xxvii (1874), pp. 197-8.

<sup>6</sup> HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. V 108 fo. 67v.

<sup>7</sup> Eckertz, p. 244.

tant reason for the success of the opposition movement in 1513 was its seizure of the gates and watchtowers. In 1525 the opposition did reach the stage of creating a communal committee to discuss joint grievances, but it lacked the sanctions to impose its will on the government. The attempt to seize the gates was forestalled by the warning given to the council by the Gaffel masters.<sup>1</sup> In short, the possibility of any popular movement developing within Cologne was small, unless it enjoyed the support of at least a part of the ruling élite.

After 1525 there was little chance of this élite turning to the Gospel, for this was now identified in their eyes with disturbance. All measures taken to strengthen the council's control over the city were simultaneously measures against the Reformation. There was a rising incidence of unorthodoxy among the lower artisans which must have confirmed the government's conviction.<sup>2</sup> In 1526 it acted against journeymen stonemasons who attempted to introduce Lutheran preaching into their guild.<sup>3</sup> This was the last flicker of any corporate movement in favour of the Gospel. The council gradually tightened its police control. In 1525 it strengthened the central control of the militia by reducing the points of assembly for fire or disturbance to five.<sup>4</sup> In September that year it ordered that no stranger was to enter Cologne without the watch informing the council, and by 1533 was trying to control visitors to its regular markets.<sup>5</sup> In 1536 it stipulated that no one was to engage a servant without its knowledge, and throughout the fifteen-thirties issued prohibitions of harbouring strangers and of secret assemblies. To this were added admonitions against loose talk, irreverence, swearing and blasphemy.<sup>6</sup> All these ordinances were directed against Protestantism in its various forms, 'from which nothing good has arisen than all disobedience, disturbance, trouble and disruption of the old Christian ceremonies and police'.<sup>7</sup> By the fifteen-thirties a Protestant movement was as unthinkable in Cologne as a Catholic movement was later to be in Calvin's Geneva.

The acceptance of the Gospel was always an individual event, a personal conversion, but in its totality the Reformation was as much a social as a religious phenomenon. It was brought about not simply by a mounting aggregation of individual convictions, but because it struck roots in communal and corporate forms of the society. In Cologne the Gospel could find no institutional footing, and the structure of social control was such that a basis in the commune or guild corporations was equally unviable. Thanks

<sup>1</sup>HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. V 108 fo. 67.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Ennen, iv. 296 ff. where some examples are listed involving a linenweaver (1526), stonemason apprentices (1526), a mirrmaker (1528), a slater and a parchmenter (both 1529).

<sup>3</sup>HA Köln, Ratsprotokolle 6 fo. 57.

<sup>4</sup>HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. V 126a, loose sheet between fos. 125 and 126.

<sup>5</sup>HA Köln, Reformation 13, Morgensprache of 8 Sept. 1525; Verf. und Verw. V 126a fo. 247v.

<sup>6</sup>HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. V 126a fos. 251, 253, 256.

<sup>7</sup>HA Köln, Verf. und Verw. V 126a fo. 247, Morgensprache of 17 Jan. 1533.



to government pragmatism and the minor influence of humanism, private conviction was for a while possible, but it could become neither a public nor collective manifestation. In the long run the weight of social control was therefore decisive, for it did not allow the social space for a Reformation *movement* to appear. In this regard the failure of the Reformation in Cologne was as much a product of the urban environment as its success elsewhere.

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