MOCKING POPE AND PREACHER:
POPULAR PROPAGANDA IN THE AGE OF REFORMATION

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Introduction

As we enter the twenty-first century, students increasingly rely upon visual imagery for their understanding of past (and present) events. My students can quote confidently from "Troy," "Alexander," "Amistad," and "JFK" to illustrate their knowledge of Classical Greek or American life, even as they struggle to memorize a basic chronology or analyze a written document. Although we might bemoan the rise of television, video games, and "McNewspapers" that favor style over substance, such reliance upon visual information is hardly unique to our era. Editorial cartoons, posters, and pamphlets for centuries have simplified complex ideas or debates into recognizable "image bytes." Similarly, in earlier times, Roman bas-reliefs, Byzantine icons, medieval stained glass, and Renaissance frescoes conveyed intricate theological and political concepts to a largely illiterate population. Textual sources remain fundamental to the study of history, but teaching students to "read" visual primary sources can provoke their curiosity and enhance their understanding of complex issues. In addition to printed documents (i.e., maps, cartoons, engravings), visual primary sources might include sculpture, paintings, numismatics, architectural designs, and so forth. Because coins, cartoons, and buildings were often designed for mass viewing, analysis of visual primary sources not only teaches students a new skill but also allows us to view historical developments as they were presented to non-elite men and women.

Nowhere is the impact of visual imagery more evident than in the religious conflict of sixteenth-century Europe. Protestants and Catholics alike produced thousands of images designed to glorify their own position and demonize their opponents.[1] Fueled by the invention of the printing press and inexpensive paper, printers and preachers could produce broadsheets and pamphlets that even day laborers and widows could

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[1] The seminal work remains Robert Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). A 1994 paperback edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press and New York: Oxford University Press) includes updated bibliography. A more recent analysis is the M.A. thesis of Jessica Davis, which considers propaganda directed against the Protestant Reformation: J. Davis, "The Reformation Attacked: Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Visual Propaganda," unpublished M.A. thesis, George Washington University, 2002. For a discussion of early Reformation propaganda in lay pamphlets, see Miriam Chrisman, *Conflicting Visions of Reform: German Lay Propaganda Pamphlets, 1519-1530* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996). Also see A.G. Dickens, *Reformation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966). Although dated in its interpretation, Dickens's book includes hundreds of useful images. The most useful primary source is *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500-1550*, ed. Walter L. Strauss (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974), containing 1600 pages of images in four volumes; and also Hans-Joachim Kohler, ed., *Flugschriften des fruehen 16. Jahrhunderts*, Serie I (Zug, Switzerland: Inter Documentation Company, 1978-1987).

afford.   This explosion of "popular" propaganda might or might not represent an accurate sampling of popular opinion in the sixteenth century.[2] It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to accurately interpret what Everyman (and Everywoman) believed five hundred years ago, particularly about a topic at once as personal and as universal as salvation.   Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the plethora of cheap, accessible images fundamentally transformed the transmission of ideas.   In the same way that television and the Internet revolutionized (and democratized) the acquisition of information in recent decades, pamphlets with simple line drawings expanded the distribution of new concepts more broadly.

This essay describes one method for introducing high school or college students to the Protestant Reformation. This unit can range from two to five classes, depending upon the number of texts and images utilized. The documentary evidence—both visual and textual—provides conflicting perspectives that students must analyze and explain, just as professional historians do. In addition, utilizing visual sources encourages the participation of students for whom English is not a first language as well as those who have trouble comprehending dense theological tracts. Visual sources also can promote interdisciplinary analysis (e.g., history, fine arts, and religious studies). In this essay I have chosen to limit my examples to printed visual propaganda, but inclusion of hymns and songs of the Reformation would be useful too.[3] I usually begin with an observation that the Protestant Reformation might have been the first example of a multimedia ad campaign, with the same ideas presented visually, aurally, and textually. My students intuitively understand this approach, and are intrigued by the challenge of discovering similar ideas about sin and salvation in a variety of mediums. Debate about the images regularly spills into the hallway after class, and students consistently mention this unit in their final evaluations as one that taught them to think both more creatively and more analytically.

Historical Background

The Protestant Reformation is traditionally dated to October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther allegedly nailed a copy of his "95 Theses" to a church door in Wittenberg.   A former Augustinian monk and a professor of theology, Luther

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[2]Keith Moxey argues that "far from being expressions of popular opinion, such [sixteenth-century woodcut] prints were actually the means by which the reformed attitudes of the middle and upper classes could be disseminated to as broad an audience as possible." *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives: Popular Imagery in the Reformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 2–3.

[3]See the three printed hymns in Merry Wiesner, Julius Ruff, and William Bruce Wheeler, *Discovering the Western Past: A Look at the Evidence, Vol. 1 to 1789*, Fourth Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 294–297, as well as Rebecca Oettinger, *Music as Propaganda in the German Reformation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001). See also the comments of Marshall McLuhan about "hybridisation of media" in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

complained bitterly about corruption and sloth within the Roman Catholic Church. He was particularly incensed about the sale of indulgences, papal letters that drew upon the Church's "treasury of merits" to allow sinners to avoid earthly penance or time in Purgatory. Luther was hardly the first to raise such complaints, but his observations struck a chord with the German populace. Drawing upon a potent combination of preaching and printing, Luther's ideas spread rapidly throughout Europe, inspiring other reformers to break with the Catholic Church. Modern scholarship identifies multiple "reformations" (e.g., reformation of the cities, a peasants' reformation, magisterial reformation), but all of them trace their origin to Luther's powerful ideas about the relationship between man and God. Beset with internal problems and a powerful Islamic threat to the East, the Catholic Church responded slowly. Within a few years the religious unity of Europe had been shattered forever, with equally important consequences in the political, social, intellectual, and artistic realms.

How were such radical ideas disseminated? Visual propaganda, especially broadsheets (posters) and book illustrations, were critical means for conveying new ideas. These inexpensive images, found in title pages, single-leaf woodcuts, manuscript illustrations, chapbooks, and pamphlets, served for decoration, entertainment, and instruction. The subject matter varied widely, from biblical narratives and devotional images to ancient history, battle scenes, and portraits.[4] Satire, too, became a powerful weapon in the competition to capture believers. The German woodcuts considered here were simple, even rustic, in their composition and execution, far removed from the formal intricacies of High Renaissance art. Yet it was precisely their low cost that contributed to their ubiquity and their impact. (One scholar estimated the cost to be between four and eight pfennings, when a master artisan earned nearly thirty pfenning per day.[5]) As Robert Scribner has observed, the lowly woodcut is redolent of homemade gin; it was "cheap, crude, and effective."[6]

Lesson Plan

The opening lesson covers essential background information about the causes and principal characters of the Protestant Reformation. Prior to examining the sources, it is important that students be familiar with the common complaints of the German *Volk*: clerical pluralism and absenteeism; tithes and taxes destined for Rome; a lavish papal lifestyle; widespread inflation; papal claims to temporal power; clerical immunity from lay courts. The most immediate cause, of course, was the sale of indulgences; thus we

[4]Moxey, 3–5.

[5]Moxey, 23, n. 71, citing Bruno Weber, *Wunderzeichen und Winkeldrucker, 1543-1586* (Dietikon-Zurich: U. Graf, 1972).

[6]Scribner, 5.

begin with a photograph of an actual indulgence, printed by William Caxton in 1476 (Figure 1). Figure 2 represents the sale of indulgences.[7] It is important to show a relatively evenhanded portrayal here because, as we shall see shortly, the sale of indulgences was frequently parodied in Lutheran propaganda.

Figure 1. An Indulgence printed by William Caxton of England, ca. 1476.
With permission from the UK National Archives, ref. E135/6/56.
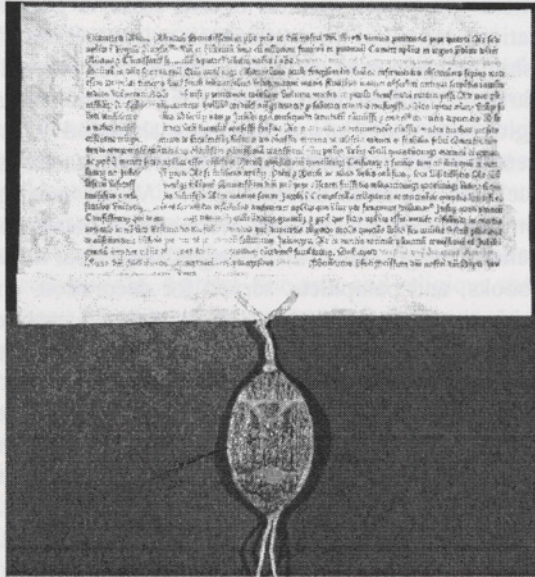
Students also need to be familiar with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, including the traditional clothing and symbols associated with popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, and monks. Students further benefit from knowing the key phrases and ideas of evangelical reform, such as *sola fide* (justification by faith), *solo scriptura* (preeminence of the Word), *cuius regio eius religio* (he who rules chooses the religion), as well as the key elements of Catholic dogma (e.g., seven sacraments, good works, efficacy of saints, the Trinity). Much of this information can be obtained from a standard textbook. Alternatively, one can assign students to read Martin Luther's early letters or sermons (e.g., *Freedom of a Christian*) in preparation for the first class. If time permits, we

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[7]This broadsheet depicted various financial threats to Germany, including the sale of papal indulgences. Note how the indulgence is nailed to the cross in place of Jesus. The artist clearly opposes the pope, but he also criticizes merchants, moneylenders, and ostentatious clothing with fur and ornamentation. See Steven Ozment, *Protestants: Birth of a Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 53.

usually read excerpts together in class and list key tenets of Protestantism on the blackboard.

Figure 2. Jörg Breu the Elder, woodcut (ca. 1530).
With permission from *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500-1550*, rev. and ed. Walter L. Strauss. 4 vols. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974), 323. Also available in Jensen, 58; Ozment, 53.

Once students have a grasp of the basic ideas behind the early Reformation, we consider any two editorial cartoons that represent opposing viewpoints of a contemporary divisive issue (e.g., stem-cell research, abortion, war in Iraq). We discuss the pros and cons of a cartoon versus a written editorial: Which has more impact? Which is more difficult to create? To distribute? To reproduce? Which might reach a wider audience? Which is more cost-effective? How might these two means of distributing information compare to a sermon, a hymn, a TV ad, or a legal decision? At this point I usually provide some statistics about literacy rates and the number of printed books in early sixteenth-century Europe, in order to remind students that most people could neither read nor afford an entire book. We also discuss the use

of advertising and "propaganda," both historical and modern.[8] For example, what is the distinction (if any) between these two terms? Do they carry positive or negative connotations? Is one more (or less) effective at altering our actions or beliefs? Once again students have the opportunity to apply knowledge from other subjects (e.g., political science, marketing) to the study of history.

Next I explain that we are going to study several images from the Reformation that are the equivalent of editorial cartoons. Students are encouraged to look for links between the images and the written texts we have already studied, as well as among the visual images themselves. The images can be presented in a number of different ways: I prefer PowerPoint, but overhead transparencies and photocopies work equally well. These images are all woodcuts from inexpensive Protestant pamphlets or broadsheets, and would have been readily available in markets, taverns, and other public places. Most of these images and symbols would have been instantly recognizable to any sixteenth-century person, even if they initially appear baffling to us. To reinforce this point, I will sometimes show students a collage of modern symbols and personalities that have no meaning on their own but are nonetheless familiar to everyone (e.g., McDonald's "Golden Arches," the "got milk?" slogan, a silhouette of Michael Jordan). Students should now be prepared to begin their analysis of Reformation visual propaganda.

Figure 3 introduces students to the essential ideas of Protestant/Catholic debate. Created by Hans Sebald Behem in 1524, to accompany a text by Hans Sachs, it shows Protestants grouped behind Martin Luther, while Catholics congregate behind a priest. Luther holds the Bible, pointing to it with his right hand to emphasize the truth to be found in Scripture. He wears a scholar's cap to emphasize his role as a teacher of true doctrine. The group behind him represents the common folk, dressed in ordinary clothes and carrying agricultural implements (a flail for threshing wheat, a basket full of eggs or fruit). Although Lutheranism was popular with powerful princes and middle-class merchants from the beginning, it also appealed to the German masses, and evangelical reformers frequently emphasized the "working man" (*Karsthans*) to promote their new faith.[9] In contrast, not only are the Catholics more finely-dressed, but they carry tools and symbols linked with Catholicism: a nun in her habit carries a chalice, a blacksmith points to a church bell at his feet, and a fisherman waves his net in the air. The text that accompanies this illustration criticizes the Catholic Church for the practice of simony (selling of Church offices), a point reinforced visually by the

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[8]The term "propaganda," meaning "extension" or "enlargement," comes in part from Gregory XV's papal bull of 1622, *Congregatio de propaganda fide*, to establish a group of cardinals to extend and promote the Catholic faith. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith remains an active office in the Vatican today.

[9]Luther initially emphathized with the peasants' uprising of 1525, but he rapidly changed his position when he published *Against the Robbing Murdering Hordes of Peasants* (1525).

repeated references to material gain among the Catholics. After students have described the characteristics of each group, I ask them to identify any authorial bias. The title ("The Complaint of the Godless Against Luther") is a dead giveaway, of course, but so too is the fact that God (or Christ) tilts his scepter toward the Protestant side to indicate that they possess his favor. Despite the obvious favoritism of the artist, this woodcut is relatively neutral in its depiction of each side.

Figure 3. Hans Sebald Behem, "Complaint of the Godless Against Luther" (1524).
With permission, from *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500-1550*, rev. and ed.
Walter L. Strauss. 4 vols. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974), 203. Also
available in Scribner, 31; Moxey, 56.

The next several figures contrast Protestant and Catholic practices more explicitly. All but Figure 7 favor Protestants, which reflects the reality that Luther and his followers were quicker to realize the advantages offered by printing. Lucas Cranach's small pamphlet of 1521, entitled "Passional Christi und Antichristi" (Figure 4), was intended to underscore how the Church had evolved away from the early values

professed by Christ.[10] Each of the thirteen pairs of images included a brief commentary by Philip Melanchthon to juxtapose the pious life of Christ with the dissolute actions of the Antichrist Pope. In Figure 4, Jesus drives the moneylenders from the Temple, while the contemporary pope runs a profitable business selling indulgences. The

Figure 4. Lucas Cranach the Elder, "Passional Christus und Antichristus" (1521), fol. Di.
With permission, from J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.
Also available in Wiesner, 300; Scribner, 150-155, and online at Emory University (see n. 11).

Passional Christi und

Antichristi.

expensive gowns of the pope (and the moneylenders) contrast visibly with the simple robes worn by Jesus and by the laity lining up to leave money on the table. Figure 5 contrasts Jesus' peaceful entry on a donkey into Jerusalem with the pope astride a horse, accompanied by military soldiers and heading toward Hell. The remaining images echo this theme of contrast: Christ is crowned with thorns while the pope wears a triple tiara; Christ and his followers pay taxes to Rome while the clergy enjoy

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[10]Scribner, 149–159.

exemptions; Christ carries his cross in agony while the pope reclines on a palanquin carried by servants.[11]

Figure 5. Lucas Cranach the Elder, "Passional Christus und Antichristus" (1521), fol. Cii.
With permission, from J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.
Also available in Scribner, 150–155, and online at Emory University (see n. 11).

Passional Christi und

Christus.
Sich an/ dein könig kompt dir demütigk uff einem jungen esel Mathei x. Also ist Christus kommen regierende uff on frembd den esel arm vnd sanfftmütigk vnd reydt nicht gu regieren stolz fur vns allen gu eynem seligen todte Johannis 12.

Antichristi.
Die geistlichen seindt alle könige vnd das begeygt die platten uffin koptffe. duo 12.q.1.
Der Bapst magk gleich wie der keyser reytten vnd der keyser ist sein bruder abant uff das bischoff ächter wirdt gehalt nicht genung dere werde. c.Constantinus.96.dst.
Der Bapst ist allen völckern zu rey-chen vorgesagt er. vag. say-gentes. Johannis 22.   C ü

Figure 6, entitled "The Descent of the Pope into Hell," was created by Hans Sebald Beham in 1524. Wearing a papal tiara and a jeweled cloak, a despondent pope leads a wagon full of churchmen and indulgences into a flaming building. Smirking demons stoke the fires and gather other religious figures to join the plethora of ecclesiastical figures already inside the burning structure. The text below the image cites the Book of Isaiah 14, which revels in the downfall of Lucifer, here equated with the pope.

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[11]Scribner, 149–159. Scribner's comments on each pair are useful, but some of his illustrations are misnumbered. For teaching purposes, all twenty-six images are available online at http://www.pitts.emory.edu/dia/1521LuthWbook/pc1.cfm.

Figure 6. Hans Sebald Behem, "Descent of the Pope Into Hell" (1524).
With permission from *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500-1550*, rev. and ed.
Walter L. Strauss, four vols. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974), 205.

Figure 7 is a broadsheet (poster) created by Matthias Gerung in 1546. It forms part
of a series of thirty-two allegorical scenes, most of which were anti-Catholic. By this
point in time it was apparent that reconciliation between Rome and Wittenberg was all
but impossible, and the level of verbal and military conflict continued to increase. On
the upper level, devout Protestants are engaged in serene prayer, baptism, preaching,
and communion. In startling contrast, the lower half is full of chaos, Catholics, and
creatures of the devil. Two devils dressed as cardinals offer indulgences for sale to the
crowd, as the pope—with a devil peeking out from under his cloak—greedily collects
the money. The lower half of the image emphasizes fine linens and a reliquary in the
background, in juxtaposition with the deliberate simplicity of the Protestant service.

Figure 7. Matthias Gerung, "Sale of Indulgences" (1546).
With permission from the Sekretariat of the Kunstsammlungen, Coburg, Germany; Ref. VC:
Inv. No. I, 349, 7. Also in *From a Mighty Fortress*: *Prints, Drawings and Books in the Age of Luther,
1483-1546*, Christianne Anderson & Charles Talbot, eds., (Detroit Institute of Arts, 1983).

At this point students are reasonably well-versed in Protestant polemics, so it is useful to throw them a curveball. Figure 8, a Catholic denunciation of Martin Luther,

Figure 8.   "Siebenkopfe" ("Seven-Headed Luther").
Anonymous (possibly Hans Brosamer), from a pamphlet written by Johann Cochleus (1529).
With permission from the British Library, shelfmark 3905.5.81(1).
Also available in Scribner, 233.

represents the Church's effort to retaliate in 1529. The body is that of an Augustinian monk clasping a prayer book, but he is depicted with seven heads (*siebenkopfe*), each accompanied by an inscription. From left to right, the first head shows "Doctor" Luther wearing a scholar's hat; the second makes a play on his name "Martinus" by contrasting Luther's avarice with the generosity displayed by the Catholic St. Martin who donated

half of his cloak to a beggar; and the third head shows "Luther" wearing a turban and thus affiliated with the infidel.[12] The center head ("Ecclesiast") evokes Luther's status as a priest, while the fifth head represents him as a wild-haired fanatic with bees buzzing around him. The last head refers to Barrabas, a thief freed by Pilate in place of Christ, with a club and wild hair intended to reinforce the image of Luther as a radical.[13]

Figure 9. Anonymous, "Seven-Headed Papal Beast."
With permission, from *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500-1550,* rev. and ed. Walter L. Strauss, four vols. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974), 1530. Also available in Scribner, 103; Moxey, 28.

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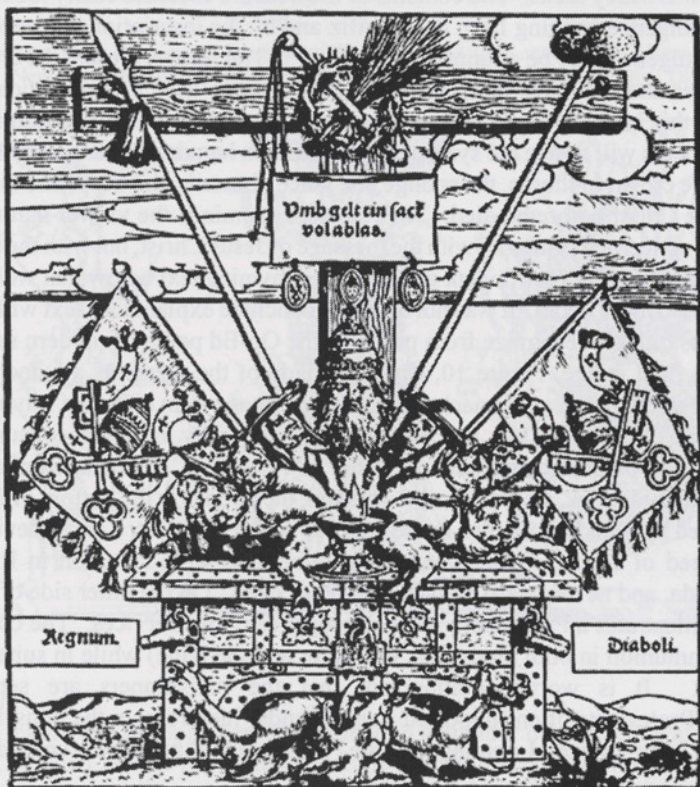
[12]Scribner rightly points out (253–254) that some ambiguity exists in deciphering these images. The third head might represent a Turkish infidel, or a Saxon nobleman affiliated with Luther, just as the item above his head might represent an imperial baton, a bridle for Luther's loose tongue, or something else.

[13]I have not included a description of the sixth head of Luther's "Siebenkopfe" because the identity and meaning are uncertain. The expert in this field, Robert Scribner, whose work I cited often in the notes, also omitted a description of this particular head even as he described each of the others.

Figure 9 provides an excellent contrast to the previous image: Again we encounter the theme of a seven-headed beast, but this time from a Protestant perspective. In fact, Figure 9 was expressly created in response to the *siebenkopfe* of Luther. Both references are to the book of the Apocalypse, when a seven-headed dragon presages the end of the world. In Figure 9, however, the central head wears a papal tiara, while the other ecclesiastics are recognizable by the cardinal's flat hat, the bishop's pointed miter, and the monk's distinctive round haircut (known as a "tonsure"). The beast surrounds what should be an altar, but instead it has been transformed into a treasure box protected by numerous heavy locks. The contents of the treasure chest are easily identified, both by the indulgence hanging from the crucifix and by the inscription that reads "A sack full of indulgence may be obtained for money."[14] The flags represent the crossed keys of St. Peter and the papal tiara, the same coat of arms used by the Vatican today.[15] Although this image at first appears to be solely a condemnation of Catholic practice, astute students will notice the symbols of the Passion hanging from the crucifix. These include the crown of thorns, the sponge, the lance, the nails, the whip, and the flail used to scourge Christ before he died. Their presence reminds the viewer that the Church should be concerned primarily with the message of Jesus Christ, not with the acquisition of material goods. This woodcut also includes rhyming text below that would explain the images in more detail. It was not unusual to include explanatory text with an image, as students quickly recognize from perusing the Op-Ed pages of modern newspapers.

The final image, Figure 10, captures many of the elements alluded to in prior slides. Created by Lucas Cranach, ca. 1540, this image is an effective way to conclude the lesson.[16] On one side, the ecclesiastical hierarchy is being consumed by an enormous fire-breathing monster called the "Jaws of Hell." Students should be able to easily identify a monk, a cardinal, and a bishop; the pope is in the bottom of the painting surrounded by imps and devils. In the very top of the woodcut, a small devil defecates on the head of a nun. Such scatological references were common in Reformation propaganda, and never fail to enliven the end of class. On the other side of the image, Cranach illustrates a Protestant vision of proper religious services. The congregation takes communion in both kinds (i.e., the wafer and the wine) while in suitably devout positions. It is worth pointing out that the parishioners are separated by gender—Protestants often supported a rigid gender hierarchy in the household, in the shop, and in the church. Looming over the Protestant faithful is the crucified Christ and

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[14]Scribner, 100–104.

[15]A satirical coat of arms of the Pope, ca. 1545, can be found in *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut,* 855.

[16]To provide students with additional practice, consult a similar (but more detailed) woodcut by Cranach (ca.1545) that illustrates Catholic and Protestant theological practices, although always from a pro-Protestant perspective, in *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut,* 619.

the Lamb of God (representing John the Baptist). At the center of the painting is the by-now-familiar figure of Martin Luther. With the Bible open in front of him, he condemns the Roman church to Hell with his left hand while raising up the evangelicals with his right. The "foundation" of Luther's belief, represented by the four circular seals that support the pulpit and the book of Scripture, are the four Gospels. Together with the crucified Christ, these references to the Apostles reinforce the evangelicals' emphasis upon the New Testament.

Figure 10. Lucas Cranach the Younger, "Luther Preaching, with the Pope in the Jaws of Hell."

With permission, from *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500-1550*, rev. and ed. Walter L. Strauss, four vols. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974), 618. Also available in Scribner, 206; Dickens, 59.
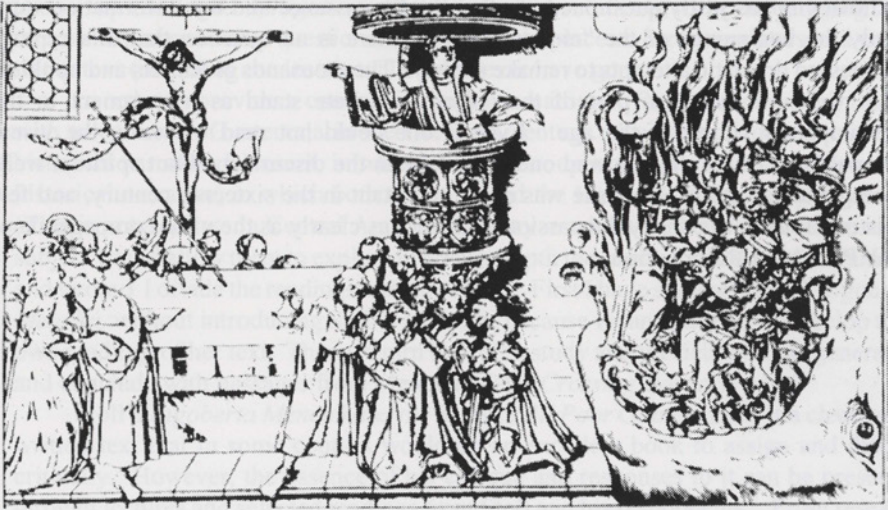
Conclusion

This lesson can be amplified or extended in a number of different ways. Images from the Catholic/Counter Reformation can be utilized to show the response from the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and activist popes in the second half of the century.[17]

[17]See, for example, Davis, *The Reformation Attacked*, containing more than four dozen images, mostly pro-Catholic. Philip Soergel, *Wondrous in his Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) also contains several images from each perspective. See also the 1575 *Godly Contemplations for the Unlearned* (London: Scholar Press, 1973), which contains Catholic catechism and visual images. On Catholic propaganda, see Richard Croft, "Printing, Reform,

Although Queen Elizabeth enacted new legislation to prohibit the publication of defamatory images in England, such images flourished in Catholic presses elsewhere. These images can be particularly useful for showing students how politics and religion became inseparable as the early modern state developed. The status and role of women in early modern Europe is another subject to be explored profitably in sixteenth-century propaganda.[18] Luther wrote extensively about marriage and women, and his own marriage to a former nun (Katherine von Bora) generated still more discussion on both sides of the religious divide. The perception of peasants or Jews or other marginal groups can be viewed through historical images, as can popular beliefs about magic or science.

The sixteenth century was a tumultuous time, one in which venerable traditions and institutions were severely challenged and sometimes toppled. While recent scholarship has justly questioned whether the Renaissance and the Reformation were truly the beginnings of the "modern" world, there is no question that this century witnessed dramatic attempts to remake society. The thousands of leaflets and booklets that were published as part of that vigorous debate stand as a testament to the participatory nature of the age. Even if one could not read or write, the visual propaganda of the day allowed one to partake in the discussion about spiritual well-being and salvation. No issue was more important in the sixteenth century, and few historical sources convey the passion of the era as clearly as the visual propaganda of the Protestant Reformation.

[17](...continued)

and the Catholic Reformation in Germany (1521-1545)," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16 (Fall 1985): 369–381, and Kevin Stevens, "Vincenzo Girardone and the Popular Press in Counter-Reformation Milan: A Case Study (1570)," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26 (Fall 1995): 639–659.

[18]See, for example, "A Reformation Woodcut" in Thomas Noble, et. al., *Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment*, Vol. 1 to 1715, Third Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001), 494–495, which discusses Erhard Schön's 1533 woodcut of a husband and wife role reversal in the context of the Reformation.