Karlstadt's philosophical and theological roots and his use of patristic, scholastic, and legal sources. Karlstadt's lecture notes and disputation theses also present a clearer view of academic procedures in Wittenberg at the time when Luther was responding to his earliest opponents and working out the consequences of his understanding of repentance and grace. Major themes visible in Karlstadt's theses include the authority and proper exegesis of scripture, the relationship between grace and freewill, and the identification and punishment of heretics. Karlstadt's correspondence with Spalatin invites comparison with that of Luther and Melanchthon with Spalatin as another source for the elector's awareness of developments at his new university, while the printing history of Karlstadt's series of theses illustrates just how closely he was associated with Luther at the beginning of the Reformation.

The printed version of the critical edition is the most practical format for research, but its contents are also available to the public in digital form at: http://diglib.hab.de/edoc/ed000216/start.htm (accessed 10 Jan. 2018). Under the link “I. Projektphase” users can access not only the introductions and edited texts but also links to digitized images of the sixteenth-century imprints and later editions of those works. “II. Projektphase” lists those documents currently being edited for the next volume of the critical edition, covering the years 1519-20. Karlstadt's visibility would only increase over the years until his very public break with Luther. Everyone interested in the early Reformation will want to examine this volume and should look forward to the next one in this critical edition.


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Alongside paleographic guidebooks and dictionaries for early languages, the manuscript catalog has long been one of the major tools for any study of older handwritten materials. Such catalogs provide the quickest access to materials that are difficult to index due to changing orthography, linguistic variation, and idiosyncratic script. Catalogs not only support on-site research, but they also enable scholars to plan their research before travelling to distant repositories. Although Daniel Gehrt's catalog is limited in scope to sixteenth-century Reformation manuscripts from the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, his descriptions represent an important advancement over earlier resources on the collection, such as the 1714 catalog by Ernst Salomon Cyprian.
Unlike printed works, which may exist in multiple copies, manuscripts and archival documents are unique and thus are difficult to gather into union catalogs across regions or subjects. Recognizing the usefulness of manuscript catalogs like this one, German scholars have created the website Manuscripta Mediaevalia (http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/), which provides digital access to complete printed catalogs for manuscript collections both within Germany and elsewhere. The Austrian counterpart, manuscripta.at, provides digital versions of early handwritten catalogs when no modern one exists. Likewise, the Katalog der Reformationshandschriften is not a stand-alone publication, but as we shall see, it is integrated into digital resources as well. Such digital initiatives, as well as projects to create full online catalogs, demonstrate the changing research landscape, however, as newer, electronic modes for describing and indexing manuscripts are poised to supersede the printed catalog.

Nevertheless, it is a great pleasure to welcome another resource to the fold of important German manuscript catalogs, a strong contribution to the expanding set of tools for discovering extant copies of pertinent texts. Daniel Gehrt's Katalog der Reformationshandschriften provides an extremely useful and detailed overview of the impressive collections at the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, with descriptions of 260 codex manuscripts containing approximately 15,800 individual items and about 7000 Tischreden (Table Talks). These manuscripts, however, constitute only a small subset of the resources at the Forschungsbibliothek, which holds 3,496 oriental and 7,940 western manuscripts, of which 521 are medieval manuscripts largely in German or Latin. Thus, the Reformation manuscripts in this catalog form only a limited, but very important, part of the Gotha collections.

The manuscripts included in this catalog are those that are specifically relevant to the religious history of the sixteenth-century Reformation; however, not included are other contemporary manuscripts that might offer a broader view of the events in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At the same time, the temporal limits go beyond the earliest stage of the Reformation (1517-55) to include relevant materials from throughout the sixteenth century. The materials described here are largely archival or documentary in nature, albeit bound into codices. Although several codices do contain liturgical texts or longer works like Martin Luther's Small Catechism, most are composed of numerous documents, each needing to be separately described. These are chiefly materials relating to the progress of the Lutheran Reformation within Germany, but there are also resources on events across Europe, as well as the Geneva reformation.

Gotha, located between Eisenach and Erfurt, was a residence for the Ernestine branch of the Wettin dynasty from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Numerous members of this ducal family were not only dedicated Lutherans, but they also fostered research into the history of the sixteenth century by collecting the papers of important leaders and historiographers of the early Reformation. With the family's loss of political prestige and power in the aftermath of the Schmalkalden War, the Ernestines came to define themselves as the protectors
of Luther's theological legacy, and as a result turned their attention to collecting documents related to the Wittenberg Reformation. Their collecting activities started in the seventeenth century, expanded greatly in the early eighteenth century (during the celebration of the bicentennial of the Reformation's start), and continued on a smaller scale after that. Together with the state archives in Weimar and the University of Jena library, the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha today is one of the chief Thuringian repositories for research into the Reformation. Gehrt precedes the descriptions with a succinct history of the Gotha collection's growth over three centuries, placing the materials into a broader research context and introducing the historical personages responsible for them.

What kinds of resources would Reformation scholars expect to find in this catalog? Along with several smaller collections of materials from Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Jean Calvin, and others, the Ernestines succeeded in acquiring collections from important early leaders of the Lutheran Reformation, in particular Georg Spalatin (1485–1545), Stephan Reich (1512–88), and Paul Eber (1511–69). Eber, who served as theology professor at Wittenberg, was an associate of Luther, Melanchthon, and Bugenhagen. Although some of Eber's writings are now in Nuremberg, six volumes of his correspondence are in Gotha (Chart. A 123–28), containing about 400 letters from and 620 letters to him. These came to the Ernestine family sometime during the Thirty Years' War, in the first half of the seventeenth century.

There are also manuscripts from the personal collections of the Ernestines, including a three-volume copy of Georg Spalatin's Chronicle of Saxony and Thuringia (Chart. A 189–91), complete with illustrations done by the Cranach workshop, and seven volumes relating to mid-sixteenth-century controversies surrounding Victorin Striegel (1524–69), a theology professor from Jena (Chart. A 33–39). Further records of the ducal family's midcentury religious struggles can be found in the manuscripts from Duke Johann Wilhelm of Saxe-Weimar (1530–73) and the Duchess Dorothea Susanna of Saxe-Weimar (1544–92). With her husband imprisoned by the emperor (1567–73) and then as a widow (1573–92), the duchess played a leading role in the inner struggles of the Wettin family, in particular in promoting their Lutheran heritage. During this period she composed her own Glaubensbekenntnis (confession of faith) that was distributed to eighty pastors for signature, and she supported pastors and teachers who shared her interpretation of Reformation. These developments are well documented in several volumes (Chart. A 47–49, 51–64, and 932) that include the preliminary work on the Glaubensbekenntnis, papers related to her confessional policies between 1573 and 1581 (Das grosse Passional) and her correspondence. The contents of the last of these sets are only included in the current catalog to the degree that they reflect the religious history and events of that time. Another ten volumes (Chart. A 103–12) contain the papers of Bartholomäus Gernhard (1525–1600) who served the court preacher in Weimar and was deeply involved in the duchess's actions.
As stated earlier, the Ernestines fostered research into the Lutheran Reformation during the seventeenth century, starting with the work of Veit Ludwig von Seckendorf (1626-92), whose documentary work is still highly valued by Reformation historians today. One result of this was the acquisition of additional manuscripts from Georg Spalatin and Stephan Reich. Among Spalatin’s papers are his translations into German of works by Jean Gerson and Pseudo-Bernhard of Clairvaux, along with several early manuscripts from his private collection (Chart. A 336–38, 340–41, 451–54), including letters related to the heresy trial against Martin Luther. Reich’s work appears in eleven volumes, six of which (Chart. A 240, 357, Chart. B. 314, 316, 318–19) came from his personal collection. Among these are Reich’s own transcriptions of dedications, academic addresses, and materials related to the history of the Ernestine family, as well as collections of interpretations of the Psalms and Christmas hymns, and other types of literature.

Omitted from this catalog are several volumes of transcripts of reformers’ papers that were prepared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by prominent historians like Wilhelm Ernst Tentzel (1659–1707), Christian Schlegel (1667–1722), and Ernst Salomon Cyprian (1673–1745). For the exact extent of materials included or omitted, the reader is directed to Gehrt’s introduction.

The catalog’s second volume concludes with an extensive bibliography and numerous indexes that provide access to the collection through personal names (both known and unidentified) and subjects, as well as an index of songs and hymns (both by title and by composer). The personal names are further identified in their relationship to the document itself (author, signer, addressee, etc.). In addition, this edition is linked into records in the university and research library of Gotha’s online database HANS (Handschriften, Autographen, Nachlässe und Sondermaterialien; http://hans.uni-erfurt.de), which contains core data on each manuscript as well as biographical data, locations, dates, brief registers, etc. The database offers much more flexible search routines for identifying pertinent materials or for identifying the relationships between the document and the persons associated with it. The long-term goal is to incorporate these records into the German Kalliope-Verbund union database for archival records.

The Katalog der Reformationshandschriften provides useful insight into one of the more important collections of materials on the progress of the sixteenth-century Reformation in Germany. As such, this catalog, which adheres to current standards for manuscript and archival cataloging, is an important contribution to scholarship and a worthy addition to library collections that focus on early modern history. Integration of the catalog’s contents with online resources offers new approaches for research and study for scholars worldwide, improving access to these manuscripts and contextualizing them.