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Michael Gross. *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. 354p.

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Michael B. Gross, Associate Professor of History at East Carolina University, here provides Germanists, historians, and cultural studies scholars an exemplary text in the best traditions of German Studies. His book is the latest volume in the *Social History, Popular Culture and Politics in Germany* series edited by Geoff Eley (University of Michigan), which has for many years demonstrated the great potential of cross-disciplinary inquiry into German social phenomena. Like many of its series predecessors, *The War Against Catholicism* deftly deploys aspects of social theory, gender studies, literary analysis, political science, and traditional historiography. This book is a worthy addition to the Eley-edited collection, serving at once as an excellent introduction to the series itself and as a primer in the topic of German anti-Catholicism more generally. Written in an historian's academic language while also highly accessible to scholars of other fields, this book supports investigations into 19th-century German society from a variety of scholarly perspectives. Certainly there already exists much excellent scholarly literature on the *Kulturkampf* and German Liberalism, but Professor Gross situates his research in this continuum deftly in his detailed introduction.

Following on research by Konrad Jarausch and Larry Jones, Gross understands Liberalism "not as simply a political movement and set of economic principles, but more broadly...as also a body of cultural attitudes and social practices" defined by a preference for "rationalism, individualism, *Bildung* and progress" (22-23). His study further "accepts the assumption that words and deeds can produce meanings and identities that transcend in often unexpected and unwelcome ways the intentions of their original authors and actors" (23-24). The promise of innovative scholarship detailed here is expertly sustained throughout the book's five chapters. Each outlines a different aspect of Liberal anti-Catholicism, and their themes illustrate his deft interweaving of methodologies and primary sources.

First, Gross analyses the post-1848 German Catholic religious revival and political mobilization advanced by local crusades (*Volksmissionen*) by Catholic orders such as Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans. The Bishop of Münster in 1850 stated these were, among other things, designed to "awaken the spirit of penance, to root out corruption and to stimulate fervor" (33). Gross shows how the missions were essentially often just "instruments of psychological and public terror" to frighten Catholics into returning to the fold (25). He draws on personal and professional

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clerical correspondence, parish reports, diocesan communications, secular newspapers, and municipal archives, significant portions of which are analyzed here for the first time. Vivid descriptions of mission meetings, the impact they had on participants and the internal conflicts in the German Catholic Church brought about thereby lend the issues at stake a more personal and affective dimension.

In the second chapter, analysis turns to the effects of the vibrant Catholic missions on people of other faiths, a topic not often mentioned in traditional studies of the period, and generally not as detailed as here. Significant numbers of Protestant believers and Jews attended *Volksmissionen* in the mid-1800s, and though they rarely converted, the impressive attendance figures caused Protestant clergy and elected officials to respond by energetically producing scores of anti-Catholic sermons and tracts (75). Gross' significant innovation is to link the upsurge in Protestant anti-Catholicism to Liberals' contemporaneous development of "models of anticlerical, anti-Jesuit, antimonastic and anti-Catholic thinking." As part of the re-imagining of Liberalism after 1848, it began to define itself in terms of "individualism, science, education, constitutionalism, and free-market economics" (99). Protestant theology at the time contained significant points of overlap, and had a common "foe" in the German public sphere. This emerging symbiosis is skillfully described and its socio-cultural effects persuasively outlined.

In Gross' third chapter, widely-circulated Liberal newspapers such as the *Vossische Zeitung*, literary-cultural journals, and illustrated magazines such as *Kladderadatsch* and *Gartenlaube* are used to explore the written and visual portrayals of Liberal anti-monastic imagination. Indeed, as he later reminds us, even the term *Kulturkampf* itself has a symbiotic relationship with Liberalism, having been coined by the Progressive Party leader Rudolf Virchow (197). These publications are familiar to most (cultural) historians of mid-1800s Germany, but Gross finds additional meaning in their subtexts that others have not addressed. After ably describing the caricatured representations of Catholic priests and nuns living the communal life in these publications, he concludes that Liberal antimonasticism was not a political posture, but a "rich and elaborate ritual of identity" (26). Reprints of some of the more salacious artwork from these journals lend his arguments additional force and appeal.

Gross provides what is probably the most striking and original aspect to this text in the chapter where gender relations are discussed. He argues that "liberals coded public life and the state as masculine" and "the domestic sphere and Catholicism as feminine" (201). Analyzing politicians' speeches, activities of Liberal organizations and leading Liberal publications, he argues forcefully that the *Kulturkampf* was, for

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Liberals, also a gender struggle (*Geschlechterkampf*) (27). This has implications for a wide variety of fresh research perspectives into the *Kulturkampf*, as one could not now imagine viewing the Catholic-Protestant-Liberal dialectic without reference to this dimension.

Finally, Gross engages both the church-state debate at the root of political Liberal anti-Catholicism, as well as the effective singling out of one group of citizens for state attention. The fascinating philosophical paradoxes inherent in German Liberals' enthusiastic support of anti-Catholic campaigns are analyzed, and critical attention is paid to Liberals' active role in shaping public discourse to the detriment of Catholic fellow-Germans. In doing so, he brings a fruitful cultural studies dimension to his analysis that could serve as a model for many other such historical inquiries, as well as serving as an excellent example of social and political history on its own.

Catholicism provided German Liberals with many representations of an imagined Other, whether in its allegedly feminine, unpatriotic, medieval, or monastic-ritualized aspects. Professor Gross is to be commended for using such a wide variety of sources to illustrate this, and for simultaneously laying bare so many social, political, and economic roots of anti-Catholicism. Those not as well versed in the minutiae of the *Kulturkampf* for its major actors can avail themselves of a detailed index at the end of his text for a clear guide as to where both relevant persons and topics can be found therein. Also, for those not fluent in German, faithfully-rendered translations of textual excerpts, titles, and captions are included. *The War Against Catholicism* can certainly be considered an essential and original work and deserves an audience beyond German social and political historians, which with its inclusion in Professor Eley's series is certainly more likely. ✱