Introduction

The Fifteen Confederates are a collection of pamphlets ostensibly written by a group of laymen, the confederates, who had sworn together to address the religious, social, economic, and political problems facing the German nation in the early years of the Protestant Reformation. They came off the presses sometime in the fall of 1521, in the unsettled atmosphere after Martin Luther's hearing at the Diet of Worms and subsequent disappearance, without indication of author, publisher, or date or place of publication. Evidence from other sources indicates that they were available at the Frankfurt book fair by 27 September and that very quickly they were known throughout the German-speaking lands. Not surprisingly, almost immediately they aroused the interest of ecclesiastical authorities. Still in September Johannes Cochlaeus, advisor to the papal legate at the Diet of Worms Girolamo Aleander, translated parts of the fourth and tenth *Confederates* and sent them to Aleander. By October, Johannes Eck, Martin Luther's opponent at the Leipzig Disputation, had taken a copy of the entire work to Rome.[1]

In a later pamphlet, Johann Eberlin von Günzburg, an apostate Franciscan preacher, admitted his authorship of *The Fifteen Confederates*.[2] Both Eberlin and *The Fifteen Confederates* were central to the pamphlet war that erupted during the early years of the Protestant Reformation, which Mark U. Edwards likens to a modern media campaign. Barely seventy years old at

1. The most complete discussions of the circumstances surrounding the appearance of *The Fifteeen Confederates* and the initial responses to them are provided by Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 41–42 and Baldini, *Gli Statuti di Wolfaria*, 7. Cochlaeus' translation of parts of the fourth and tenth Confederates have been published in Baldini, *Gli Statuti di Wolfaria*, 71–77.

2. *Wider die falschen Geistlichen, genandt die Barfüsser und Franziskaner*, *JEvGS* 3: 85, 88.

the time, the moveable type printing press became an indispensable weapon in the religious controversies of the age. Scholars estimate that somewhere around 10,000 pamphlet editions were published in the German-speaking lands between 1500 and 1530. Almost 70 percent of these, over 6,000 editions, appeared during the crucial years between 1520 and 1526. Among publicists of the Reformation, Eberlin ranks sixth in terms of the number of pamphlets he wrote and the number of editions of his works produced.[3] Between 1520 and 1525, in addition to *The Fifteen Confederates*, he may have published as many as twenty-four pamphlets dealing with the reform of church and society (twenty of these can be reliably attributed to Eberlin, the other four are less sure). A number of these works ran into several editions.[4] Probably the most obvious sign of the notoriety of *The Fifteen Confederates* among contemporaries is the prominent place assigned to them in *The Great Lutheran Fool* by the noted Catholic pamphleteer Thomas Murner.[5]

Not surprisingly, Eberlin has been heralded at various times as "the Luther of southern Germany," "one of the most important and immediate links between Luther and the German people," "after Luther the most prolific Protestant pamphleteer," and "next to Luther, . . . the most trenchant of the pamphleteers of the early Reformation."[6] As a result, Eberlin and his writings have been favorite topics for German scholars in a variety of disciplines, including theology, history, literature, politics, and law. In addition, he has caught the attention of scholars working in English, French, and Italian, although here studies have stayed focused for the most part on

3. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, 14–40.

4. The works safely attributed to Eberlin are contained in the three volumes of the critical edition of his writings edited by Ludwig Enders (*JEvGS*). Also included in volume three of that work (111–24) is *Der Glockenthurm*, one of the works whose authorship is less sure. At the beginning of the same volume (xxxiii–xxxv) Enders notes two further works some scholars have suggested as possible products of Eberlin's pen: *Das die Priester Eeweyber nemen mögen und sollen*, a translation of Phillip Melanchthon's *Apologia pro M. Barptolomeo Praeposito, qui uxorem in sacerdotio duxit*, and *Klag und antwort von Lutherischen und Beptischenn pfaffen uber die Reformacion so neulich zu Regenspurg der priester halben außgangen ist im Jar M D xxiiij*. Alfred Götze has suggested that another pamphlet, *Sendtbrieff an Pfarrer von Hohensynn. Doctor Martini Luthers Leer betreffennde*, is also the work of Eberlin, see "Ein Sendbrief Eberlins von Günzburg," 145–54. For a complete list of extant editions of works attributed to Eberlin, see Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 339–74.

5. Murner, *Von dem grossen Lutherischen Narren*, 120–61.

6. Schmidt, "Die 15 Bundesgenossen," 5; Bell, "Wolfaria," 139; Ozment, "Social History," 189; Oberman, *Roots of Antisemitism*, 4.

Eberlin's social and political thought, especially alleged "utopian" aspects of *The Fifteen Confederates*.[7]

Despite Eberlin's prominence in his own day and his subsequent popularity among scholars, we know surprisingly little about his background and early life. In fact, much of the little we know has been reconstructed from biographical references in Eberlin's own writings, and these tend to concentrate on the period of his life after he had encountered the Reformation and to portray events in his former life from the perspective of his new allegiance. His birth date has been calculated as falling somewhere between 1460 and 1475 on the basis of four university matriculations for a Johann Eberlin: Ingolstadt (1473), Basel (1489 and 1490), and Freiburg im Breisgau (1493). However, there is no independent evidence that all of these records refer to the same person or that any of them refer to the author of *The Fifteen Confederates*.[8] On the basis of the Freiburg matriculation record, which mentions a "Mgr. Johannes Eberlein de Kleinkez Augusten. dioc.," Eberlin's birthplace has been identified as Kleinkötz, a small village six kilometers south of the town of Günzburg in the margraviate of Burgau in southern Germany.[9] In one of his later pamphlets, Eberlin indicates that he had been baptized in Günzburg, and elsewhere he identifies two of his relatives: Matthias Sigk, the municipal clerk in Lauingen on the Danube, and Johann Jakob Wehe, a parish priest in nearby Leipheim who was later executed for his role in the German Peasants' War of 1525.[10] Otherwise, we know virtually nothing about his social origins.[11]

7. For works focusing on *The Fifteen Confederates*, see the select bibliography at the end of this volume. More comprehensive bibliographies are available in Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism*, 216–38; Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günburg*, 320–38; and Baldini, *L'Educazione di un Principe Luterano*, 155–88.

8. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von* Günzburg, 17–18 and Baldini, *L'Educazione di un Principe Luterano*, 15, have identified two other Johann Eberlin's to whom they might refer. Peters (16–32) provides the most comprehensive reconstruction of Eberlin's life prior to the publication of *The Fifteen Confederates*.

9. Mayer, *Die Matrikel der Universität Freiburg i. Br.*, 110; Deuerlein, "Nachtrag zu Johann Eberlin von Günzburg," 495.

10. *Mich wundert, dass kein Geld im Land ist*, *JEvGS* 3:169; *Vom Missbrauch christlicher Freiheit*, *JEvGS* 2:40; *Wie sich ein Diener Gottes Worts in seinem Thun halten soll*, *JEvGS* 3:184.

11. Hitchcock, *Knights' Revolt*, suggested that Eberlin was a scion of the lower nobility and that the reforming proposals in some of his pamphlets reflected the interests of that group. Hitchcock's conclusions were endorsed by Cole, "Eberlin von Günzburg and the German Reformation," 9, 42–43 and "Law and Order," 251–56, but challenged by Bell, "Wolfaria," 122n4.

About Eberlin's early life in the church we are not much better informed. He may have been ordained and served as a priest in the diocese of Augsburg, although, again, the evidence suggesting this activity could refer to another Johann Eberlin.[12] Eberlin himself indicates in two of his later works that he was encouraged to enter the Observant branch of the Franciscan Order by Johann Kröner von Scherdüng, at one time the preacher in Heilbronn, and that he had seen the triumphal entry of Cardinal Raymond Peraudi into that city. This suggests that he may have entered the order in Heilbronn sometime in 1500 or 1501—Peraudi visited the city toward the end of 1501. Kröner von Scherdüng may also have introduced Eberlin to the humanist movement in southwestern Germany.[13] Thereafter Eberlin likely spent some time in Alsace, perhaps as a member of the Observant priory in the town of Barr.[14]

The first clear indication we have of Eberlin's life as a Franciscan can be gleaned from statements in several of his later writings. In these he indicates that for a time he was a preacher in the Franciscan church in Tübingen. During this time he seems to have played an active role in serving Franciscan nuns, the Poor Clares, under the care of the Tübingen priory,[15] which may explain his concern for the plight of cloistered women in *The Fifteen Confederates* and in a number of his later works. Eberlin provides us with no indication of when he was in Tübingen or for how long, although Christian Peters, the author of the most recent and authoritative biography of Eberlin, calculates he must have been in the city as early as 1517 and

12. The first Basel matriculation identifies Johann Eberlin as "presbyter Augustensis dioceses" (Wackernagel, *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel*, 209). However, this could be another priest by the name of Johann Eberlin who remained loyal to the Catholic church, see Baldini, *L'Educazione di un Principe Luterano*, 15.

13. *Wider die falschen Geistlichen, genannt die Barfüsser und Franzikaner*, *JEvGS* 3:46; *Wie sich ein Diener Gottes Wort in seinem Thun halten soll*, *JEvGS* 3:205; Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin*, 3n5 and 6. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg* 19–21, makes the most complete case that Kröner von Scherdüng may have been Eberlin's introduction to the humanist movement.

14. Lucke, "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 10–14. Throughout his writings, Eberlin makes frequent reference to people and places in Alsace, including a number of important Alsatian humanists: see *The First Confederate*; *The Third Confederate*; *The Eighth Confederate*; *The Fourteenth Confederate* all below; *Mich wundert dass kein Geld im Land ist*, *JEvGS* 3:160, 181; *Wider die falschen Geistlichen, genannt die Barfüsser und Franziskaner*, *JEvGS* 3: 70–71.

15. *Sieben fromme, aber trostlose Pfaffen klagen einer dem andern ihre Note*, *JEvGS* 2: 70; *Wider den Ausgang vieler Klosterleute*, *JEvGS* 2:136; *Wider die falschen Geistlichen, genannt die Barfüsser und Franziskaner*, *JEvGS* 3:67–69.

certainly by 1519.[16] Eberlin portrays himself as being at this time an ardent defender of the dignity and liberties of the clerical estate, and especially of those in religious orders. This has obvious rhetorical value when contrasted with his later conversion to the "cause of the gospel," but it may also provide us with some insight into his pre-Reformation activities. He indicates as well that he became involved in a theological controversy at the University of Tübingen, but provides no details about its nature. There has been some speculation that Eberlin may have entered into a dispute between scholastic and humanist faculty members on the side of the humanists.[17] It appears that shortly after this controversy, Eberlin was transferred out of the Tübingen priory. At one time scholars assumed that this might have been a form of punishment imposed on Eberlin as a result of the various controversies in which he was involved. However, subsequent positions of honor he held in the order suggest instead that it is best explained by the common practice of frequent transferals in the mendicant orders.[18]

Perhaps still in 1519, Eberlin was in Basel, where he became a member of a humanist sodality, which included the Franciscan prior Konrad Pellikan, the famed Alsatian humanist Beatus Rhenanus, and members of the prominent Basel publishing families of Froben and Amerbach. In this context he encountered some of Luther's most important writings of the early Reformation.[19] He may also have made his first foray into the realm of popular publishing. In 1520 or shortly thereafter the Basel printer Adam Petris produced a brief anonymous pamphlet entitled *An Epistle to the Parson of Highsense (Hohensynn), concerning Dr. Martin Luther's Teaching*. A

16. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 21.

17. *Sieben fromme, aber trostlose Pfaffen klagen einer dem andern ihre Not*, *JEvGS*, 2:70. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 21–28 provides a comprehensive overview of the possible participants in the dispute. Paul Scriptoris, an earlier resident of the Tübingen priory, had been a zealous defender of the new learning.

18. Lucke, "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 12; Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 180; Heger, *Eberlin und seine Vorstellungen*, 14. According to Neidiger, *Mendikanten zwischen Ordensideal und städtischer Realität*, 177, well-educated friars were regularly shuffled between friaries to fill various positions in the order which required their particular talents.

19. Riggenbach, *Eberlin und seine Reformprogramm*, 12–15; Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin*, 8; and Heger, *Eberlin und seine Vorstellungen*, 14–15, assumed that Eberlin was transferred from Tübingen to Freiburg im Breisgau. Scholarly consensus now favors Basel, see Lucke, "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 14–18; Wulkau, "Das kirchliche Ideal des Johann Eberlin von Günzburg," 11; Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 180; Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 28–29; Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism*, 42–43.

satiric comparison of the lives of contemporary clergy with the example provided by Christ, both its style and content suggest that it might be the work of Eberlin.[20]

In early 1521 Eberlin was transferred to Ulm.[21] In a later pamphlet addressed to the city council he indicates that when he arrived there he was not yet openly supporting the Wittenberg reform movement: "When I came to you, God placed a great desire in your hearts to learn his Word through me, but I failed, in part because I did not know it and in part because I was afraid to speak the truth. But through Dr. Luther's little book I became daily more learned and ready to preach the truth."[22] However, it appears that this state of affairs changed quickly. In a letter dated 15/16 March to the papal vice chancellor Guilio de Medici, the legate Aleander refers to "a friar of the Franciscan Observants in Ulm" who had been preaching in an orthodox fashion at the beginning of Lent, but who has since begun preaching material and defending propositions which the legate thought worthy of notice in Rome.[23]

If we can believe Eberlin's later account of events, his new activities raised the ire of his superiors in the order who then moved to silence him, apparently against the wishes of the city council: "Then God allowed the devil to prepare a game through my hypocritical brothers, by which I was driven from you despite the intervention on three occasions of the city council of Ulm, who earnestly—as they also found support among the common people—appealed to my superiors to keep me there."[24] If the council did intervene, Eberlin's opponents were eventually successful, and he preached his final sermon in the city on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul (29 June 1521) and then departed the city.[25]

In this context Eberlin wrote the first works that would become elements of *The Fifteen Confederates*. Noting inconsistencies in the cycle—for

20. Götze, "Ein Sendbrief Eberlin von Günzburgs," 145, 150–53; Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 29–30.

21. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 30–31.

22. *Die andere getreue Vermahnung an den Rath von Ulm*, *JEvGS* 3:2.

23. Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin*, 8–9, first identified this friar as Eberlin. Aleander's letter has been reproduced in Brieger, *Aleander und Luther*, 106 and Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin*, 9.

24. *Die andere getreue Vermahnung an den Rath von Ulm*, *JEvGS* 3:2. The *Ratsprotokolle* for this period make no mention of an intervention by the council on Eberlin's behalf, see Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 182.

25. *Ein kurzer schriflicher Bericht des Glaubens, an die Ulmer*, *JEvGS* 2:173.

example, the *Third Confederate* reminds its readers of topics which are, in fact, not discussed until the *Seventh Confederate*—Johann Heinrich Schmidt concluded that Eberlin was not a logical thinker and suggested that the order of the individual *Confederates* could be changed without detriment to the impact of the collection as a whole. In response, Wilhelm Lucke argued convincingly that these works were written in an order different from that in which they appear in the collection. He suggested further that the idea of the collected work had not yet occurred to Eberlin when he wrote these first components. Lucke's revised chronology for the composition of the *Confederates*, with a few minor modifications by Gottfried Geiger, is now generally accepted by Eberlin scholars.[26]

According to the revised order of composition, the first *Confederates* to be written were numbers seven, two, three, and four. These deal with issues of concern to inhabitants of monasteries, touching either the nature of their vocation or their interactions with the laity: the sufficiency of the parish clergy and the spiritual services provided by them, the Lenten fast and its applicability to both those in monasteries and the laity, the plight of cloistered women, and the canonical hours. Taken together, they envision a reform of the monastic life and its place in society that would have fundamentally changed the nature of the institution. Under the circumstances, the response of Eberlin's confreres and superiors to his suggestions should come as no surprise. Furthermore, these works may not have been envisioned initially as published pamphlets. Aleander mentioned that Eberlin's questionable opinions were spread about in sermons and propositions. Peters suggests that the seventh and second *Confederates* could easily have been developed out of popular sermons and that the third and fourth retain elements of what could have been lists of theses.[27]

Wilhelm Lucke characterized this group of *Confederates* as focusing on individual abuses in the church, but as remaining within the bounds of orthodoxy and recognizing the authority of the church throughout. While they draw on elements of Luther's reform program, especially as outlined

26. Schmidt, "Die 15 Bundesgenossen," 13–15; Lucke, "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 2–3, 32–39; Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 182–84.

27. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 45–46. He identifies *JEvGS*, 1: page 30, line 24 to page 33, line 4 and page 38, line 9 to page 40, line 7 (below page 49, line 11 to page 51, line 22 and page 55, line 22 to page 57, line 15) as blocks of theses which can stand on their own independent of the surrounding material. Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 184, initially suggested that the earliest *Confederates* may have first been sermons.

in the *Address to the Christian Nobility*, they avoid mentioning Luther by name.[28] Gottfried Geiger and Günther Heger argued further that while Eberlin derives specific complaints about abuses from Luther's work, the basic thought of these pamphlets reflects the Christian humanist reform program of Erasmus of Rotterdam.[29] Elsewhere I make the case that Eberlin's suggestions in these works are best characterized as a continuation of reform traditions within the Franciscan Observant movement, complemented with ideas drawn from the works of Luther and Erasmus.[30]

The next three *Confederates* to be written were numbers one, five, and eight in the cycle. The first, an appeal to Emperor Charles V that he take to heart the reform proposals suggested by Luther and the humanist poet laureate Ulrich von Hutten, was, unlike its predecessors, clearly intended as a literary work from the outset. Probably written during the first three weeks of April, it was part of a deluge of pamphlets aimed at influencing the authorities and public opinion at the time of the Diet of Worms and may have been modeled on several "manifestos" written in the preceding year by Hutten.[31] In *The Fifth Confederate* Eberlin continues to call for reform from those in power, but he changes the object of his appeal from the emperor to secular authorities at all levels in the German nation. It is tempting to see in this change disappointment with the outcome of the Diet of Worms. Eberlin admonishes all authorities to undertake a reform of the preaching office, arguing that secular authorities have not only the right, but also the duty, to oversee this task. Only with good, biblically based preaching can peace and social harmony be maintained. In *The Eighth Confederate* he changes his tack and defends writing and publishing in the vernacular as the only effective ways to fight the wiles of the church. Included in this work is a brief history of conflict between popes and emperors throughout the Middle Ages, suggesting a growing sense of nationalism likely derived from Hutten's writings, but also compatible with statements in Luther's *Address to the Christian Nobility*.

In this group of *Confederates* we see evidence not only of Eberlin's deteriorating relationship with his brethren and superiors in the Franciscan order, but also with church authorities more generally. In his letter first

28. Lucke "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 42–48.

29. Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 191–93; Heger, *Eberlin und seine Vorstellungen*, 20.

30. Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism*, 47–59.

31. Ahrens, "Gedanken Eberlins," 37; see also Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 46.

calling attention to Eberlin's activities in Ulm, Aleander had suggested that the matter be brought to the attention of the emperor's Franciscan confessor, Johannes Glapion.[32] Likely in response to Glapion's involvement, *The First Confederate* calls on the emperor to refuse any counsel from his confessor relating to affairs of the realm, or better yet, to send him away and take as his confessor a true friend of the German people like Erasmus, Luther, or Luther's colleague in Wittenberg Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. Eberlin's distrust of Glapion escalates into an outright attack on the Franciscan Observants in particular and the orders of the mendicant friars in general in this and the subsequent two *Confederates*. At the same time Eberlin is increasingly willing to defy the ecclesiastical hierarchy, suggesting a deeper immersion into Luther's writings and stronger commitment to his cause. However, Eberlin continues to portray reform at Wittenberg as an extension of that of the humanists, associated especially with Erasmus and increasingly with Hutten.[33]

After leaving Ulm, Eberlin probably first went to Switzerland. A character in one of his later pamphlets reports seeing him in Baden in the Swiss Aargau on St. Ulrich's day (4 July) 1521: "There he preached in a completely Lutheran sense against priests, monks, and nuns, much more earnestly than he had preached before."[34] Unfortunately, we have no direct information on Eberlin's other activities in Switzerland at this time. He may have been *en route* to visit Huldrych Zwingli in Zurich—there is evidence that he and Zwingli knew of each other when Eberlin was in Basel—but we have no confirmation that this was his intention or whether or not he reached his goal if it was. More likely he soon moved on to Lauingen on the Danube, where he spent the summer with his cousin Matthias Sigk.[35]

32. Brieger, *Aleander und Luther*, 106; see also Lucke, "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 54.

33. For a summary of scholarship on Hutten's influence on these and subsequent Confederates, see Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism*, 67–73.

34. *Klage der sieben frommen Pfaffen*, *JEvGS* 2:71.

35. Lucke, "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 20, first suggested that Eberlin's intended destination was Zurich. Strobel, "Nachricht von Johann Eberlin von Günzburgs Leben und Schriften," 369, speculated that Eberlin went from Baden to Basel and then Rheinfelden, although he likely confused Eberlin's activities in 1521 with those from a subsequent visit to the area in 1523. In his 1522 pamphlet dedicated to Sigk, *On the Abuse of Christian Liberty*, Eberlin recalls their conversations from the preceding summer when he stayed with Sigk in Lauingen. see *Vom Missbrauch christlicher Freiheit*, *JEvGS* 2:40.

During this time Eberlin penned four further *Confederates*, although the locations and precise order of their composition is unclear. *The Thirteenth Confederate* is an appeal to the Swiss for their help in defending the cause of the Gospel. This may be a printed version of the sermon delivered in Baden, although as Christian Peters argues, its content suggests that it could have been written at any point during the summer. Gottfried Geiger argued that this was the first pamphlet written after Eberlin had developed the idea of collecting his works together as *The Fifteen Confederates*. Peters counters, I believe more accurately, that this honor belongs to *The Ninth Confederate*, an appeal to the authorities of Germany to come to the aid of monks, nuns, and priests suffering under the unjust rules associated with their estate.[36] In both of these works Eberlin's denunciation of the evils perpetrated on Christendom by the monks and priests continues unabated. In *The Ninth Confederate* he focuses especially on the activities of the mendicant orders and here expands considerably a brief history of them contained in *The Eighth Confederate*.

Closely related to the themes of *The Ninth Confederate*, but also to the eighth's call for writing in the vernacular, are the contents of the sixth and fourteenth. Both consist of translations of parts of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, with comments on those passages by Eberlin. The sixth concentrates on Erasmus' pillorying of the preachers from the mendicant orders while the fourteenth reproduces his satire of abuses associated with the veneration of the saints. Eberlin takes the opportunity provided by the latter discussion to excoriate the mendicants' use of their patron saints to exploit the naivety of the laity.

Likely while he was staying with his cousin in Lauingen during July and August Eberlin wrote the next three *Confederates*, numbers ten, eleven, and twelve. Numbers ten and eleven are closely related, containing respectively the ecclesiastical and secular statutes of the imaginary land of Wellfaria brought to Germany by Psittacus (the parrot or "ear-blower"). In terms of both structure and content they invite comparison with Thomas More's *Utopia*, and are among the most popular and intensively studied of Eberlin's writings.[37] *The Twelfth Confederate*, an answer of the German

36. Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 183; Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 44–45. Lucke, "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 95–97, argues that Eberlin may have derived the idea of collecting his reforming pamphlets together under the guise of a sworn confederacy from the writings of Hutten.

37. Studies on Eberlin's alleged utopianism are legion, see, for example: Hitchcock, *Knights' Revolt*, 57–77; Cole, "Pamphlet and Social Forces," 195–205; idem, "Law and

people to the complaints brought to them by monks and nuns dissatisfied with life in the cloister, offers a general dispensation to all who wish to leave their orders and suggests comprehensive reform of the monastic life. It is unclear whether Eberlin was still in Lauingen or whether he had returned to Switzerland when he wrote *The Fifteenth Confederate*, a warning against the new, harmful teachings threatening Christendom. This work sets out to prove that scholastic theology, not the ideas of the Reformers, represents the novelty in the history of Christian teaching. In the middle of this discussion Eberlin mentions for the first time some of the central themes of the theology coming out of Wittenberg. Gottfried Geiger characterizes these as foreign bodies in the context of the cycle as a whole, and Wilhelm Lucke suggests on the basis of Eberlin's reference to "a little book on confession," possibly Luther's *On Confession* at press in the middle of August, that Eberlin had established contact with the Reformers in Wittenberg.[38]

Extant editions of *The Fifteen Confederates* indicate they were a publishing success both individually and as a collected cycle. After its initial publication by the Basel printer Pamphilius Gengenbach, the collected work was reprinted three times: once by Jörg Nadler in Augsburg and twice by Johann Eckhart in Speyer. Gengenbach also published individual editions of each of the *Confederates* and even second editions of numbers twelve and thirteen. By far the most popular *Confederate* was the seventh which ran through six editions: two by Gengenbach in Basel and one each from presses in Zurich, Augsburg, Speyer, and Zwickau.[39]

In *The Fifteenth Confederate*, Eberlin first began to address some of the central themes of Reformation theology. The remainder of his publishing

Order," 251–56; Bell, "Wolfaria," 122–39; Seibt, *Utopica*, 71–81; Vogler et al., *Illustrierte Geschichte*, 159–62; Ozment, *Reformation in the Cities*, 91–108; Gorceix, "L'Utopie en Allemagne," 14–29; Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 178–201; Plard, "L'Utopie Communiste," 387–403; Vogler, "Reformprogramm," 219–32; idem, "Von Eberlin zu Stiblinus," 143–50; Eliav-Feldon, *Realistic Utopias*; Heger *Eberlin und seine Vorstellungen*, 47–64, 111–16; Baldini, "Riforma luterana," 3–31; idem, "Nobili e contadini," 439–53; Bujňáková, "Eine Gesellschaftsutopie," 184–94; Opitz, "Social Vision of Eberlin"; Brinker-von der Heyde, "Neue Weltordnungen," 29–40; Baldini, "Istanze Utopiche," 43–58; Doku, "Lutheran Utopia,"; Rivoletti, "Strategie della finzione," 69–93; Lederer, "Welfare Land," 165–81.

38. Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 198; Lucke, "Die Entstehung der '15 Bundesgenossen,'" 91.

39. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg* 43–47 and 340–50, argues that Gengenbach published the editions of the individual *Confederates* as soon as Eberlin finished each of them, followed shortly by the cycle as a whole.

activity in many ways chronicles his increasing immersion in that theology, although the social, political, and economic concerns voiced in *The Fifteen Confederates* never entirely disappear from view in his subsequent writings.

Eberlin likely spent the winter in Switzerland, possibly with Konrad Pellikan, before he began making his way toward Wittenberg in early 1522. His later writings indicate more than passing knowledge of the reforming movement in Augsburg, suggesting that he stopped there on his way north. He may also have spent some time in Nuremberg, although the evidence for this is less firm.[40] In a pamphlet written in 1526, Eberlin reflected back on his arrival at the center of the Saxon Reformation, likely in early 1522: "Three and one-half years ago I came to Wittenberg and thought that I knew much in the Gospel, but, when I consulted with the Wittenbergers, I knew nothing."[41] Eberlin's presence in the city is confirmed by the inclusion of his name in the matriculation records of the university for the summer semester of 1522.[42] The only other information we have about Eberlin's activities at this time are two vague references from his later writings. In what was probably his first work published after his arrival in Wittenberg, he addressed the German bishops: "I have advised you in an innocent and friendly manner in a small book addressed to you which I wrote while bedridden in Leipzig four weeks ago."[43] And in a subsequent pamphlet he claimed that the bishop of Meersburg consulted with him during his stay in Leipzig.[44] Echoes of Eberlin's advice may be contained in *How Very Dangerous, that a Priest does not Have a Wife*, a thorough denunciation of compulsory clerical celibacy that draws on the writings of both Luther and Karlstadt on the subject. Christian Peters speculates, I believe correctly, that Eberlin intended this pamphlet as a means to recommend himself to the Wittenberg Reformers.[45]

It appears that after completing *How Very Dangerous*, Eberlin devoted himself to an intensive study of Reformation theology, which, as we have

40. Riggenbach, *Eberlin und seine Reformprogramm*, 80–81; *Eine freundliche Vermahnung an die Christen zu Augsburg*, *JEvGS* 2:137–52; *Klage der sieben frommen Pfaffen*, *JEvGS* 2:92.

41. *Warnung an die Christen der Burgauischen Mark*, *JEvGS* 3:275.

42. Förstmann, *Album Academia Vitebergensis*, 113.

43. *Wie gar gefährlich, so ein Priester kein Eheweib hat*, *JEvGS* 2:31.

44. *Trost der sieben frommen Pfaffen*, *JEvGS* 2:92.

45. *Wie gar gefährlich, so ein Priester kein Eheweib hat*, *JEvGS* 2:21–37; Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 56–59. For an overview of arguments about the respective influences of the writings of Luther and Karlstadt on this pamphlet, see Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism*, 98–103.

seen, he claimed was a novelty to him at the time of his arrival in Wittenberg.[46] Not surprisingly, when he again began writing, he focused on some of the central elements of that theology. *On the Abuse of Christian Liberty* was published in the early autumn of 1522. It indicates that not only was Eberlin wrestling with the fundamentals of Luther's theology, but also that he may have had some reservations about positions he had taken in his earlier writings. For example, in contrast to his earlier insistence on fundamental and immediate changes to the cloistered life and religious orders, in this work he includes cowls and tonsures among the externals over which enthusiasts (*Schwärmer*) fight to no avail.[47] Closely related to *On the Abuse of Christian Liberty* was Eberlin's next work, *Against the Imprudent, Unreasonable Departure of Many Cloistered*. At the outset Eberlin refers back to his earlier discussion of Christian liberty and claims that the large numbers of runaway monks and nuns have occasioned the present work.[48] Similar themes also reappear in *A Friendly, Encouraging Exhortation to the Christians at Augsburg*, in which Eberlin sought to convey to friends in the south the fruits of his theological study in Wittenberg.[49] Also during this time Eberlin translated from Latin into German the autobiographical history of Jacob Probst, the prior of the Augustinian convent in Antwerp who had close ties to Wittenberg. In February 1522 Probst recanted his reforming teachings under pressure from the authorities, but he subsequently returned to them and his case was for a while a central feature in polemics both for and against the Reformation.[50]

46. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 59. Martin Brecht has pointed to a break in Eberlin's publishing activity after the completion of *How Very Dangerous*; all subsequent pamphlets cite Luther's translation of the New Testament, which came off the presses around September 21, 1522, see Brecht, "Johann Eberlin von Günzburg in Wittenberg," 48.

47. *Vom Missbrauch christlicher Freiheit*, *JEvGS* 2:39–55, especially 51.

48. *Wider den unvorsichtigen, unbescheidnen Ausgang vieler Klosterleute*, *JEvGS* 2:119–36, especially 122–23. Although the only extant version of this pamphlet bears the publication date of 1524, references by Eberlin to a work of this nature in pamphlets from 1522 and 1523 indicate that it was completed on October 28, 1522, see *Wider den unvorsichtigen Ausgang*, *JEvGS* 2:121; *Eine freundliche, tröstliche Vermahnung an die Christen zu Augsburg*, *JEvGS* 2:151; *Wider die falschen Geistlichen, genannt die Barfüsser und Franziskaner*, *JEvGS* 3:87. See also Riggenbach, *Eberlin und seine Reformprogramm*, 200; Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin*, 82–83; *JEvGS* 3:xv; Brecht, "Johann Eberlin von Günzburg in Wittenberg," 50.

49. *Eine freundliche, tröstliche Vermahnung an die Christen zu Augsburg*, *JEvGS* 2:137–52.

50. *Eine schöne und klägliche Historie*, *JEvGS* 2:95–117.

Eberlin's subsequent works written during his first stay in Wittenberg can be divided into two distinct groups: anonymous pieces, often in fictional form, concentrating on pressing social concerns and signed works more explicitly theological in nature. In November and December 1522, Eberlin returned to the former format. In *Seven Devout but Disconsolate Priests Complain to One Another about Their Plight* seven new fictional characters discuss the predicaments facing godly clergy. The fifteen confederates then suggest solutions to the priests' problems in *The Consolation of the Seven Devout Priests*.[51] Closely related to these two pamphlets and written around the same time is *A New, and the Last, Statement of the Fifteen Confederates*.[52] In these works Eberlin cautions his readers to be judicious in their acceptance of some of the statements in *The Fifteen Confederates*. In the conclusion of *The Consolation of the Seven Devout Priests*, the fifteen confederates warn: "We ask that you read judiciously our first fifteen little books, which appeared among many in Basel in 1521, for not all things found there are articles of belief."[53] And *A New, and the Last, Statement of the Fifteen Confederates* points out the dangerous consequences of writing books on religious matters. It then concludes by announcing the retirement of the fifteen confederates and encouraging their readers to turn their attention to the Bible.[54]

After the retirement of the fifteen confederates and the seven devout priests, Eberlin returned to the format of the signed pamphlet in his own voice. One of the questions addressed in *A Little Book Which Answers Three Questions* is about the authority of a council to decide on matters of faith. This suggests that the book was written in early spring 1523 when plans for a general council in Germany were being proposed.[55] Shortly thereafter,

51. *Sieben fromme, aber trostlose Pfaffen klagen einer dem andern ihre Not*, *JEvGS* 2:57–77; *Trost der sieben frommen Pfaffen*, *JEvGS* 2:79–93. On dating these works, see Brecht, "Johann Eberlin von Günzburg in Wittenberg," 51–52; Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 92, 107–8.

52. *Letzter Bundesgenosse*, *JEvGS* 1:171–205.

53. *Trost der sieben frommen Pfaffen*, *JEvGS* 2:93.

54. *Letzter Bundesgenosse*, *JEvGS* 1:202–5.

55. *Ein Büchlein, worin auf drei Frage geantwortet wird*, *JEvGS* 2:153–69. During the Nuremberg *Reichstag*, convened on 17 November 1522, a proposal was put forward for a church council which would include representation for secular authorities. On 8 February 1523 this proposal was presented to the papal nuncio and on 6 March was proclaimed by imperial edict. In the meantime it became widely known through informal channels. See Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin*, 90–92; Heger, *Eberlin und seine Vorstellungen*, 26; and Brecht, "Johann Eberlin von Günzburg in Wittenberg," 52.

Eberlin wrote the first of two epistles to the citizens and council of the imperial city of Ulm, likely in preparation for a planned visit there in the summer of 1523. *A Short Written Report on Faith to the Citizens of Ulm* is dated 24 February 1523.[56]

Eberlin's' pamphlets written between the time of his arrival in Wittenberg and the spring of 1523 suggest that he had moved fully into the orbit of the Wittenberg Reformation. In the works in which he speaks with his own voice his goal is primarily to share with his readers the details of the Reformation theology he had encountered there. While he continues to address social issues associated with reform in the anonymous works cast in the voices of fictional characters, he tends to step back from some of the more radical and forceful statements of *The Fifteen Confederates*, and especially their criticism of members of the first estate. This trend seemed to reverse itself in the spring and summer of 1523.

In 1525 the Augsburg printer Heinrich Steiner published a pamphlet by Eberlin entitled *Against the Profaners of God's Creatures*. In it the anticlerical rhetoric developed in some of *The Fifteen Confederates* returns with full force, and Eberlin goes so far as to identify ordination with the mark of the apocalyptic beast.[57] Bernhard Riggenbach regarded this work as far too radical to have been written after Eberlin's arrival in Wittenberg. He suggested instead that it, too, had been written during Eberlin's convalescence in Leipzig, in support of Karlstadt, who had opted for an increasingly radical reforming trajectory in Wittenberg during Luther's stay at the Wartburg in late 1521 and early 1522, but first published by a member of the Karlstadtian party in 1525. Riggenbach's suggestion led to widespread speculation about the extent and duration of Eberlin's radical Karlstadtian phase.[58] More recently, however, Christian Peters has argued convincingly that this work was, in fact, written in mid-1523 in response to moves led by two Franciscans, Johann Fritzhans and Hans Seyler, to turn back the tide of reform in the city of Annaberg.[59]

Similar criticism of the first estate continues in *A Second True Admonition to the Council of Ulm*, written between 16 April and 23 May 1523.

56. *Ein kurzer schriftlicher Bericht des Glaubens, an die Ulmer*, *JEvGS* 2:171–92, especially 174.

57. *Wider die Schänder der Creaturen Gottes*, *JEvGS* 2:1–19.

58. Riggenbach, *Eberlin und seine Reforprogramm*, 81–83, 97–110; Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin*, 52–62; Ahrens, "Gedanken Eberlins," 31n70; Geiger, "Die reformatorischen Initia Eberlins," 197–200; Heger, *Eberlin und seine Vorstellungen*, 23–24.

59. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 173–84.

Here Eberlin returns to his denunciation of the mendicant orders from *The Fifteen Confederates*, and he identifies the Dominicans and Franciscans as the main opponents of the Gospel in the city.[60] Eberlin's anti-mendicant polemics then reach a crescendo in *Against the False Religious known as the Bare-Footed Friars and Franciscans*, which was likely written between May and July. This work was part of a general campaign against the Franciscan order by its former members in the spring and summer of 1523, initiated, if not orchestrated, by Luther.[61]

While the pamphlet war against the Franciscans was still being waged, Eberlin left Wittenberg for a preaching tour of Switzerland and southern Germany.[62] Evidence of the message he preached survives in two works published during his travels: *A Splendid Mirror of the Christian Life* and a sermon on Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms preached in Rottenburg am Neckar.[63] Eberlin's ultimate destination was Ulm. He must have arrived in the city by the middle of October and begun preaching immediately. By the end of the month open conflict between him and local Dominicans led to his ouster from the city. Eberlin may then have visited his cousin Johann Jakob Wehe, the reforming priest in nearby Leipheim. Wehe's sermons were enjoying some popularity locally, including among the citizens of Günzburg, whose priest responded by having the magistrates throw several of them in jail. *The Bell Tower*, an anonymous pamphlet denouncing the actions of the priest and magistrates of Günzburg has been attributed to Eberlin, although his authorship is by no means a sure thing.[64] Eberlin probably next traveled to Nuremberg, before returning to Wittenberg in late autumn 1523.[65]

60. *Die andere getreue Vermahnung an den Rath von Ulm*, *JEvGS* 3:1–40.

61. *Wider die falschen Geistlichen, genannt die Barfüsser und Franziskaner*, *JEvGS* 3:41–88. On the anti-mendicant campaign and Eberlin's role in it, see Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism*, 1–36, 131–62.

62. Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg* 185–222 provides the best summary of this period of Eberlin's life. A less thorough summary in English of Eberlin's activities is available in Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism*, 201–11.

63. *Ein schöner Spiegel des christlichen Lebens*, *JEvGS* 3:97–109; *Predigt von zweierlei Reich, gehalten zu Rottenburg*, *JEvGS* 3:89–95.

64. *Der Glockenthurm*, *JEvGS* 3:111–24. The debate about Eberlin's authorship of this pamphlet has continued for over a century, see Riggenbach, *Eberlin und seine Vorstellungen*, 194–96; Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin,* 143–44; *JEvGS* 3:xxv; Leitzman, "Zu Eberlin von Günzburg," 277; Brecht, "Johann Eberlin von Günzburg in Wittenberg," 49n8; Laube, *Flugschriften* 2:937; Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 242.

65. Statements in *Ein freundliche Zuschreiben an alle Stände deutscher Nation*, *JEvGS* 3:125–45, suggest that it was possibly written in anticipation of the Reichstag scheduled

In Wittenberg he continued to write, in part reflecting on the experiences of his travels. *How a Servant of God's Word Should Conduct Himself*, first published in 1525 but likely written in March 1524, is dedicated to Eberlin's cousin Wehe and consists of instructions for an aspiring evangelical preacher. It encourages proceeding cautiously in matters of reform and suggests that the enthusiasts pose a greater threat to the cause of the Gospel than do the papists.[66] He also began work on *I Wonder that there is no Money in the Land*, which revives the character of Psittacus and the social concerns of *The Fifteen Confederates*. Modeled closely on Ulrich von Hutten's *The Robbers*, this work claims to be the written transcript of a conversation between Psittacus and three south German commoners about the reason for widespread poverty in a land so richly endowed by God. Much of the blame for this state of affairs Eberlin still lays on the shoulders of the clergy, but he continues to caution against the activities of the enthusiasts and enters into a detailed critique of the writing and publishing of books. Among those denounced as having foolish titles which mislead readers is *The Fifteen Confederates*.[67]

Statements in *I Wonder* suggest that it was written piecemeal in 1523 and early 1524, and that it was finished after Eberlin had moved to Erfurt. When exactly he arrived there is not completely clear. His next pamphlet, *A Sermon in Erfurt on Prayer* is the printed version of a sermon he claims he delivered on 1 May 1524. This work continues to exhibit Eberlin's concern with the activities of the enthusiasts and his desire for measured, orderly reform.[68] Although he claims to have preached regularly in Erfurt, and possibly may have been recommended for a clerical position there by Luther, Eberlin was unable to find fixed employment in the city.[69]

Eberlin also claimed to have played a role in stilling unrest associated with the Peasants' War in and around Erfurt in the spring of 1525.[70] He eventually left Erfurt in search of settled employment, applying unsuccessfully for a position in Rothenburg ob der Tauber and ultimately successfully

to convene there on 13 November.

66. *Wie sich ein Diener Gottes Worts in seinem Thun halten soll*, *JEvGS* 3:183–232.

67. *Mich wundert, dass kein Geld im Land ist*, *JEvGS* 3:147–81.

68. *Predigt zu Erfurt vom Gebet*, *JEvGS* 3:233–52.

69. *Mich wundert, dass kein Geld im Land ist*, *JEvGS* 3:166.

70. *Warnung an die Christen der Burgauischen Mark*, *JEvGS* 3:282–87. Radlkofer, *Johann Eberlin,* 513–15 found some confirmation of Eberlin's clalims. For a good summary of this period of Eberlin's life, see Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 279–91.

for one in the service of Duke George of Wertheim. In the support of his appeal for this position he wrote the last of his published works, *A Warning to the Christians of the Margraviate of Burgau*. Ostensibly a warning to Eberlin's friends and relatives not to heed those attempting to foment renewed rebellion, this pamphlet seeks to disassociate the Gospel from the events of the preceding year and to justify Eberlin's activities during the Peasants' War.[71]

Eberlin spent the next four years in the service of the Duke of Wertheim, first in the small parish of Remlingen and later in Wertheim itself. In the latter post he rose to prominence, being named superintendent and apparently becoming a close advisor of the Duke on religious matters. Unpublished writings from this period of his life indicate a strong interest in practical matters of reform and the establishment of a humanist educational program. However, Eberlin's position and influence came to an abrupt end with the death of Duke George on 17 April 1530. Further activity in Wertheim was impossible as a result of political pressures on the father of the deceased duke, Duke Michael, and Eberlin moved to a new position in the parish of Leutershausen. However, conflicts from his earlier activities followed him there and the last three years of his life were filled with strife. Throughout all this Eberlin's health continued to deteriorate, and he died in early autumn 1533.[72]

By any account, Eberlin's was an important voice in the early years of the Reformation. As such, it provides us with valuable information about the Reformation's message as it passed through the medium of popular pamphlets. One of the most striking features of Eberlin's writings is the fact that only gradually do many of the central themes of the new Wittenberg theology emerge in them. Only after he moved to Wittenberg and immersed himself in the theology of the movement there did he really begin to speak as we would expect a Protestant Reformer to speak. Luther and those associated with him do appear in Eberlin's earlier utterances, but there serve as beacons for the reform-minded in the German-speaking lands, associated more with addressing abuses in the church and society than with the finer

71. *Warnung an die Christen der Burgauischen Mark*, *JEvGS* 3:253–87.

72. A wealth of material has been published in German on Eberlin's last years, which is well summarized in Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg*, 292–314. Eberlin's unpublished writings from this period include the first German translation of Tacitus' *Germania*, supplemented with statements of other classical authors about the ancient Germans, and a treatise on the education of a prince. See Masser, *Ein zamengelesen bouchlin* and Baldini, *L'Educazione di un Principe Luterano*.

points of Reformation theology. Luther takes his place alongside Erasmus, Ulrich von Hutten and a host of other reformers, primarily from the ranks of the Renaissance humanists.

The subtitle of Christian Peters' biography identifies Eberlin as a Franciscan reformer, humanist, and conservative Reformer. *The Fifteen Confederates* occupy a crucial position in this evolution, chronicling his movement through the first two phases and his entry into the third. In the process, they give us a clear indication of how broadly reform could be conceived at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This is most obvious in the Wellfarian statutes of the tenth and eleventh *Confederates*, the first vernacular utopia of the age. Eberlin's later writings indicate that his growing connections to the Wittenberg Reformation led him to abandon or qualify some of his earlier enthusiasm and elements of his reforming agenda. However, they also indicate that his concern for social reform never disappeared entirely, even if *The Fifteen Confederates* were now to be read with caution.