

Here I Fall: A Blunder in Roland Bainton's *Here I Stand*¹

By Steve Perisho

ABSTRACT The Atla listserv ATLANTIS handles a lot of reference “stumpers.” One such, posted on behalf of a research librarian writing from the Polish National Library in late 2014, sparked the historico-textual investigations out of which these findings emerged. Flagged is a blunder in one of the most famous biographies of Martin Luther ever written: Roland Bainton's reproduction of an established forgery as “‘A Mighty Fortress’ in Luther's Hand”. But there is more to the story than just this response to the question first posed by Dr. Tomasz Ososiński. Uncovered is not just the eighty years of debate over authenticity that Bainton overlooked, but a statement (and no less than four reproductions) to the contrary in the very authority he cites. Why did his colleagues in Germany, who may have been the only ones to catch the gaff, do so very little to set the record straight, despite the extensive experience that they and their predecessors (including the duped scholar-librarians of the late 19th-century) had had with Luther forgeries? The paper concludes with a comment on the present impact of this (as yet still uncorrected) “fake news” in print and online.

Roland H. Bainton's much-beloved *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* was widely praised when it first appeared in 1950.² Herman Richard Klann might well have been speaking for Europe in addition to the Anglo-American sphere when he noted that “the reviewers were rarely less than commendatory, very often genuinely enthusiastic, and sometimes adulatory.”³ Winfred Ernest Garrison, a member of the jury that bestowed the \$7,500 Abingdon-Cokesbury Award for 1950, was among the latter:

One of Prof. Bainton's outstanding characteristics is that he can write history in what is, in the best sense, a ‘popular’ style without ever diverging by a hair's breadth from the historical truth which he has discovered by rigorously scholarly methods of research and the exercise of mature and dispassionate judgment. He never blurs the record by easy generalizations, or sacrifices accuracy to literary effectiveness. His conscience as a historian is almost supersensitive...in regard to seeing to it that no statement is made that does not have ample and exact documentary support.⁴

¹ I credit Dr. Tomasz Ososiński, of the Polish National Library, with putting me onto this investigation. Though I did the work on Roland Bainton referenced later by Dr. Ososiński, it was he who introduced me to the scholarship on Hermann Kyrieleis. Cf. Tomasz Ososiński, “Hermann Kyrieleis and His Forgeries of Luther's Manuscripts: A Case from the Polish National Library,” in *Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation / Cultural Impact of the Reformation: Kongressdokumentation Lutherstadt Wittenberg August 2017*, vol. 2, edited by Klaus Fitschen, Marianne Schröter, Christopher Spehr, and Ernst-Joachim Waschke, with the cooperation of Mathias Sonnleithner and Katrin Stöck, Leucorea-Studien zur Geschichte der Reformation und der Lutherischen Orthodoxie 37, 373–384 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018), which draws, from p. 383, on an earlier version of these Ososiński-prompted investigations then posted to my blog (<https://liberlocorumcommunium.blogspot.com/2014/12/here-i-fall-roland-bainton-on-mighty.html>). See also note 43, below.

² Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950).

³ Herman Richard Klann, “An American Picture of Martin Luther,” *The American Lutheran* 34 (1951): 242.

⁴ W. E. Garrison, review of *Here I Stand*, *Christian Century* 67, no. 40 (October 4, 1950): 1169.

An aspect of the book that its reviewers consistently praised was its approach to illustration. For Klann, who thought less of Bainton “the theologian,” this was “the achievement of Bainton the...artist”: “One of the unusual features of the book” was “the welding of text and illustrations...about one fourth of [which] were done by Bainton himself.”⁵ Paul Roth noted that “Scores of fascinating woodcuts and engravings—cartoons and lampoons, book, tract, and Bible pages, and portraits—adorn and enliven the text, a fine and enjoyable help to orienting the reader in the sixteenth century context.”⁶ For Ernst Benz, reviewing the German as well as the American edition, it was “precisely [his] familiarity with late-medieval and Reformation religious art, above all the domain of the woodcut” and copperplate engraving, that made it possible for Bainton to contribute “to his work about Luther,” “out of the depth of his collections” of specimens and personal artistic reproductions, “an absorbing [body of] illustrative material.”⁷ Thomas Caldecot Chubb thought him “excellent...illuminating and eloquent” on “Luther and music,” but concluded with a special “word [of praise]...for the book’s wealth of sixteenth-century illustrations.”⁸ According to J. V.-M. Pollet, the book was “not lacking in freshness and color,” for “well-chosen texts and quotations alternate agreeably, and the whole is enhanced by an appropriate imagery.”⁹ This was the opinion of Theodore Hoyer as well, who, having, like Garrison, testified to the honesty, fairness, and accuracy of the history, took care to note that “The illustrations are of special value” and judiciously employed.¹⁰ Even Herbert J. Clancy, a Catholic for whom *Here I Stand* was a biography that “by no means supplants Father Grisar’s,”¹¹ enthused over “the unusual illustrations, which...greatly enhance the book.”¹²

It is ironic, therefore, that at one point of illustration, at least, the great Yale church historian *did* allow a statement through that was seriously deficient in “documentary support.” Not only that, but almost no reviewers seem to have noticed this deficiency. And even the few Germans who did notice failed to draw attention to the problem. More to the point, the blunder was re-promulgated without modification as recently as 2015. It is an intriguing episode, involving the hymn for which Luther is best known, “Ein feste Burg.”

⁵ Klann, 243, 266.

⁶ Paul H. Roth, review of *Here I Stand*, *The Lutheran Quarterly* 3 (1951): 225.

⁷ Ernst Benz, “Luther in amerikanischer Sicht,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 3 (1951): 364.

⁸ Thomas Caldecot Chubb, “The Soul of Luther,” *The New York Times Book Review*, November 19, 1950, p. 10.

⁹ J. V.-M. Pollet, “Interprétations de Luther dans l’Allemagne contemporaine,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 27, no. 2 ([April] 1953): 153.

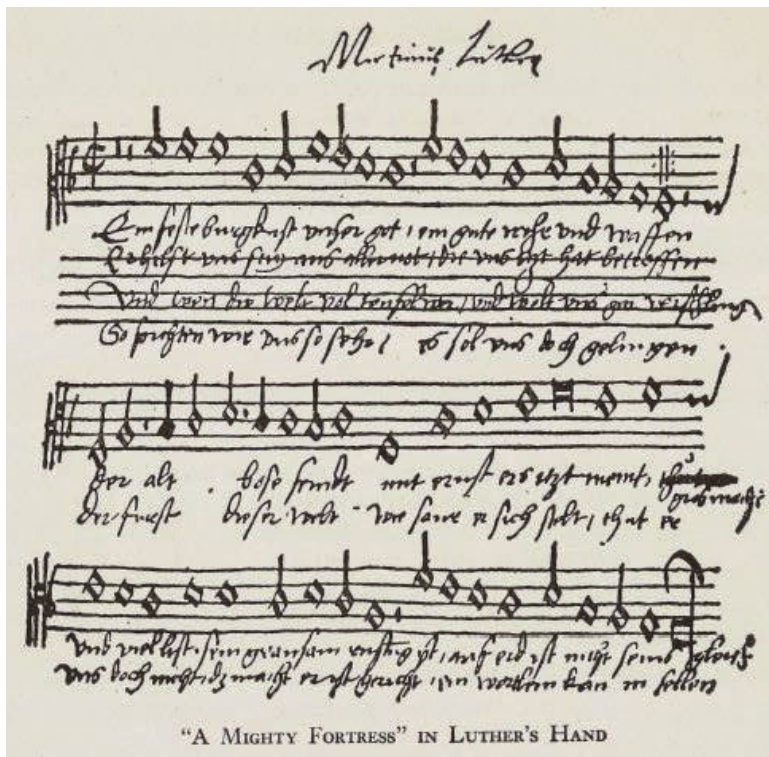
¹⁰ Theo[dore] Hoyer, review of *Here I Stand*, *Concordia Theological Monthly* 22, no. 3 (March 1951): 220.

¹¹ Hartmann Grisar, *Luther* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1911–1912).

¹² Herbert J. Clancy, review of *Here I Stand*, *Catholic Historical Review* 37, no. 3 (October 1951): 304.

The text that would become chapter 21 of *Here I Stand* appeared for the first time “inadvertently”¹³ in the September 1948 issue of *Church History* as “Luther’s Struggle for Faith,”¹⁴ and then, in 1950, in the *Festschrift für Gerhard Ritter*.¹⁵ In that version, Bainton closes with the words, “What wonder then that Luther, in the year of his deepest depression, composed ‘A Mighty Fortress is our God.’” On pp. 370–372 of the biography, however, also published in 1950, Bainton concludes with the following modifications and additions:

- in place of “‘A Mighty Fortress is Our God,’” the phrase “these lines”;
- the text of “Ein feste Burg” in an English translation, probably Bainton’s own; and
- the following image of a *manuscript* of “Ein feste Burg” set to music and captioned explicitly “‘A Mighty Fortress’ in Luther’s Hand”:



Unfortunately, the claim that this is a fragment of “‘A Mighty Fortress’ in Luther’s Hand” was severely lacking in “documentary support” at the time, and had been so for decades.

¹³ Roland Bainton, “Luther’s Struggle for Faith,” in *Studies on the Reformation*, Collected Papers in Church History, series two (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 13.

¹⁴ Roland Bainton, “Luther’s Struggle for Faith,” *Church History* 17, no. 3 (September 1948): 193–206.

¹⁵ Roland Bainton, “Luther’s Struggle for Faith,” in *Festschrift für Gerhard Ritter zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Richard Nürnberger (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1950), 232–243.

It was severely lacking at the time, because the only work Bainton cites in support of the claim, Charles Schneider's *Luther, poète et musician*,¹⁶ says just the opposite, and in italics no less. Citing the manuscript's first publication in France, on p. 54 of Daniel Courtois' 1887 *La musique sacrée dans l'église réformée de France* (71),¹⁷ Schneider goes on to say (referencing a comment supposedly by Luther himself, clearly excluded from *Here I Stand* by Bainton, but present at the head of each of the four reproductions in Schneider),

The chorale is therefore dedicated by Johann Walter to Luther — and not... the reverse. [An] important fact that those who have [on the basis of this manuscript] sworn that ["Ein feste Burg"] itself was composed in [(était de)] 1530 have not, it seems, noticed. The German text is clear, completely clear: it is not a question of the very manuscript of Ein' feste [sic] Burg, but rather of a copy that Walter made and that he [then] offered [back] to the Reformer. «Hat myr verehret meyn guter Freund Herr Johann Walther...».¹⁸

Again, the superscription Schneider quotes, plainly visible on pp. 71, 72, 100 and 164 of his book, was largely excluded from *Here I Stand*. All that remains of it *there* is the signature "Martinus Luther". Here it is as it appears no less than four times in Bainton's own source:



¹⁶ Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 409; Charles Schneider, *Luther, poète et musician, et les Enchiridien de 1524* (Geneva: Edition Henn, 1942).

¹⁷ Daniel Courtois, *La musique sacrée dans l'église réformée de France: Thèse présentée à la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Paris pour obtenir le grade de bachelier en théologie et soutenue publiquement le 25 juillet [(on at least one copy corrected to 7 décembre)] 1887* (Strasbourg: G. Fischbach, 1887).

¹⁸ Schneider, 73. Note that upon its very first appearance in print in 1871 the so-called "Luther-Codex" was already, contra those against whom Schneider was directing this comment in 1942, being described as a "handwritten collection of spiritual songs and compositions...dedicated to [Luther] by the *Kapellmeister* of the Electorate of Saxony, Johann Walther" (subtitle of the work by Otto Kade, below).

The crucial point is that Schneider is under no illusions as to the provenance of the *manuscript of the hymn*. Though he does not question the authenticity of the *superscription* largely omitted by Bainton, he is correcting an apparently common misreading of it. “Luther,” says Schneider (but without my quotation marks), is simply noting that the manuscript (a *copy* of his text) was written out and dedicated to him by his “good friend” the “composer” Johann Walter.¹⁹ Though citing Schneider, Bainton presents him as saying the opposite of what Schneider had himself concluded eight years before—and then Bainton omits the very portion of the superscription that would have raised questions in the mind of anyone with a reading knowledge of German.²⁰

Yet not even the *complete* inscription had anything to do with *this manuscript of “Ein feste Burg”* (in Walter’s hand) in particular, as Bainton seems to have thought. Bainton (1950) was drawing upon Schneider (1942), who was drawing upon Courtois (1887). But Courtois was dependent upon Koenig (1881),²¹ who got his information from [the absolutely first appearance of this manuscript in print in 1871, Otto Kade’s *Eine feste burgk ist vnser got*](#).²² And in fairness, all of *those* reproductions (I don’t say commentary), with the exception of the very first in Kade,²³ allow one who has not seen the original and is not reading carefully to conclude that the superscription was affixed to the Walter copy of “Ein feste Burg” in particular rather than the codex as a whole. Yet [the digitization of the manuscript \(Hs 83795 \(earlier M 369 m\) in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum](#) makes it clear, *as did Kade himself in 1871*, that while [the inscription occurs on “Seite Ia” \(=“Aufnahme 5”\), the Walter copy of “Ein feste Burg” occurs without it on “Seite 154v” \(=“Aufnahme 316”\), over 310 pages later](#).



¹⁹ As indicated in note 36, below, the scholarship on the manuscript in question had often admired the perspicacity of the forger. Unlike Bainton the specialist (among others who should have known better), the unlearned forger had somehow known to—or intuited, or stumbled fortuitously into a recognition that he must—attribute the handwriting of the hymn or setting to Walter rather than Luther.

²⁰ Following me in this, Ososiński says, however, only that Bainton “misunderstood Schneider’s text” (383).

²¹ See [p. 53 ff. of Courtois](#), who treated the manuscript as Walter’s (56, 57; cf. on p. 53, however, “la découverte du manuscrit même de Luther”!), but the inscription “en tête du manuscrit” as “une brève note de la main même de Luther” (53). At the bottom of that same page, Courtois cites [Robert Koenig, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 10th ed. \(Bielefeld & Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1881\), 222 ff.](#), who had taken the same position: the manuscript was in Walter’s hand, but the signed note of receipt at the head of it, in Luther’s.

²² Subtitled [Der neu aufgefundene Luther-Codex vom Jahre 1530: Eine von dem grossen Reformator eigenhändig benutzte und ihm von dem Kursächsischen Kappellmeister Johann Walther verehrte handschriftliche Sammlung geistlicher Lieder und Tonsätze](#). Dresden: Schrag’sche Verlags-Anstalt. Heinrich Klemm, 1871.

²³ Though Kade does place the two plates on successive leaves before his table of contents, he more than once distinguishes between the “Titelblatt” on which the inscription occurs and the “Blatt-Nummer” (156) on which the hymn is to be found.

However Bainton (or his editors) may have handled *Schneider* in 1950,²⁴ the “Kade Luther-Codex” (as it was often called) was suspect from the very beginning, 80 years before its copy of “Ein feste Burg” was appropriated by Bainton as “‘A Mighty Fortress’ in Luther’s Hand”. Indeed, Otto Kade himself felt it necessary to argue for the authenticity of both codex and inscription already in 1871 (indeed, Kade spent eight pages doing so, despite having opened with the words “The authenticity of this Codex I consider *completely indubitable*”),²⁵ and questions about the authenticity of both had been posed by others from as early as 1873, if not before. In his review of the book by Kade, Wilhelm Bode dismissed *the two taken as a unit* for reasons that would today count against *the inscription only*. And in his brief postscript to the 1873 review by Bode, Robert Eitner went much further than scholars would today, to claim that the Staats-Archiv in Königsberg had confirmed that only a single Lied contained in the Kade Luther Codex had been demonstrably inscribed by Walter himself,²⁶ and thus disparaged not just the inscription, but the entire manuscript to boot.²⁷ Hugo Holstein, writing in 1884, cited an article published ten years earlier in support of his observation that “The authenticity of this musical Luther relic has been accepted by many, questioned by others. In particular, the authenticity of the inscription is not beyond question.”²⁸ Max Herrmann assumed that the “Luther” inscription was genuine. Yet even he was very far from unaware that its authenticity had been under dispute for more than three decades prior to the delivery of his famous lecture of 1905.²⁹ The 1909 edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, too, was, like Courtois in 1887 and Koenig in 1881, taken in by the inscription and its date,³⁰ but in 1917, Wilhelm Lucke, having noted that doubts about the Kade Luther Codex had been circulating from the moment it first burst onto the scene in 1871, echoed Holstein and others (including Kade’s own son Reinhard, a

²⁴ What drove this may have been the desire to introduce into chapter 21 (originally the academic article of 1948) the visual appeal for which the biography as a whole (in progress since roughly 1942) was, upon publication, so very widely praised. On the time it took to produce the biography, see Ronald H. Bainton, *Roly: Chronicle of a Stubborn Non-Conformist* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Divinity School, 1988), 98–99.

²⁵ *Kade, Eine feste burgk ist vnser got*, 9. The authenticity of the inscription is discussed on pp. 12 ff., but there, too, Kade opens with the claim that learned men familiar with Luther’s handwriting have pronounced it orally and in writing “indubitably Luther’s own”.

²⁶ [Wilhelm] Bode [Sr.] and Rob[ert] Eitner, Recension of *Eine feste burgk ist vnser got: Der neu aufgefundenen Luther-Codex vom Jahre 1530* (1871), by Otto Kade, *Monatshefte für Musikgeschichte* 5 (1873): 131–133.

²⁷ Though Eitner couldn’t resist stressing how very little Kade had really been able to claim for the authenticity of his Luther-Codex, published only the year before (Robert Eitner, “Eine Passion von Johann Walther von 1552,” *Monatshefte für Musik-Geschichte* 4 (1872), Beilage, 60), Kade was later to turn Eitner-on-his-own-little-Auszug against himself (Otto Kade, *Die ältere Passionskomposition bis zum Jahre 1631* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1893). For more on the authenticity of the *Ein auszug der Historien des leidens vnsers herrn Jesu Christi* that Eitner had briefly owned (now Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Mus.ms.autogr.Walther, J. 1), see Konrad Ameln and Carl Gerhardt, *Johann Walther und die ältesten deutschen Passionshistorien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939), 10–14, apparently an offprint of the original in *Monatsschrift für Gottesdienst und christliche Kunst* 44 (1939).

²⁸ Hugo Holstein, “Der lieder- und Tondichter Johann Walther,” *Archiv für Litteraturgeschichte* 12 (1884): 197.

²⁹ Max Herrmann, “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott”: Vortrag gehalten von Max Herrmann in der Gesellschaft für deutsche Literatur zu Berlin und mit ihrer Unterstützung herausgegeben mit sechs Tafeln und einem bibliographischen Anhang (Berlin: B. Behr’s Verlag, 1905), 7, 8, 14, and 23. For more on the famous Kyrieleis Luther forgeries and the fate of Max Herrmann under the Nazis, see Ronny Kabus, “Das protestantischste aller Lieder, ein Lutherhandschriftenfälscher und das Schicksal eines deutschen Juden,” *Schriftenreihe der Staatlichen Lutherhalle Wittenberg*, Heft 4 (1988), 41–46. For an important revision of the list of Kyrieleis forgeries created by Herrmann (pp. 26 ff.), see Manfred Koschlig, “Widmungsexemplare Martin Luthers: Kyrieleis fecit (1893–96),” *The Philobiblon* 14, no. 4 (December 1970): 217–258. According to Ososiński (382), not even the Koschlig list is likely exhaustive.

³⁰ *Hymns Ancient and Modern for Use in the Services of the Church with Accompanying Tunes: Historical Edition* (London: William Clowes and Sons, Ltd., 1909), lxx–lxxi. I am indebted to Chris Fenner of the Hymnology Archive (<https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/ein-feste-burg/>) for this reference. Though my blog post of 23 December 2014 (an early draft of what became this article) appears in Fenner’s bibliography, he unfortunately follows this 1909 edition of *HAM* in taking the date of 1530 forged by Kyrieleis at face value.

musicologist and historian in his own right who had examined the manuscript itself before it vanished in the wake of his father's death) in distinguishing between an authentic 16th-century manuscript and an evidently bogus inscription.³¹

Most significantly, red flags had been planted in the standard critical edition of Luther's Works from 1923 at the very least. In the *Weimarer Ausgabe* of Luther's *Lieder*, published that year, Lucke returned to the subject of the *Notenhandschrift* that was to dupe Bainton twenty-seven years later, and offered a series of warnings. Writing in part to counteract a "more recent" resurgence in the reputation of the inscription,³² he reiterated what he had said in 1917, but this time turned the tide for good, such that the judgment he handed down in [WA 35 \(1923\)](#) should probably have been, for Bainton in 1950, decisive: "Since W. Lucke's statements in [the 35th volume of the Weimar Luther \(WA\) edition \(1923\), pp. 85 ff.](#), it has been considered incontrovertible that" what we have on the title page of the Kade Luther Codex (at that point, too, still missing³³) is "a forgery."³⁴ Four years later, Otto Albrecht, [on p. 290 of WA 48 \(1927\)](#), the authoritatively critical edition of the genuine but also "uncertain, erroneous, [or] forged...Bible and book inscriptions of Luther," reversed the judgment he had handed down in 1898,³⁵ itself one of the "more recent" rehabilitations of the Kade Luther Codex that Lucke had sought to counter in WA 35:

³¹ Wilhelm Lucke, "Aus meinen Voruntersuchungen zur Ausgabe von Luthers Liedern," *Lutherstudien zur 4. Jahrhundertfeier der Reformation veröffentlicht von den Mitarbeitern der Weimarer Lutherausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1917), 82.

³² [WA 35 \(1923\), 85–86](#). For examples of the "neueren Literatur" according the superscription "eine vornehmere Stellung," Lucke reached as far back as 1882, a mere 11 years after the sensation-arousing appearance of the book by Kade.

³³ WA 35 (1923), 86.

³⁴ Carl Gerhardt. *Die Torgauer Walter-Handschriften: eine Studie zur Quellenkunde der Musikgeschichte der deutschen Reformationszeit*. Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1949.

³⁵ O. Albrecht, "Die von Luther bestätigte Naumburger Gottesdienstordnung Medlers," *Monatsschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst* 3 (1898): 81–89.

The words on the title page of the so-called Kade Luther-Codex (more precise details at [\[WA\] 35 \(1923\), 85–87](#))—they are no dedication, but an acknowledgement of a dedication [already] effected—exemplify certainly not Luther’s own hand; whether they are an old copy or a new forgery, and what the value of this lost musical manuscript, considered apart from this remark on its title [page], is, have not yet been clarified.³⁶

³⁶ Albrecht thus makes four claims: 1) the handwriting of the inscription is not Luther’s; 2) the intent of the inscriber (whether to preserve or deceive) is unascertainable; 3) the codex *bearing* the inscription has since vanished; and 4) the historical value of the said codex (considered apart from the inscription that it at some point attracted) is unknown. As we have seen, 3) Albrecht was, like Lucke before him, simply *ignorant* of the whereabouts of [the original](#), which, according to Markus Jenny, had been acquired by the Germanisches Nationalmuseum by 1893 (“427 Johann Walter übertrug Luthers Musikanschauung in die Praxis,” p. 321, in “XI. Kirchenlied, Gesangbuch und Kirchenmusik,” pp. 293–322, in *Martin Luther und die Reformation in Deutschland: Ausstellung zum 500. Geburtstag Martin Luthers* veranstaltet vom Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, ed. Gerhard Bott (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1983), to which I was directed by Daniela Meidlinger, of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum), as indeed Carl Gerhardt was saying (though without specifying a date) in 1949. And Blankenburg, writing in 1991, claims 4) that its value “for Walt(h)er studies [is, unlike the forged Luther superscript,] of great significance” (Walter Blankenburg, *Johann Walter: Leben und Werk, aus dem Nachlaß herausgegeben von Friedhelm Brusniak* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1991), 21; see also 255). What is more, twelve years before Bainton’s death in 1984 and almost 40 years before the Hendrickson reprint of *Here I Stand* in 2015, WA 48 was updated by a Revisionsnachtrag. And this doesn’t just agree 1) that the inscription is not “in Luther’s Hand”; unlike Albrecht, it 2) comes down firmly on the side of an intent to deceive. The inscription isn’t just “dubious” or “uncertain”; it is most definitely “false” or “forged”: “The words on the title page are now proven to be incontestably a forgery” (WA 48 Revisionsnachtrag (Weimar: Böhlau, 1972), 138 at no. 290). Markus Jenny, describing the Kade Luther-Codex (or “Tenor-Stimmbuch aus der Torgauer Kantorei”) for the above-mentioned Germanisches Nationalmuseum catalog in 1983, claims that the idea for a forged acknowledgement-of-gift on the part of “Martinus Luther” could only have occurred to a late-19th-century owner who “knew or guessed” that the volume itself contained numerous authentic entries in Walter’s own hand (321; cf. Gerhardt, *Die Torgauer Walter-Handschriften*, 13: “The forger of the inscription had therefore enjoyed an astonishing measure of learning, instinct, or luck”). This (pre- as well as) post-Bainton scholarly consensus as to inauthenticity (for example the now-common distinction between 1) authentic 16th-century Walter codex (tenor part-book) and 2) forged 19th-century “Luther” acknowledgement-of-gift) appears also in an essay by Joachim Stalman published in 2013: “The authenticity of the mark of possession was disputed early [on] and ultimately refuted by [both] Luther and Walter research. Forgery has been the consensus since Carl Gerhardt’s 1949 examination of the Torgau Walter manuscripts at the [very] least...such that it is now clearly a question of a [tenor] part-book from Walter’s precentorship library” (“‘Die Music braucht Gott stets also beim heiligen Evangelio’ - Bleibende Spuren des Torgauer Erzkantors in der evangelischen Kirchemusik,” in *Johann Walter: Torgau und die evangelische Kirchenmusik*, Sächsische Studien zur älteren Musikgeschichte 4, ed. Matthias Herrmann (Altenburg: Verlag Klaus-Jürgen Kamprad, 2013), 35–45, page beginning “Ausgang des 15. Jahrhunderts an (1868)”).

Not surprisingly, then, others continued to issue warnings throughout the near quarter-century between 1927 and 1950. Friedrich Blume, for example, said of the Kade Luther Codex in 1931 that “the entry on the title page is probably inauthentic.”³⁷ Wilibald Gurlitt—whose 112-page article on Johannes Walter published 17 years before *Here I Stand* reproduced the “two receipts” in Walter’s hand that made it possible for Ameln and Gerhardt to determine that Walter’s was (as the forger had intuited) the principal hand in the Kade Luther Codex—seems to have fallen for the *inscription*, but at least not the *date* it bore.³⁸ To the reasons for considering it “unecht” given by Lucke and Albrecht in 1923 and 1927 respectively, Ameln and Gerhardt, writing in 1939, added several of their own,³⁹ grounded, probably, in an examination of the original manuscript rendered possible by its rediscovery in the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* in approximately 1935.⁴⁰ And Marcus van Crevel re-summarized much of this “long-standing controversy” on pp. 100–101 of a book he published in 1940, concluding that the so-called Kade Luther Codex was of no value for *Luther* studies.⁴¹

On the indispensable book by Gerhardt himself, published on the eve of the appearance of *Here I Stand*, I have already drawn a great deal throughout. Here I shall simply mention the nine-point indictment he provides by way of his own personal summary of the state of the question as to the inauthenticity of the inscription in 1949.⁴²

With this eighty-year tradition of largely native scholarship in their upstream, the Germans were not so easily taken in. As Dr. Tomasz Ososiński was the first to point out,⁴³ Otto Schlisske, whose *Handbuch der Lutherlieder* Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht had published in 1948, tells of having “received from one of the most renowned of German publishing houses [the] following letter:”

Dear Herr Dr. Schlißke!

At present we are preparing the German edition[s] of [some] recent American works of scholarship on Luther [(die deutsche Ausgabe neuerer amerikanischer Lutherforschungen)]. In one of the original editions in English [here] before us is found an illustration with the subscript “A Mighty Fortress” — in Luther’s Hand’. The university professor preparing the German edition wrote me recently [to say that] though he is no hymnologist, even he, as a church historian, knows that the year of the origin of Luther’s ‘Ein feste Burg...’⁴⁴ remains highly contested still today[, and that] to this point he had also never heard anything but

³⁷ Friedrich Blume, *Die evangelische Kirchenmusik*, Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft 10, ed. Ernst Bücken (New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1931), 23–24, 95.

³⁸ Wilibald Gurlitt, “Johannes Walter und die Musik der Reformationszeit,” *Lutherjahrbuch* 15 (1933): 36n1.

³⁹ Ameln and Gerhardt, *Johann Walter*, 1–2n3.

⁴⁰ Gerhardt, *Die Torgauer Walter-Handschriften*, 6–7; Ameln and Gerhardt, *Johann Walter*, 1–2n3.

⁴¹ Marcus van Crevel, *Adrianus Petit Coclico: Leben und Beziehungen eines nach Deutschland emigrierten Josquinschülers* (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1940), 100–101.

⁴² Gerhardt, *Die Torgauer Walter-Handschriften*, 12–13.

⁴³ Dr. Tomasz Ososiński, doing research into the Kyrieleis forgery owned by the Polish National Library (Biblioteka Narodowa), stumbled across this reference in Schlisske, and wrote the Rev. Dr. Thomas Johnson of the Center of Lutheran Studies at the Claremont School of Theology on 9 December 2014, thinking that he might be able to identify the American in question. Dr. Johnson forwarded the inquiry on to his librarian, Dr. Mark G. Bilby, who posted it to ATLANTIS, the listserv of the Atla. It was I who thought to check *Here I Stand*.

⁴⁴ The question was whether the reference to “1530” in the inscription on the title page of Germanisches Nationalmuseum Hs 83795 should be invoked in debates over the date of the composition of “Ein feste Burg”.

that we know of no [extant] manuscript of a Luther hymn.⁴⁵ Yet in the foreign reviews of the American work in question [it] is especially stressed that in this one title in particular is utilized a great deal of source material that [the] Americans picked up in Germany after 1945. Since you, my dear Herr Doctor, as the author of the *Handbuch der Lutherlieder*, have been especially closely engaged with the origin, transmission, and history of the hymns of our reformer, I am hoping that you [will] be able to tell us most kindly where this piece comes from. Is it in fact a question of a genuine Luther manuscript?...

Schlisske then continues:

When I received this letter, I had, unfortunately, as a consequence of other pressing commitments, no time to concern myself with the [question whether any hitherto unknown] Luther manuscripts [had] surfaced in America. In my reply I [therefore] referred the publisher... to a paragraph in my *Handbuch der Lutherlieder* in which I had reported on the [late 19th-century] forgeries of Hermann Kyrieleis.⁴⁶ In addition I gave voice to the suspicion that some of these [Kyrieleis] forgeries had somehow made their way to America in the first years after the [Second World] War and now once again troubled the world. Upon the conclusion of a wider investigation by the German publishing house, a reproduction of th[is] supposedly

⁴⁵ This remains true today. See, for example, Gerhard Hahn and Helmut Lauterwasser, "362 Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," *Liederkunde zum evangelischen Gesangbuch* 3, no. 17 (2012): 63–75; Markus Jenny, *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge: vollständige Neuedition in Ergänzung zu Band 35 der Weimarer Ausgabe*, Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe der Werke Martin Luthers: Texte und Untersuchungen 4 (Köln & Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1985), 100–101, 247–249, and elsewhere; and Ulrich S. Leupold, ed., *Liturgy and hymns*, Luther's Works 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 283–285. These discuss only the earliest *printed* editions, some of which (even they!) are no longer extant.

⁴⁶ See p. 108.

original Luther manuscript was abandoned.⁴⁷

The publisher was Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, and the “*Hochschulprofessor*” (translator) was church historian D. Hermann Dörries, of Göttingen (1895–1977). An examination of *Hier Stehe Ich: das Leben Martin Luthers*, as translated by Prof. Dörries,⁴⁸ confirms that the image of “‘A Mighty Fortress’ in Luther’s Hand” was quietly dropped.

Yet when Prof. Dörries reviewed the English original in the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* in 1951,⁴⁹ he did not mention the gaff. Did he pass over it out of friendship? Bainton had been instrumental in the resurrection of that journal after the Second World War,⁵⁰ and he was serving on its Board of Editors at the time. Indeed, his “The *Querela Pacis* of Erasmus, Classical and Christian Sources” appeared in that same issue, the first to be published by the American Society for Reformation Research (1947–) in formal cooperation with the

⁴⁷ Otto Schlisske, *Die verräterische Tinte: Kriminalisten auf den Spuren Luthers* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1958), 90–91 (the Epilogue). In the paragraph that follows, Schlisske tells us what prompted him to write *Die verräterische Tinte*, speaking, incidentally, to the potential significance of my own findings: “Since then, the[se] extraordinarily valuable works of American scholarship on Luther have been translated into even more languages. In this connection I came to realize that [it was] precisely the image of Luther’s ‘handwritten draft of the hymn “Ein feste Burg...”’ [that] was [being] sensationally [over-]valued. [It was] this that prompted me to revisit again in depth the superb investigations conducted 50 years ago by Max Herrmann” (91–92). Whether there really was, as Schlisske seems to imply, a connection between 3) the forgery of Kyrieleis exposed by Herrmann and 2) the much earlier forgery at the head of the Kade Luther Codex remains unclear. But the fact that 2) the latter was a forgery was *not*—and *should* therefore have raised at least *doubts* in Bainton’s mind.

As for the supposed connection between the two, another contender for a holograph of “Ein feste Burg” had indeed been 3) the (by contrast notation-free) Hermann Kyrieleis forgery discredited by Max Herrmann in 1905. Herrmann says on p. 23 of his lecture that he turned up a couple of pages from the book by Kade among the evidence confiscated from the Kyrieleis home and attached to the acts of the Kyrieleis trial of 1898 (which were later destroyed in the bombing of Dresden, more than two years after Herrmann himself died of bladder cancer (on 17 November 1942) while confined to Theresienstadt, thus avoiding the 16 May 1944 transfer to and murder at Auschwitz later suffered by his wife (Kabus, 45; [Todesfallanzeige, Ghetto Theresienstadt, 17 November 1942, Database of Digitized Documents, holocaust.cz](#)). On p. 13 of his book, Gerhardt considers this evidence that the superscript that duped Bainton, the one at the head of the Johann Walter “Luther-Codex” first published by Otto Kade in 1871, if not actually perpetrated by (a much younger) Kyrieleis himself, served as one of his “Vorlage”. And Koschlig, on pp. 224, 242, and 244 (Abb. 10) of the important article he published in 1970, follows them both in this, calling it Kyrieleis’ “Textmuster”: “Thus, the forger was probably duped by a forger!” (Koschlig, 224; cf., on all this, Ososiński, 378, 382–383). Yet Koschlig also argued, against Albrecht at WA 48 (1927), 289–290 (no. 5), that 1) the loose leaf inserted at the back of a Luther Bible published in 1534 and bearing a fake Luther dedication to a “Herr von Reuß-Greiz” was the model for 2) the inscription imposed by a second forger on the Kade Codex (Koschlig, 231n11). If Koschlig is right, then 4) Bainton, too, ignoring the rejection of his caption twice present in the source he himself cites (i.e. Schneider), was, like Kyrieleis himself, deceived by 2) a forger (not Kyrieleis) himself deceived by 1) a forger (Kyrieleis according to Albrecht, writing in 1927 ([WA 48 \(1927\), 289–290](#)) and following Thiele and Milchsack; but *not* Kyrieleis according to Koschlig, writing in 1970).

WA 48 (1927), by contrast, rejected Koschlig’s interpretation, considering it obvious that 2) the Kade forgery and 1) the Reuß-Greiz forgery “stem...from different unknown hands” (no. 289 f. on p. 138). Yet if we assume that the hand on which 2) the Kade forger relied was the hand of *a* forger, then WA 48 Revisionsnachtrag wasn’t reducing the *number* of forgeries in that one single line of descent.

Kyrieleis himself used or invoked the text of “Ein feste Burg” in at least nine of *his* forgeries (Koschlig, 227, 255 (under “Eyn fest Burgh,” where there are eight), and 256 (where the ninth appears among the 23 free-standing pages listed by J. van den Gheyn in 1898)). Indeed, this was a major red flag already for Georg Buchwald in 1896. For Buchwald, “the height of audacity” on the forger’s part was the fact that autograph copies or portions of no less than four different Luther hymns had suddenly surfaced in three, three, two, and (in the case of “Ein feste Burg”) two copies respectively, each one of each set craftily hawked in a *different* European city, the great libraries and cultural institutions targeted being located in Milan, Munich, and Vienna. And that despite the fact that “To my knowledge we possess not a single hymn by Luther in [an] original manuscript” ([Georg Buchwald, with Otto August Schulz, “Ein unerhörter Schwindel mit Lutherautographen,” Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen 13 \(1896\): 512!](#))

⁴⁸ Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952.

⁴⁹ Dörries, review of *Here I Stand*, 265–266.

⁵⁰ Miriam Usher Chrisman, “In Memoriam,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 76 (1985): 5.

founding *Verein für Reformationsgeschichte* (1883–). What is more, Bainton and Dörries were, not surprisingly, close friends. “Among the colleagues whom we met in Göttingen” on our “Quaker Mission to Postwar Germany” in 1948,⁵¹ says Bainton,

were Peukert, Wolf, and Gogarten. With the Dörries family we formed a friendship terminated only by death. Their children later stayed with us in the States, as did Professor and Frau Dörries when he gave the Terry lectures at Yale. He translated my Luther, and I his Constantine.⁵²

Bainton impressed Dörries’ graduate students by reading Luther in Latin and translating him into German along with the best of them, and “Dörries overwhelmed [Bainton] by giving [him] a first edition of one of Luther’s tracts.” Indeed, the friendship with Dörries merited one of Bainton’s famous sketches:⁵³



Herman Dörries

Though my search for reviews has not been exhaustive,⁵⁴ I do not recall encountering a single reviewer in any language who drew any attention to this howler. Thanks to Dr. Ososiński, we know from Schliske that Dörries caught it, but Dörries seems to have been hesitant to say anything about that in print. Could he have left it to his Göttingen colleague D. Dr. Erich Roth, a specialist on the Reformation in Transylvania and the Reformation-era doctrine of the sacraments, to drop the hint? Prof. Roth, reviewing the translation for the [May] 1951 issue of the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, did, after all, observe that the translator “has...quietly corrected small [but] substantive blunders”.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Bainton, *Roly*, 111.

⁵² *Constantine and Religious Liberty*, trans. Roland H. Bainton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

⁵³ Bainton, *Roly*, 121–122, 110.

⁵⁴ Let alone footnotes and passing comments in the Luther scholarship published after 1950; let alone the argument from silence. As for “my search for reviews,” I have contented myself with tracking down those listed in Cynthia Wales Lund, *A Bainton Bibliography* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2000), 133–135.

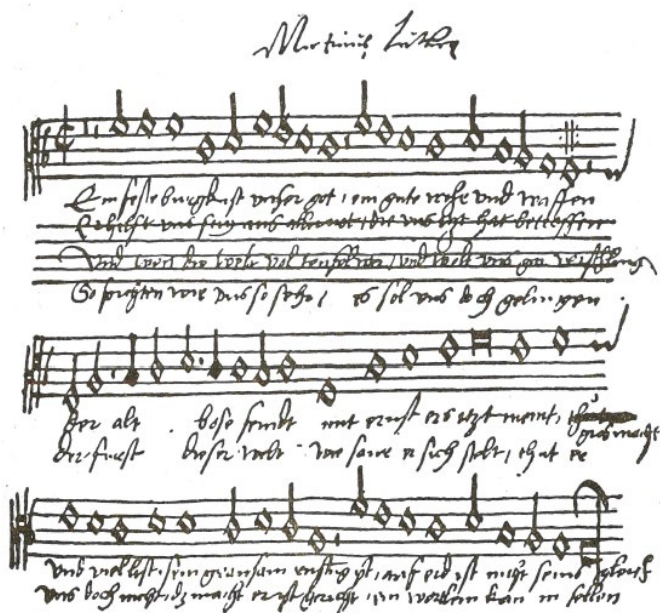
⁵⁵ Erich Roth, review of *Here I Stand*, *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 77, no. 5 ([May] 1951): col. 294. Cf. Pollet, “Interprétations de Luther,” 153.

What the Germans caught and corrected in the early 1950s (but drew very little—if any—attention to)⁵⁶ was not caught by others. The Argentinians reproduced it in 1955,⁵⁷



Manuscrito de Lutero de "Castillo fuerte".

the Greeks in 1959,⁵⁸



*Ιδιόγραφο του Λουθήρου «Ένα ισχυρό Φρούριο».

⁵⁶ Apparently the Poles followed the Germans in this. See now Ososiński, 384.

⁵⁷ Lutero, trans. Raquel Lozada de Ayala Torales, as rev. A. F. Sosa (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1955), 420.

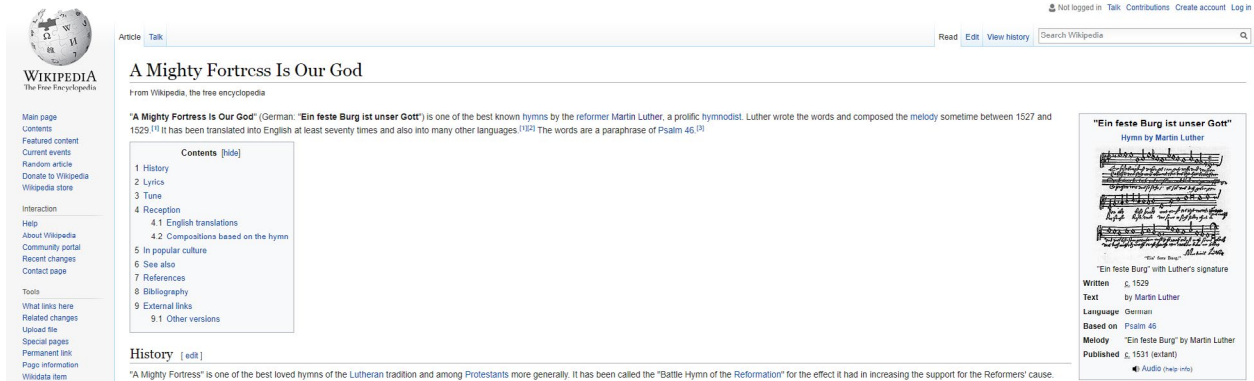
⁵⁸ *Edō stekomai* = (Here I stand): Martinos Louthēros: *hē zōē tou, to ergon tou, hē didaskalia tou*, trans. Gerasimos Zerbo-poulos (Athens: Ho Logos, 1959), 354.

and the Chinese in 1987,⁶¹



to name only the examples most ready-to-hand.

More importantly, *Here I Stand* was reprinted in the United States as late as 2015, with the image of “A Mighty Fortress’ in Luther’s Hand” still firmly intact,⁶² the same image that currently illustrates the Wikipedia article on the hymn.⁶³



⁶¹ *Zhe shi wo de li chang : gai jiao xian dao Mading Lude zhuan ji*, trans. Loren L.J. Ku and Petrouk Luk (Xianggang: Dao sheng chu ban she, 2005 [1987]), 442. Scan provided by Daniell Whittington of the David Allan Hubbard Library of Fuller Theological Seminary; translation of caption and page number by Xu Bian, Assistant Professor of Chinese, Seattle Pacific University.

⁶² Ronald H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, Hendrickson Classic Biographies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015), 385, as confirmed for me by Amazon reviewer Mr. Jimmy Reagan.

⁶³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Mighty_Fortress_Is_Our_God. Ososiński has since noted that while a Russian equivalent describes it (the whole thing?) as “Kyrieleis’ forgery,” the Dutch page (<http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutherliederen>) calls it (the whole thing) “*Ein feste Burg* in Maarten Luthers handschrift” (385n26).

Was Prof. Bainton (who lived on into early 1984) ever apprised of his blunder? Dr. Ralf Breslau, of the *Handschriftenabteilung* of the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, said that he could find no Vandehoeck & Ruprecht documentation related to the production of the German translation of 1952;⁶⁴ Pamela L. Reed, of the United Methodist Publishing House in Nashville, said that Abingdon “went...‘paperless’” and maintains now “only the minimal [documentation] necessary for continuation of administration of copyrights, contracts and royalty”;⁶⁵ and Martha Smalley, of Special Collections at Yale Divinity School, said that she could see nothing in the finding aid to the Roland Herbert Bainton Papers at Yale Divinity School that looked especially promising.⁶⁶ That *may* leave only any extant papers of Prof. Dörries. These I have made no serious attempt to locate.

My claim is not that Bainton led subsequent Luther specialists and professional biographers astray. It is rather that this not insignificant blunder of his, uncorrected by Abingdon or to my knowledge anyone else in the Anglo-American sphere to date, has been taken up in the uncritical fashion of those who rely on old popular scholarship, and is on the cusp of being given new life in this internet- and social-media-driven age of “fake news.” The truth was ready-to-hand in 1950. It was there (in part) by 1942 in Bainton’s own source, whose four identical illustrations were cropped in such a way as to render their uncongeniality invisible. It was there in the scholarship to a lesser and greater degree from 1871. And it was there in what should probably have been, for Bainton, a definite fashion in WA 35 (1923), WA 48 (1927), and Gerhardt (1949), to pull out, in conclusion, but a few. The point is not just to illustrate the work of theological librarianship. It is to attempt to drive a definitive stake into the resurgent overvaluation⁶⁷ of a forgery: the inscription affixed to the 16th-century tenor-part book containing “‘A Mighty Fortress’ in Walter’s Hand”.

⁶⁴ Note to author dated 17 July 2015.

⁶⁵ Note to author dated 8 July 2015.

⁶⁶ Note to author dated 22 December 2014.

⁶⁷ I am referring back to Schlisske’s *Die verräterische Tinte: Kriminalisten auf den Spuren Luthers* (1958) here (see note 47), though, as I’ve attempted to show, the attempt reaches, through Hermann and many others, as far back as 1871 if not before.