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### The Afterlife of Ludolph of Saxony's Vita Christi

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## The Afterlife of Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi* on the Early Modern Press

Emily A. Ransom, Holy Cross College, Notre Dame

Without exaggeration, the fourteenth-century Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi* was an early modern best-seller. This work of late medieval affective devotion had already been influential in the 150 years before the Protestant Reformation. It was a benchmark text for the *devotio moderna*, a movement of lay semi-monastic men and women that spread throughout Europe and was thriving on the eve of the reformations. From that position it highly influenced the mystic Henry of Herp, and also potentially influenced the highly popular *Imitatio Christi* of Thomas à Kempis. Dozens of medieval manuscripts survive in libraries across Europe.

But its most profound influence extended far beyond the Middle Ages and has been obscured due to some of the scholarly blind spots of periodization. In 1521 it inspired the conversion of Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, and (as I have argued elsewhere) it highly influenced his *Spiritual Exercises*. In 1580, the Society listed it among the handful of texts to be given to novices, and thus it continued to influence the early generations of Jesuits such as the English poet Robert Southwell. Another early Catholic reformer, Juan de Valdés, also recommended it in his 1529 *Dialogo de Doctrina Cristiana*. It had probable influence on Thomas More through his connections with the London Carthusian Charterhouse, and almost certainly on Desiderius Erasmus through his early education and upbringing with the *devotio moderna* in Deventer. The mystic Juan of Avila recommended reading it in his *Audi filia*, and Teresa of Ávila directly mentions it in her 1588 *Libro de la vida* and in the Constitutions for Carmelite nuns. Other Catholic reformation luminaries influenced by the work include Mary Magdalene de Pazzi and Francis de Sales.

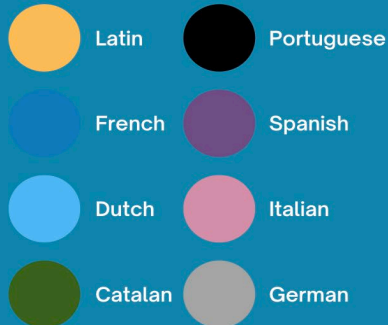
But fascinatingly, its influence was not only within the Catholic reformations but also among the Protestants they countered. To the extent that the work influenced Erasmus's spirituality—his *Paraphrases* that were ordered to be put in every parish in Elizabethan England, his *Enchiridion* that was translated into English potentially by William Tyndale himself—it also influenced the spirituality of Protestants. It appears the records of at least twenty two personal libraries in England. Scholars have argued for its influence upon Luther, Calvin, the Anabaptists, and on the general climate that made people especially receptive to the interiorization of piety among Protestant reformers. In its emphasis on affectivity, interiority, personal relationship with Jesus, mental prayer, biblical study, and imagination, the *Vita Christi* is in some ways connected to all the major religious movements of the turbulent sixteenth century.

During the 2022 NEH seminar "Printing and the Book During the Reformation," I laid the foundation for further research into the early modern print record of this highly influential and underexplored benchmark text of reformation spirituality. Utilizing various databases and electronically available copies of the text and comparing them beside the edition in the private collection of OSU's rare books archivist, I documented the variation of editions of the *Vita Christi* and works that included and anthologized excerpts of the *Vita* as major components. In the end I counted approximately 246 editions printed across Europe between 1470 and 1660, including translations into seven vernaculars. Furthermore, I noted variations in the editions, including variant endings and paratextuals, and made notes of marginalia and other reader-specific marks in the electronically available material. In the end, I produced a solid resource for further study into this significant best-seller of affective devotion that spans periods, confessions, and languages.



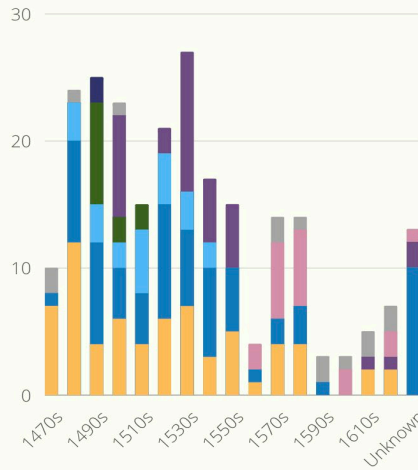


# The *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony in print



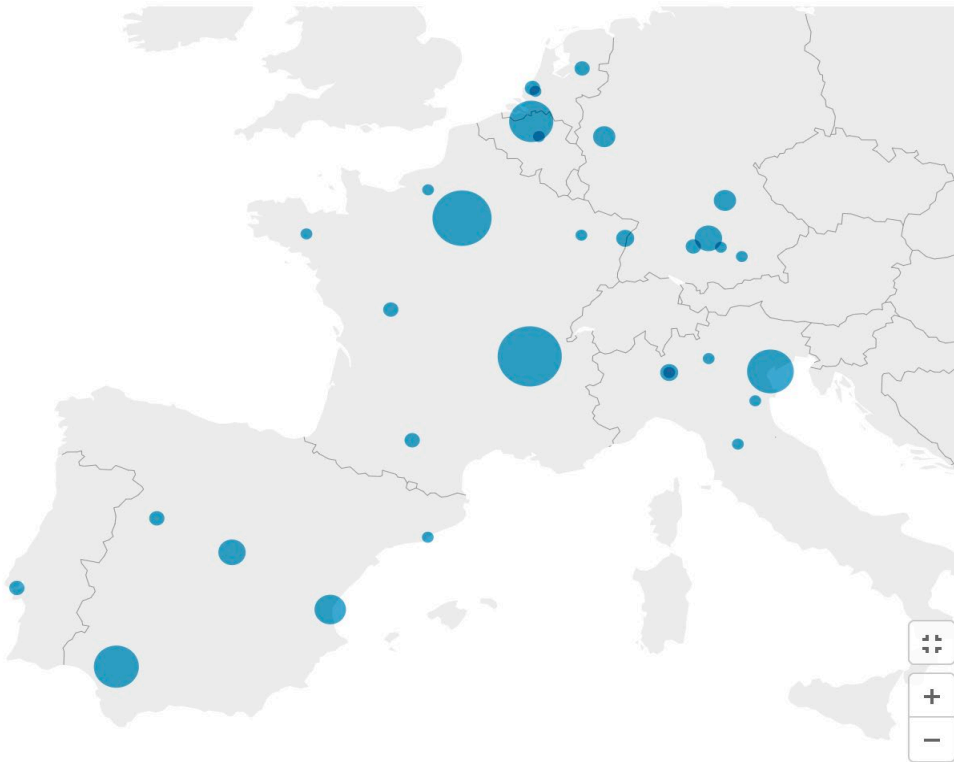
Total editions by 1660: 241

This includes abridged and partial editions, along with inclusions of sections within other works.



Alcalá de Henares	8
Antwerpen	23
Augsburg	1
Barcelona	1
Bréhan-Loudéac	1
Brescia	1
Delft	2
Dillingen	8
Ferrara	1
Florence	1
Köln	5
Lisboa	2
Louvain	1
Lyon	51
Mailand	1
Milano	3
München	1
Nürnberg	5
Paris	43
Poitiers	2
Rotterdam	1
Rouen	1
Saint-Nicolas-de-Port	1
Salamanca	2
Sevilla	24
Strasbourg	3
Toulouse	2
Ulm	2
Valencia	11
Venezia	26
Zwolle	2

## The *Vita Christi* on the Press, 1470–1660



Catalan	12
Dutch	23
French	69
German	14
Italian	20
Latin	68
Portuguese	2
Spanish	35



USTC	Year	Title	Place	Printer	Language	Format	Pagins	Other	Surviving copies
746775	1475-1	Iter ad Terram Sanctam	Strasbourg	Heinrich Eggestein	Latin	folio	ff. [34]		24
746774	c. 1475	Iter ad Terram Sanctam	Strasbourg	Heinrich Eggestein	Latin	folio	ff. [34]		40
746776	c. 1476	Iter ad Terram Sanctam Weg zu	Ausburg	Anton Sorg	German	folio	ff. [40]		10
746777	1477	Iter ad Terram Sanctam Weg zu	Ausburg	Günther Zainer	German	quarto	ff. 116		22
746778	c. 1477	Iter ad Terram Sanctam. Weg zu	Ausburg	Ludwig Hohenwan	German	quarto	ff. 116		8
435613	1483-1	Iter ad Terram Sanctam	Gouda	Gerard Leeu	Latin	quarto	ff. [54]		34
77489	c. 1485	Le Doctrinal de science	Lyon	Guillaume Le Roy	French	quarto	82		2
746763	c. 1491	Expositio in Psalterium	Speyer	Peter Drach	Latin	folio	224	Also with: Francesco Petrarca:	118
201865	after 1	Expositio in Psalterium	Lyon		Latin	quarto			1
143166	1506	In psalterium expositio	Paris	Ulrich Gering et Be	Latin	quarto	ff. [32]	Wimpfeling, Jakob (Editor)	5
181484	1514	In psalterium expositio	Paris	Berthold Rembolt	Latin	quarto	232	Wimpfeling, Jakob (Editor), Pei	6
144512	1518	In psalterium expositio. Additur	Lyon	Jean de Moylin	Latin	quarto	30	add. Tr. Hieronymus, St (Trons	26
181960	1520	In psalterium expositio, in qua sa	Paris	Claude Chevallon	Latin	quarto	232	Wimpfeling, Jakob (Editor)	3
838807	1521	Ludolphus super Psal. Ludolphi C	Venezia	Ottaviano, Scoto &	Latin	folio	144	Wimpfeling, Jakob (Additional	43
184339	1523	In psalterium expositio	Paris	Claude Chevallon	Latin	quarto		Wimpfeling, Jakob (Editor), Pei	5
140460	1542	In psalterium David, diligentissim	Lyon	Antoine Vincent	Latin	octavo	372	add. Francesco Petrarca	12
348567	1552	Narratio in psalmis Davidis	Zaragoza		Latin				1
VD16 ZV	1517	Diul Aurelij Augu[ ] [stini Hippone]	Leipzig	Landsberg, Martin	Latin	quarto	[13] Bl. : TH. ; 4		
VD16 ZV	1515	Buccolica Antho[ ] [nij Geraldini]	Leipzig	Thanner, Jakob	Latin	quarto	[26] B Autor/Person: Geraldinus, Antonius ; Bock, Heinrich –[Beitr.]– ; Stachmann, Heinrich –[Beitr.]–		
VD16 ZV	1517	Buccolica Anto[ ] [nij Geraldini Po]	Leipzig	Landsberg, Martin	Latin	quarto	[42] B Autor/Person: Geraldinus, Antonius ; Bock, Heinrich –[Beitr.]– ; Stachmann, Heinrich –[Beitr.]–		
VD16 ZV	1503	Von der kintheit unsers Heren i	Ausburg	Froschauer, Hans	German				
VD16 G 1	1511	Buccolica Antho[ni] Ge[ ] [raldini p]	Leipzig	Landsberg, Martin	Latin	quarto	[44] B Autor/Person: Geraldinus, Antonius ; Bock, Heinrich –[Beitr.]– ; Stachmann, Heinrich –[Beitr.]–		
VD16 L 3:	1591	VITA CHRISTI [ ] R.P.F.LVDOVICO	Köln	Quentel, Johann [E]	Latin	duodeci	[10] Bl., 709[+699] S. : TH., H. ; 12		
VD16 G 1	1517	Buccoli. Ann[ ] [thonij Geraldini P]	Leipzig	Schumann, Valenti	Latin	quarto	[24] B Verfasser: Geraldinus, Antonius; Beiträger: Pistorius, Johannes		
VD16 L 3:	1596	VITA CHRISTI [ ] R.P.F.LVDOVICO	Köln	Quentel, Arnold,	Latin	duodeci	[10] B Verfasser: Luis de Granada; Weitere Pers.: Isselt, Michael –von– (editor); Beiträger: Gregor <XIII., Papst		
VD16 T 1:	1596	DE IMITATIONE [ ] CHRISTI, ET R	Köln	Mylus, Arnold	Latin	sextoide	136[=] Verfasser: Thomas <von Kempen, Weitere Pers.: Jansenius, Cornelius –[Bearb.]–		
VD16 G 1	1520	ANTHONI GE[ ] [RALDINI POETAE	Köln	Caesar, Konrad	Latin	quarto	[24] B Verfasser: Geraldinus, Antonius		
VD16 V 1:	1592	DE IMITATIO [ ] NE CHRISTI, ET [ ]	Köln	Mylus, Arnold	Latin	sextoide	144, [ ] Verfasser: Thomas <von Kempen>; Weitere Pers.: Jansenius, Cornelius –[Bearb.]–		
VD16 H 1	1593	VITAE [ ] SANCTORVM [ ] Das ist,	Köln	Gymnich, Johann I	German ar	quarto	[T. 1.] Verfasser: Haraeus, Franciscus; Weitere Pers.: Bodinus, Johannes; Leucht, Valentin –[Bearb.]–; Beiträger: Diel, Conrad –[Beitr.]–; Hoffer, Johann –[Beitr.]–; Stampf, Johannes –[Beitr.]–; Pontanus z Breitenberka, Jifi Barthold –[Beitr.]–		
VD16 B B:	1599	Meditationi sopra i principali mi	Köln	Mylus, Arnold	Latin	duodeci	T. 1. [ ] Verfasser: Bruno, Vincenzo; Weitere Pers.: Putz, Heinrich –[Bearb.]–; Putz, Matthias –[Bearb.]–		
Bibliotecat	1401-1	Vida de Jesucrist		Eiximenis, Francesc, 1327?-1409	Catalan	Perzami i paper ; Autor: Acl comença lo libre apellat V	Villena, Isabel de, 1430-1490	<a href="https://nmc.csuc.cat/digital/collection/manuscribcj/d/240518">https://nmc.csuc.cat/digital/collection/manuscribcj/d/240518</a>	
	1527	Vita Christi	Barcelon	Amorós, Carles, ed	Latin		Villena, Isabel de, 1430-1490	<a href="https://roderic.uv.es/handle/10550/76773">https://roderic.uv.es/handle/10550/76773</a>	
	1496	Vida de Jesucrist	Granada	Meinardo Unzuat y	Catalan		Eiximenis, Francesc, 1327?-1409	<a href="https://roderic.uv.es/handle/10550/63683">https://roderic.uv.es/handle/10550/63683</a>	<a href="https://gedos.usal.es/handle/10366/142829">https://gedos.usal.es/handle/10366/142829</a>

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