

The Defense of Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, and the Baptists, by Katharina Schütz Zell

by ELSIE ANNE MCKEE

The sixteenth century is known as a time of religious conflict as well as religious renewal. Especially as the first generation passed from the scene, and leaders born in a divided Christendom reached maturity, confessional stances hardened and intra-Protestant polemic became as sharp as any exchanges between Roman Catholics and Protestants. The topic of this essay is the reaction of one surviving first generation reformer to the gradual narrowing of religious vision in Protestant orthodoxy. The chief second generation critic here is Ludwig Rabus (1524-1592). Those whom Rabus characterized as heretics are Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489-1561), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531), Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), and the «(Ana)Baptists». The defender of the first generation is Katharina Schütz Zell of Strasbourg (1498?-1562), who acquired the title of heretic for her life-long championing of the unpopular.

The objective here is a case study of one lay reformer's defense of fellow-believers, and thus the primary focus is Katharina Schütz Zell's (KSZ) exchange of letters with Ludwig Rabus, which she published at the end of 1557 as «Ein Brieff an die gantze Burgerschafft der Statt Straszburg...»¹ In this article, only limited attention is given to outside sources, although the larger work of which the present essay is a part will include historical evaluation of the accuracy of the various charges and counter-charges². Center stage here is the argument between the two correspondents, and especially KSZ's understanding of Protestant confession and the nature of religious «tolerance».

¹ Full title: Ein Brieff an die gantze Burgerschafft der Statt Straszburg/ von Katherina Zellin/ dessen jetz säligen Matthei Zellen/ deß alten und ersten Predigers des Evangelii diser Statt/ nachgelassne Ehefraw/ Betreffend Herr Ludwigen Rabus/ jetz ein Prediger der Statt Ulm/ sampt zweyen brieffen ir und sein/ die mag mengklich lesen und urtheilen on gunst und hassz/ sonder allein der warheit warnemen. Dabey auch ein sanffte antwort/ auff jeden Artikel/ seines brieffs, [Strasbourg] 30. Dec. 1557. (Notes refer to the pagination of this edition). See *Marc Lienhard*, Catherine Zell, née Schütz, in: *Bibliotheca dissidentium, répertoire des non-conformistes religieux des seizième et dix-septième siècles*, éd. par André Séguenny, vol. 1, Baden-Baden 1980, BBAur 79, pp. 115-118, for description [abbr.: Lienhard, Zell]. For an earlier letter (not published here), see n. 6.

² My work in progress: *Elsie Anne McKee*, Katharina Schütz Zell, The Life, Theology, and Writings of a Sixteenth-Century Reformer [abbr.: McKee, KSZ]. The book as presently planned will have two parts, one a biographical-theological study, the other a critical edition of her writings. For convenience, Katharina Schütz Zell is here designated KSZ. This matter and other questions raised in this article will be treated more fully in the book.

The method followed is a close reading of the text, combined with a considerable re-arrangement of the individual parts in order to make the argument easily accessible. The letters were written over a period of two years, and some points recur a number of times, sometimes (though not always!) with slight variations of nuance. Added to the problem of repetition is the diffuseness of KSZ's style. Individual issues are often argued with remarkable tenacity and logical coherence; KSZ can push her opponent into a rather tight corner on occasion. The ensemble, however, was not conceived as a single piece, and a proper appreciation for the cogency of KSZ's work may be obscured by the many details and occasional digressions which enrich but also sometimes overload the text.

Katharina Schütz, a devout young Strasbourg citizen from a respected artisanal family, was one of the first women to marry a priest, the popular cathedral preacher Matthew Zell (1477-1548)³. Understanding herself as a reformer, partner with her husband, colleague of his colleagues in the gospel (both in Strasbourg and abroad), KSZ was respected and loved by the many people she helped, and feared by those whom her strength, determination, and sometimes sharp tongue irritated. Over the course of nearly thirty-five years (1524-1558), from shortly after her marriage in 1523 until four years before her death, KSZ wrote and published as well as spoke and acted. This unusually long life for a lay author⁴, this novel and «unseemly» activity on the part of a woman, impressed many people, but it did not always win KSZ friends. Nor did her unstinted kindness to anyone who sought her help. Some people thought KSZ was indiscriminate, if not downright heretical, in both her religious views and her charity.

The Rev. Dr. Ludwig Rabus is the other protagonist in the exchange of letters studied here. Rabus was a young Protestant from Memmingen, educated in Wittenberg and Tübingen, where he received his doctorate in 1553. During his early Strasbourg years, Rabus lived with the Zells, and they and others in Strasbourg helped him during his doctoral studies. At the beginning of his ministry, Rabus served as Matthew Zell's assistant at the cathedral in Strasbourg, and then as Zell's successor after the latter's death in 1548. Late in 1556 Rabus moved to Ulm to be superintendent and pastor of that church. Rabus is best known for his martyro-

³ For a fairly complete secondary source bibliography of KSZ to 1980, see Lienhard, Zell, pp. 104-107. References to Matthew Zell are common in literature on Strasbourg, but few works are devoted to him. The most extensive is an edition and study of Zell's major writing, «Christliche Verantwortung»; see the doctoral thesis of *M. Weyer*, *L'Apologie Chretienne du Réformateur Strasbourgeois Matthieu Zell*, 3 vols., Strasbourg 1981. The most extensive recent work on KSZ is a master's thesis by *U. Liebenau*, *Catherine Zell, une mère de l'église, sa pensée à travers l'analyse de ses écrits*, 2 vols., Strasbourg 1987.

⁴ See Lienhard, Zell, pp. 108-125, for description of her published and unpublished writings and letters. See *P. A. Russell*, *Lay Theology in the Reformation, Popular Pamphleteers in Southwest Germany, 1521-1525*, Cambridge 1986, pp. 204-208.

logy, though the latter never became as famous as those of his contemporaries Jean Crespin and John Foxe⁵.

«Ein Brieff an die gantze Burgerschafft der Statt Straszburg» consists of a number of letters by KSZ, and one by Ludwig Rabus. KSZ wrote the first letter at the end of December 1555, and added another, shorter piece to this in February 1556, before sending the whole to Rabus, at that time still in Strasbourg. Rabus returned the letters (unread, KSZ claims). The third letter, written in March 1557, was sent by KSZ to Rabus in Ulm. His reply is dated 19. April 1557. KSZ analyzed this brief note in exhaustive detail, point by point, during the latter part of 1557, and published the whole correspondence, along with a dedicatory letter to the city of Strasbourg, at the end of December 1557⁶. KSZ arranged the letters in an order to support her argument, but in 1753 J. C. Füsslin included a modernized, chronologically organized version of «Ein Brieff» in his collection of sources of Reformation history. The present study, however, is based on the original text, since Füsslin's edition was not always accurate⁷.

This essay is organized in two parts, with a brief conclusion. Section one consists of Ludwig Rabus' indictment of Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, the «Anabaptists», KSZ, and others, first as these accusations are found in his letter, and then as they are assembled from KSZ's report of Rabus' preaching and conversation. The second and much longer part of the article is KSZ's defense of herself and her fellow reformers, divided into four subsections: 1) KSZ's acquaintance with the people accused, 2) her defense of the individuals and their faith, 3) an exposition of the theological confession and religious tolerance and their limits as practiced by the Zells, 4) and finally KSZ's counter-charges against Rabus himself.

⁵ For a recent brief study, see *R. Kolb, For All the Saints, Changing Perceptions of Martyrdom and Sainthood in the Lutheran Reformation*, Macon, GA 1987, chap. 2 [abbr.: *Kolb, For All the Saints*]. Below, n. 18f, 44 for support; nn. 9, 36, 73f for martyrology.

⁶ KSZ to Rabus: 27. 12. 1555 (L3r-N3v); 6. 2. 1556 (N3v-N5v); 24. 3. 1557 (B2v-E2r); Rabus to KSZ: 19. 4. 1557 (B1v-B2r); KSZ to Rabus: between end of April and end of Dec. 1557 (E2v-L2v); KSZ to Strasbourg: Dec. 1557? (A2r-B1r, B2r, L3r, N5v). Claims unread, B2v. In the Archives du Chapitre Saint-Thomas de Strasbourg (76, 46), in the Archives Municipales, there exists an autograph letter of KSZ to Schwenckfeld dated 19. Oct. 1553. This long letter (12 folio pages recto-verso, filled with fine writing) considerably enriches the earlier history of KSZ's relationship with Rabus. For a number of reasons, including limited space here, this 1553 letter does not figure in the present article, apart from a few notes (9, 25, 26, 29, 32, 63, 66, 68, 69). It will be discussed in full in my longer work.

⁷ *Johann Conrad Füsslin, Beiträge zur Erläuterung der Kirchen-Reformations-Geschichte des Schweizerlandes*, part 5, Zürich 1753, pp. 191-354 [abbr.: Füsslin, *Beiträge*]. Examples of Füsslin's errors in: McKee, *KSZ*; for the most notable, see n. 40.

I. Ludwig Rabus' Charges of Heresy, etc.

I. Rabus' Letter

To begin with Ludwig Rabus' letter of 19. April 1557 is to begin, chronologically, two-thirds of the way through the correspondence, but this is necessary if one would have the charges against Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, the «Anabaptists», and especially KSZ herself in Rabus' own words. The letter, which KSZ says that she has transcribed word-for-word, is brief and worth quoting in full:

«Mein glory, rumm und trost/ in dem gecreutzigten Christo. Dein Heidnisch/ unchristlich/ erstuncken/ und erlogen schreiben/ ist mir zuokommen/ den 16. Aprilis/ welches der Carfreytag gewesen/ da ich sunst mit predigen zimlich unrüewig und beladen. Dieweil ich dann im selbigen gifftigen/ neidischen/ erstunckenen/ und erlogenen schreiben befunden/ Ob dich wol Gott wunderbarlich heimsuocht/ dennocht kein besserung an dir zuoverhoffen/ sonder du für und für in schrocklichen irrthumben/ falscher zeugnuß/ und Teuffelischen außgeben frummer leut verstockter weiß verharrest. So befilhe ich dich dem gerechten Gotts urtheil/ und hab deß kein zweiffel/ er wirt dir ein mal deins Phariseyschen stoltz/ wolverdiente belonung geben. Dein schreiben/ das nicht der Geist Gottes/ welcher ein geist der warheit ist/ sonder des Teuffels geist/ so ein lugner von anfang gewesen/ auß dir getriben/ wil ich fleissig auffheben/ zum zeugnuß deines unverschampten mauls/ da du tratzlich darffest einen diener Christi/ ungehört/ unbefragt/ auff's aller Teuffelisch zuo schenden und zuo schmehen/ Damit man doch sehen mög die schönen fruchtlin/ der selbs gewachsenen stinckenden Schwenckfelder/ und dergleichen Ketzerischen hertzen unnd gemüeter/ Unnd sag (wie dein unverschampt maul freffel thuot) wie du zuvor im anfang/ mich beschuldigst/ Ich hab meine herren mit den dreyen tagen bochen unnd tratzen wöllen. Wie dasselbig erstuncken/ erlogen unnd auß dem Teuffel on warheit geredt ist. Also leugstu unverschampt und one ehr/ in deinem andern schreiben/ auff mich durchauß. Ist für dich zuobiten so verzihe es dir Gott. Du hast aber in der kirchen zuo Straßburg ein solche unruow bald im anfang/ und mit deinem frummen mann selber angefangen/ Das ich gedenck Gottes urtheil werd dich dermaleins treffen. Und laß mich hinfürt mit deinen lügen und lester schreiben zuofriden. Dunckt dich diser brief zuo hart/ so gedenck man müesse dem narren antworten wie es sich gebürt. Den 19. Aprilis 1557.

Ludwig Rabus/ Doctor der heiligen schrifft und superintentens der Kirchen zuo Ulm/ wider aller Zwinglische/ Stenckfeldische/ Widerteufferische geister.

Darneben aber ein armer schlechter diener/ deß gecreutzigten Christi/ und seiner armen kirchen»⁸.

The sixteenth century is notable for the uninhibited character of its polemic, but even in such company Rabus' letter ranks as rather uncharitable. As is clear here, the primary focus of his annoyance is KSZ herself, although the original (and to Rabus' mind no doubt more important) opponents are seen in the background.

A summary of Rabus' charges reads almost like a translation of the letter. The description of KSZ, her writings, and her behavior, is a succinct series of insults. KSZ is a devilish liar, a Schwenckfelder and Zwinglian, heretical, pharisaic, a false witness and shameless rumor-monger. She has been a trouble-maker from the beginning, and there is really not any hope for her since she continues stubbornly in her errors. Her writings are stinking, poisonous, pagan lies and slander. Rabus is sure that God's judgment will catch up with KSZ, whom he considers he has answered appropriately because she is a fool. Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, and the «Anabaptists» also are all heretics, though perhaps the greatest venom is poured on Schwenckfeld, whose name seemed to lend itself to caricature: Schwenckfeld-Stenckfeld-stinking.

2. Rabus' Charges As Transmitted by KSZ

In KSZ's report of Rabus' criticisms prior to this letter, many of the same points are mentioned. At first the focus is Schwenckfeld, though Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and Bullinger are mentioned. Later, apparently, Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, and the «Anabaptists» are lumped together, and KSZ is added to the group. For the sake of clarity here, each figure will be treated separately, with criticisms in more-or-less chronological order.

The first of Rabus' «bêtes noires» was Caspar Schwenckfeld. The letters from Dec. 1555 and Feb. 1556 record that Rabus called Schwenckfeld a Eutyichian heretic and the source of such heresy, one who denies the humanity of Christ and drives people away from public worship. There is much name-calling by Rabus and his friends, e. g., Johannes Lenglin and Mathias Flacius Illyricus. Indeed, Rabus and Lenglin cannot let a single sermon go by without including negative remarks on Schwenckfeld. Lenglin went so far as to say «Better papist than Baptist (<Anabaptists>) or Schwenckfelder», and KSZ challenges Rabus to deny that he is also implicated. The way Rabus' friend Melchior Specker twists Schwenckfeld's words makes Specker himself a laughing-stock. In fact, KSZ suspects that Rabus would like to burn Schwenckfeld at the stake, like Hus and Servetus⁹. The letters

⁸ B1v-B2r; B1r claims this is word-for-word.

⁹ L3v; L4v; M1r; M1r-v; M2r; M3v; N4r. There is irony in the comment on Hus, because the latter in fact figures as one of the great pre-Luther martyrs in Rabus' book, *Der Heyligen ausserwöhlten Gottes Zeugen, Bekennern und Martyrern... Historien...*

from 1557 include a report that Rabus wrote the Strasbourg magistrates that he went to Ulm because Strasbourg was «soft» on the Mass, the sects, Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, and the Baptists, and the name-calling continues unabated¹⁰.

Some of what is said about Schwenckfeld is also applied to Zwingli. At first there is only a reference to Rabus *et al.* teaching their students to call Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and Bullinger heretics from the pulpit¹¹. In the 1557 letters Zwingli is named heretic, unbeliever, enemy of God and of Christ, from the pulpit, and in books, letters, conversation. Rabus is attempting to wipe out Zwingli's books and followers, such as Bullinger. KSZ says that Rabus mistakenly thinks that he honors Martin Luther by denigrating Zwingli, but Luther would refuse to be a cover for Rabus' reintroduction of papal ceremonies¹².

Rabus' view of those he calls the «Anabaptists» and KSZ calls «Baptists», as reported by KSZ, is equally negative though rather less developed. The one early reference is Lenglin's «Rather papist than Baptist or Schwenckfelder». Later Strasbourg's «softness» on the Baptists *et al.* serves as Rabus' ostensible reason for leaving the city¹³. Strasbourg itself comes in for criticism in this connection, when Rabus likens the city's reputation to that of Münster¹⁴.

KSZ notes some of Rabus' criticisms of her. The earliest is apparently the anonymous but pointed statement from the pulpit that KSZ is discouraging people from coming to worship¹⁵. The primary ones in Rabus' letter have been noted: heretic and unbeliever, liar and slanderer, false witness, one who has fallen away from the true faith. KSZ made trouble in the church, specifically by receiving Zwingli and Oecolampadius in her home when they passed through Strasbourg on the way to Marburg in 1529¹⁶. KSZ interprets Rabus' letter as almost accusing her of the sin against the Holy Spirit, when he says she lies about him and questions whether it is legitimate to pray for her. KSZ insists that she has spoken truthfully, and it is Rabus who must show that he has not sinned against the Holy Spirit by accusing her of lying when he knows better and there are other witnesses. To cap the matter, KSZ cites Luther's words about the sin against the Holy Spirit as a standard¹⁷.

Whether or not all the details of KSZ's records are accurate (and quite often other sources confirm her claims), the general tenor of the reported criticism agrees with that of the published letter. The reputation Rabus left behind in Stras-

vol. 2, Strassburg 1554, xlv/r ff [abbr.: Rabus, Historien]. See the 1553 letter, 4v-7r, accusing Schwenckfeld of discouraging KSZ from attending public worship. See McKee, KSZ.

¹⁰ D2v; D4v, F2v; F3v; K3v; K4v.

¹¹ N4v-N5r.

¹² D4v (see n. 35); K3v; F2v, F3r, F3v, K3v; J2v.

¹³ M1r; D2v.

¹⁴ E1v. See below at n. 40.

¹⁵ N4r-v.

¹⁶ G4v; H1v-H2r.

¹⁷ F4r-v; G1r. See Luther, «Von der sunde widder den heiligen geist», WA 28, esp. 13f.

bourg was not favorable, to say the least, as he himself recognized. A contemporary Strasbourg Roman Catholic chronicler even praised «Ein Briefff» as an appropriate response to Rabus' behavior. There are always two sides to every story, and KSZ was probably a rather uncomfortable «church mother», but it is clear that she was not alone in her criticism of Rabus' preaching and behavior. Whatever the final judgment (and this whole question will be treated more at length elsewhere), given the picture of Rabus that KSZ presents in «Ein Briefff», it is small wonder that she felt it deserved to be answered¹⁸.

II. Katharina Schütz Zell's Defense and Counter Attack

The great bulk of the correspondence between Rabus and KSZ was written by the latter. The tone of the earlier letters is an irritable but hopeful maternal one, mingling praise and rebuke but generally affectionately critical. As time passes, the tone becomes more sharp and the criticisms move from affection to anger – not entirely surprisingly, in view of Rabus' terse rudeness. KSZ's disappointment in one she and her husband had loved and helped no doubt contributed to her more sarcastic tone toward the end of the correspondence, but she is never as univocally negative or abusive as Rabus in his brief note¹⁹.

I. KSZ's Acquaintance with the Accused

It is useful to begin KSZ's defense of her fellow reformers by noting her personal acquaintance with them, especially since she suggests that part of Rabus' problem is that he did not really know those whom he criticized²⁰. Of those accused, Schwenckfeld was best known to KSZ. She describes having read his books for twenty-six years, having been acquainted with him personally for twenty-four or twenty-six years. Along with her husband she welcomed Schwenckfeld as a guest, not only at table but also as house-guest and had had much opportunity to learn it if he had been a heretic²¹.

KSZ's personal acquaintance with Zwingli and individual Baptists was less than that with Schwenckfeld but it was not negligible. Zwingli and Oecolampadius had stayed in the Zells' home for two weeks in 1529, and there were generally good relationships and strong ties between Strasbourg and Zürich. Bullinger is

¹⁸ See Kolb, *For All the Saints*, pp. 49-51. Sebald Büheler, *Chronique*, ed. L. Dacheux, in: *Bulletin de la Société pour la Conservation des Monuments Historiques d'Alsace* 13, 1888, no. 368 [abbr.: Büheler]. Some Strasbourgers (including former colleagues) think Rabus went to Ulm for reasons of ambition (C4r, K3r). See McKee, *KSZ*.

¹⁹ L3r-v, B2v; B2v; F4r-v, G1v. M1v, N3v, N4r, B2v, F4v. L4v. B4r; see also Büheler, no. 18; Kolb, *For All the Saints*, p. 43.

²⁰ D4v, F2v (Zwingli and possibly Schwenckfeld).

²¹ M3r, F2v; D4v, F2v, K4r.

recognized as an honorable man to whom the Strasbourg reformers deferred²². KSZ is least specific about her acquaintances among the Baptists, though she mentions hospitality to them, and other sources suggest a broad if not always profound contact with the many reforming spirits who wandered through Strasbourg in the course of the first half of the sixteenth century²³.

It is important to bear in mind the wide-ranging character of KSZ's acquaintance, in order to see these ties with Rabus' «heretics» in perspective. Certainly Schwenckfeld became, over time, one of KSZ's closer friends, particularly after the passing of all the other first generation reformers she had known well²⁴. The importance of Martin Luther to the Zells was clearly affirmed by both. KSZ has only praise for «the dear Luther», even when she mentions disagreements on the sacraments. Luther was the reformer par excellence, with Matthew Zell close behind²⁵. Wolfgang Capito ranked next after Luther and her husband for KSZ, but she also speaks highly of Caspar Hedio and Martin Bucer, despite the friendly conflict between Bucer and the Zells on a number of occasions²⁶. KSZ knew personally and/or through their writings most of the other significant reformers of her day and many of the lesser-known figures as well. The more important ones whom she names in this exchange of letters include (besides those mentioned above): Philip Melancthon, Urbanus Rhegius, Paul Fagius, Conrad Pellican, Johannes Zwick, Johannes Brenz, Otto Brunfels, John Calvin, Sebastian Castellio, Johannes Bugenhagen, Desiderius Erasmus, Johann Agricola, Sebastian Franck, Johann Marbach²⁷. Many others not mentioned here (e. g., the Blaurer family and Melchior Ambach), were also good friends²⁸. The Zells were not indiscriminate, nor more associated with «Radicals» than with «Lutheran» or «Reformed» Protestants, but their practice of welcoming people was – and remained – less narrow than that of many contemporaries.

2. KSZ's Defense of Individuals

KSZ uses various kinds of evidence to defend Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, and the others against Rabus' charges that they (and she) are heretics. It is possible to

²² H2r; N5r, D4v (Bullinger).

²³ H2v; see n. 39, 65 below. See *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, ed. Manfred Krebs, Hans Georg Rott, Marc Lienhard, Stephen F. Nelson, vol. 7, 8, 15, 16 (Elsaß, part 1-4), Gütersloh 1959, 1960, 1986, 1988, [abbr.: QGT]. Note KSZ's references to Luc Hackfurt and Alexander Berner (G3r).

²⁴ Long correspondence with Schwenckfeld; see Lienhard, Zell, pp. 123-125, for listing.

²⁵ Constant references to Luther and his importance; e. g., A3r; F3v; G3r-v; see at nn. 34, 44, 46f, 49, H1r. For Matthew, see at nn.36, 53, 61ff. Pairing of Luther and Zell common in KSZ, *Klagred uond Ermahnuong*; see 1553 letter, 9v, 11r, and McKee, KSZ.

²⁶ B3v, C3r, C4v-D1r, D2r, G3v, H1r, J1r, K3v, L1v, L2r. L4v. See 1553 letter, 6v-7r.

²⁷ N2v, A2v, D2r, E1v, G2v, G3v, H2v, H3v, J2r; various combined lists: D3v, E1r-v, K3r.

²⁸ See correspondence both by and about KSZ, Lienhard, Zell, pp. 99-103; 123-125.

collect from her letters certain types of «objective» evidence, as well as creedal statements. Each figure or group will be considered in turn, with comments organized in a fashion KSZ herself does not follow.

In defending Caspar Schwenckfeld, KSZ offers the witness of others as well as her own testimony. Schwenckfeld was approved and recognized as a fellow worker by other Protestant reformers and people. From the earliest letters to the end, KSZ insists that even those like Bucer, who most opposed Schwenckfeld in Strasbourg, never fulminated against the noble layman from the pulpit but disputed with him out of the public eye. Most people, including Capito, Zell, and Hedio, appreciated Schwenckfeld, and the first two made him welcome in their homes. The unimpeachable Capito wrote a laudatory preface to one of Schwenckfeld's books. On his deathbed, Strasbourg's beloved first reformer and Rabus' «father», Matthew Zell, gave explicit instructions that Rabus was to leave Schwenckfeld alone²⁹. The people of Strasbourg had no idea that Schwenckfeld was a heretic. After hearing Rabus and Lenglin, some of them came to ask KSZ why their first pastors had never warned them about this unknown danger. Those who read Schwenckfeld's books knew that Rabus was not telling the truth about him. (KSZ adds that in fact more people than ever before are reading Schwenckfeld's books because of Rabus' and others' criticism, so that Rabus himself is spreading what he does not like as the «papists» spread Luther's teaching³⁰!)

KSZ also describes the evidence of Schwenckfeld's life and sufferings for the gospel. Preachers are always taking the nobility to task for their immorality, but Schwenckfeld has lived a pious life. He has suffered more for the gospel than Rabus has. No more than Luther did Schwenckfeld seek followers who would be called by his name, but that is no reason to deny the good that God has done through him. Schwenckfeld praised, loved, and honored Christ, and fought «with us» for the gospel. If he is persecuted for his faith, so was Christ, so were the apostles and others. Schwenckfeld did not drive people away from worship; it is Rabus' own polemic which makes people, who came seeking the gospel and comfort, decide not to return³¹.

At one point KSZ seems to recognize implicitly that Schwenckfeld was perhaps partly responsible for being misunderstood, though she blames Rabus primarily. KSZ reminds Rabus that he had taught out of Schwenckfeld's books before he turned against him, and she later goes on to say that if Rabus would read these books «with humility and prayer before God, without negative attitudes (bösen affect)», he would find that Schwenckfeld does not deny the humanity of Christ³².

²⁹ L4v; L4r («mitarbeiter» with Capito, Hedio, Zell); D4v, F2v, K4r; L4v, M2v-M3r, N3v, N4r, D4v-E1r. See 1553 letter, 3r-4v; it is notable that in this letter KSZ records Matthew including the «Baptists» with Schwenckfeld as those whom Rabus *et al.* are to leave alone.

³⁰ L4v; L3v, M1v-M2r, N3r, N5r.

³¹ L4v, M1r-v, N2v-N3r, D4v, F3v, K3v-K4r.

³² L4r, M3r; cf. N2v. See 1553 letter, 10r-11r.

KSZ puts much emphasis on the approval of Schwenckfeld by reformers like Zell and Capito, and on the evidence of Schwenckfeld's life and practice, but she also insists on theological confession. The earliest letter to Rabus includes a long and somewhat simplistic defense of Schwenckfeld's teaching on the humanity of Christ. It seems that KSZ may not have comprehended fully the point of the argument between Schwenckfeld and those who rejected his «glorified flesh» doctrine; her mass of Biblical references, while impressive in one way, is beside the point in another (KSZ was clearly a Biblical and not a philosophical thinker). In a sense, however, it was of relatively lesser importance to KSZ (and possibly to Matthew) whether or not the philosophy was the same for all, as long as the scripture was³³. In 1557, KSZ gives a richly Biblical and creedal «confession» which she attributes to all the major reformers, from Luther on through Schwenckfeld. The text is Christocentric, Christ as savior, true God and true man³⁴.

Zwingli is also included as one who affirms this confession, but KSZ does not say much more about the content of the Swiss reformer's faith – nor does she mention having read his books, as she often says of Luther and others. The primary focus of KSZ's defense of Zwingli is to point to the fruit of his work for the gospel. Three different times, in almost identical words, KSZ speaks of the «good and now blessed Zwingli» as one «through whom God has done so much good to an entire Confederation.» KSZ points out that Rabus never knew Zwingli, who was reforming Switzerland before Rabus was even born – and she suggests that Rabus would be ashamed of himself if he met Zwingli³⁵.

The second most important emphasis in the defense of Zwingli is the record of his suffering for the gospel. Zwingli has borne far more than Rabus ever will; he

³³ M3r-N3r (confession). KSZ relies on the scriptural character of Schwenckfeld's work (M3r: «wie das die schriftt bezeuget/ welches doch Schwenckfeld nie geleugnet hat/ sonder allzeit bekennt und noch»), and emphasizes his writings (L3v, M3r). *R. Emmet McLaughlin*, Caspar Schwenckfeld, Reluctant Radical, His Life to 1540, New Haven, CT 1986, (Yale Historical Publication Miscellany 134), p. 201, points out that Schwenckfeld tended to express himself more guardedly in print. For the development of the «glorified flesh» doctrine, see esp. chap. 7. Bucer (at least in his 3. Feb. 1534 letter to Margareta Blaurer) did not consider KSZ herself a Schwenckfelder, though he objected to her support for this disruptive party; see QGT VIII, p. 271; see at nn. 50ff, for Zells' openness; see 1553 letter in n. 63; McKee, KSZ.

³⁴ D2v-D3v. Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Zell, Capito, Bucer, Hedio, Rhégius, Fagius, Brenz, Schwenckfeld, *et al.*, and possibly some among the «Baptists»; see n. 39.

³⁵ D4r-v, F2v-F3r, K3r-v. D4r-v: «Wie seind dann ir Jungen unerfahrenen Mennen/ so rauch/ ich mein das euch wilde leüth im Waldt gezüget haben/ wie können ihr so frefelich/ den frummen unnd jetzsäligen Zwinglin/ durch den Gott einer gantzen Eydgnofschaft so vil guots gethon hat/ also schenden/ und begeren ihn/ sein Büecher/ unnd glaubens gossen auß zuo reitten/ Den ihr nie gesehen und die arbeit/ creütz/ schmach, schandt/ so er unnd Ecolampadius sampt andern alten/ umb der ehren Christi willen/ erlitten haben/ nie erfaren/ es musten nein Evangelii sampt Christo zuo grund gehn/ ehe ir das halb litten. Lebten sie noch/ ihr dörrft ihnen nicht under die augen sehen/ an Kunst und glauben.» Cf. H2r.

was insulted and reviled for his confession, as Christ was; he died at the hands of God's enemies as Christ did, he died for his brothers. If Zwingli was a heretic, then so were Christ and many others whom Rabus puts in his martyr-book to earn money!³⁶ K SZ pairs Zwingli with Luther as those who dug up the weeds, plowed, planted with great effort, and brought forth fruit which Rabus enjoys but for which he thanks Zwingli by calling him a heretic and enemy of God and Christ. Again, as with Schwenckfeld, Luther, and others, K SZ denies that Zwingli wanted followers to be called by his name, but it is still right to honor the good which God has done through him³⁷.

K SZ does not pretend that Zwingli was perfect. Like «us» (Rabus and K SZ) and all people, Zwingli must say with David in the Psalm (130, 3): «Lord, when You enter into judgment and would judge us, who could stand before you?» However, Zwingli confessed the chief points and suffered for the gospel, so the words of Christ apply to him: »Wisdom must be justified by her children» (Mt 11, 19)³⁸.

When K SZ speaks of the «Baptists» there is a slightly different combination of factors in the defense. She insists that there are «many good, understanding, and God-fearing learned people among the Baptists, people who seek Christ from the heart.» She recognizes that there are «weak, unwise, or also bad ones among them», but she urges Rabus to examine himself and says «let us have the sympathy (mitleiden) with them that we have with ourselves.» K SZ speaks well of Baptist discipline; if Rabus excommunicated as many people for great faults as the Baptists do for small ones, he would soon have a smaller church. K SZ also points out the Baptists' suffering for the gospel; «many among them have confessed Christ to (the point of suffering) misery, prison, fire and water.» It is apparent that the Baptists K SZ has in mind are the «Evangelical Anabaptists», since she reproaches Rabus for urging the magistrates to persecute peaceful people who «believe in Christ the Son of God and do no one any harm»³⁹.

K SZ also defends Strasbourg. Rabus has accused the city of being «soft» on the Mass, the sects, Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, and the Baptists. K SZ answers that those he attacks «have done neither him nor others any harm, and pray to God daily for him», and share our faith. Rabus has also told the magistrates that Strasbourg is a scandal in Germany, and is becoming a Münster. The indignant K SZ

³⁶ D4v, F3r, K3v. See Kolb, *For all the Saints*, p. 5; below at n. 73. In fact, Zwingli is not in Rabus' martyrology. Almost the only Reformed figure included is the young Matthew Zell, because he was so Lutheran in his «Christliche Verantwortung». See Rabus, *Historien*, vol. 8, pp. vii/t ff (Juan Diaz, Pierre Bruly, and Simon Grynaeus are also included).

³⁷ K3v, F3v. On weeds, see n. 67 below.

³⁸ F3r. See below at n. 51.

³⁹ D3v; E1r. K SZ seems implicitly to recognize at least some of the diversity pointed out by contemporary scholars; see *James M. Stayer*, *The Anabaptists*, in: *Reformation Europe*, a Guide to Research, ed. Steven Ozment, St. Louis 1982, 135-159. For difficulties with Baptists, Sebastian Brant, *Annales*, ed. L. Dacheux, in: *Bulletin de la Société pour la Conservation des Monuments Historiques d'Alsace*, 19, 1899, no. 4771.

denies these charges. Strasbourg «has not yet become Münster, God be praised», but it is an example of mercy, not scandal, to Germany⁴⁰.

In some ways the entire correspondence is KSZ's self-defense, and much must be passed over in silence; however, it is useful to highlight a few issues. KSZ seems most distressed by the charges that she had fallen away from the faith, caused trouble for the church and her husband, behaved in a way unfitting for a woman of the gospel⁴¹.

KSZ defends herself by appealing to other witnesses than Rabus and his young friends. She speaks of the respect and affection she had received from «the pillars of the church» (the great reformers), pointing out that they had trusted and used her aid. She maintains, in effect, that they respected her as a colleague, not just the wife of a colleague. This is particularly clear in the story of Hedio's death-bed. The dying reformer would not let KSZ leave him, although other (young) ministers and his wife and children were present; it seems clear that Hedio wanted the last of his old colleagues with him at his passing⁴².

KSZ also appeals to Strasbourg itself as witness, writing to the city where she has lived all of her life, asking her neighbours to testify to anything wrong she has done. She reminds Strasbourg of the record of her life, giving examples of her service to the gospel, the church, Strasbourg, her husband, and all who needed her – work she did both with her husband and after his death⁴³. What Rabus calls «making trouble» was in fact the struggle to establish the gospel, something for which the «first old» reformers spent themselves unstintingly and for which they got small thanks, certainly much less than Rabus himself has received for doing much less. KSZ says that many people continue to come to her as a «little piece of the rib of that blessed Matthew Zell», someone to whom they could still flee for refuge (as they had always done with the Zells)⁴⁴.

To defend the content of her confession, KSZ points to two things in particular. One is the unity of her faith with that of her popular and highly regarded husband⁴⁵, the other is her knowledge of and agreement with the «first and best

⁴⁰ D2v, E1v. E1v: Rabus said «du Oberkeit hast solche lecker mehr hie/ unnd straffest nit/ des muostu und deine Stat noch zuom spott/ schandt unnd Exempel dem gantzen Teütschen landt stan/ und noch Münster werden.» Füsslin, *Beyträge*, p. 275, substitutes «erleben» for «Münster werden». KSZ answers: «Straßburg steht noch nicht zuom Exempel inn schand unnd spott dem Teütschen landt/ sonder mehr zuom Exempel der barmhertzigkeit/ mit leidens und auffnung/ der ellenden/ Ist auch noch nicht Munster worden/ Gott sey lob.» Füsslin, *Beyträge*, p. 275 substitutes «müed» for Munster.

⁴¹ G1v, G4v, G1v-J3r, H3r. See McKee, *KSZ*. KSZ says (E3v) that Rabus would like to burn her as a witch, with Hus *et al.*

⁴² G3r-v; G4r.

⁴³ A2r-B1r *et passim*; G1v-H3r.

⁴⁴ G3r-v; H2r. KSZ is sarcastic: Rabus *et al.* are too weak to cause the kind of «unrest» that the old reformers and KSZ did when they suffered for working to establish the gospel (G3v). B4r, C1v, C2r (cf. Büheler, no. 18); L1v, C2r. N3v, A3v, B3r.

⁴⁵ G4v ff, H2r-v. See McKee, *KSZ*.

books» of the great reformers, which she has read and studied more than Rabus has⁴⁶.

KSZ does recognize that she is a sinner, that she has not done all that she should have done, and she clearly appeals to God's mercy – but she insists that she is not guilty of the charges of heresy and trouble-making that Rabus brings against her. It is true that she speaks roughly (i. e., not tactfully), but what she says is true, not false. No one has ever accused her of the kinds of things Rabus does, even people to whom she has written or spoken more sharply – and not even Rabus himself in earlier years⁴⁷!

Perhaps the climax of KSZ's argument is her appeal to Rabus against himself. She demands of Rabus that he names and proves his charges, and she turns some of his accusations into self-indictments. She reminds him that he had invited her to live with his family as their mother when he became her husband's successor. He valued her witness to the gospel in his earlier years as pastor so much that he once said he would not take forty gulden for what they had spoken together. Now he says that she is hypocritical, but if he believed such evil of her before and did not tell her sooner, then he is the hypocrite⁴⁸. When he says that she has now fallen away from the faith, she points to the agreement of her confession with that of the earlier reformers... and insists that it is Rabus himself who has fallen away. Among other things, he has changed Matthew Zell's prayers for the Lord's Supper, and is teaching a different doctrine of baptism from all the first reformers, including his revered Luther⁴⁹.

Before turning to a fuller discussion of KSZ's criticism of Rabus, it is helpful to examine the principles on which she grounded her defense of those whom Rabus considered heretics, and thus the basis for her counter-charges against him.

3. The Zells' Understanding of Faith, «Tolerance», and Limits

KSZ's understanding of the content of faith, her practical expression of it, and her ideas of what might be called «tolerance»⁵⁰, are interwoven, but each is a distinct part of a whole. Simply put, there are some beliefs necessary for a true confession

⁴⁶ References to books known to her. Luther heads the list: N1v, N2v, D4r, E1r, E4r, F4v, H3v, J1v, J2r. Schwenckfeld: L3v, M1v, M3r, F2v, K4r. Brenz: N2v, D4r, E1r. Bucer: D4r, J2r-v. «Bellius» (Castellio): E1r-v. Staupitz: E4r. Melanchthon: H3v. Zwick: J2r. Bugenhagen: J2r. Savonarola: N1v. «First and best books» (or some equivalent), esp. referring to Luther and his followers: N2v, D4r, E4r, H3v, J1v, J2r, K3r. E4r. KSZ also refers to some of the church fathers, e. g., Augustine and especially Ambrose. See McKee, KSZ.

⁴⁷ H2v; E4v-F1r, J3v. F2r. G3r. G4r.

⁴⁸ G4r. H2r, H3r *et passim*.

⁴⁹ H3r-J3r. H3v, H4r-v, J2r.

⁵⁰ Strasbourg developed a reputation for tolerance in the sixteenth century itself, and not a little scholarly attention has been devoted to the question. See McKee, KSZ, for full discussion, and below, n. 56.

of the gospel, and so (active) rejection of these beliefs marks a boundary (KSZ is primarily concerned with the convictions and only incidentally with which persons are in or out). Within the bounds of the necessary confession, differences on «lesser questions» may be tolerated. In any case, however, Christian charity is to extend to all people (though this does not preclude a vigorous discussion with those who differ, especially regarding the «chief point», «Hauptstück» of the gospel).

In setting out the various facets of KSZ's conviction and practice, the logical place to begin is where she herself does, with the confessional basis, the «chief point» which defines one as a Christian and on which there must be agreement.

«(Zwingli) mit so grossem ernst/ lieb und glauben, mit vil schmach und arbeit/ das hoch warhafftig unnd nötig Hauptstück/ das Jesus der Christ und Gottes Suon/ deshalb allein der einig Seligmacher und Herr/ alles fleisch seie geglaubet/ offentlichen gelert/ geprediget/ und bekindt hat.»⁵¹

References to the «chief point» occur five times in this one series of letters, and a number of other passages offer very similar summaries without actually calling them «Hauptstück». It is notable that this «chief point» is explicitly shared «with us» by Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, and the Baptists – those whom Rabus accuses by name. The «us» appears to refer generally to all Protestants (perhaps especially to the standard bearer Luther?)⁵². It is absolutely clear that «Christ as the true Son of God and only Savior» (Matthew's formula) is the key to the Zells' understanding of the Christian faith⁵³.

The Zells were not indiscriminate; they plainly saw themselves as Protestants and not Roman Catholics. Those who share the chief point are within the gospel; those who do not, are outside. The boundary cases are Rome and the Jews. KSZ says that the chief point is that on which «we» separated from Rome, that for which «we» fought against the pope and all unbelieving works⁵⁴. It is false teaching to attribute to works, creatures, elements, what belongs to Christ alone. The Mass and Interim are idolatry, emergency baptism is great unbelief and error which honors water instead of Christ, and afflicts poor mothers whose children have died unbaptized. KSZ expresses the early Protestant objections to ceremonies, to papal ordination and sacramental teaching, to all human infringements on the honor owed to Christ alone. She could and would argue vigorously with those she believed were wrong, while yet accepting them as people⁵⁵.

51 F3r.

52 F3r (Zwingli). D3v, E1r (Baptists). G2r (KSZ). K4r-v (Schwenckfeld and Strasbourg, see at n. 63). See also M1r, H3r, K3v, and Zell in n. 53.

53 D4r, H2v. See below at n. 61.

54 E1r, M1r.

55 Various negative references: M1r, B4v, C1r, C3v, D1v, G4v, H3v, H4r, J1v, J2r, J2v, J3r, L1v. Argument in «Ein Brieff» is within the group which shares «the chief point», with Rabus. For an example of KSZ's «evangelical» arguments with those she considered outside the chief point, see the humorous note in Jacob von Gottesheim, *Diarium seu Ephemerides*, in: *Bulletin de la Société pour la Conservation des Monuments*

Claiming that the errors of Rome came from Judaism, KSZ extends her comments on the «boundaries» of Christian faith to make clear the exclusion of Judaism as such. The criticism is very traditional, based on the condemnation of Christ by «the Jews», and it includes objections to legalism though not to the law itself. KSZ says that those good Jews who understood the law followed Christ, and her criticism of Judaism is fully compatible with a positive view of the Old Testament (interpreted Christologically)⁵⁶. This polemic against the Jews also seems not to have been personal; in fact, KSZ says that no Jew would have treated her as badly as Rabus has done, which re-inforces her characteristic (though implicit) distinction between creed and people. It is notable that KSZ's sharpest criticisms of both Rome and the Jews are indirect; it is Rabus' adoption or practice of Roman or Jewish ideas which draws the most fire⁵⁷.

The chief point of the faith is clear, the boundaries are clear, but what about the space between and the actual living of the faith? Differences on lesser matters may be tolerated, if the chief point is truly confessed and defended. One example of tolerable differences is the Baptists' views on the «polity» («Haushaltung») of the church, i. e., their stricter discipline. For good measure, KSZ continues by pointing out that things which Rabus has done, such as his use of the papal surplice and his abandoning of his Strasbourg flock, require as much exercise of tolerance by others as the Baptists demand of him. KSZ goes so far as to say that «you (Rabus) should take the blame that <we> are, in life and teaching, such that they (the Baptists) separate themselves from us»⁵⁸.

The reason for tolerating differences is that faith is a gift of God, it cannot be compelled. For example, Jews ought not to be persecuted for not believing in Christ. If people do wrong, the magistrates should punish them, but faith cannot be coerced or commanded; it belongs to the heart and conscience, not to the outer person. It must be said that KSZ's expression of this principle is somewhat

Historiques d'Alsace 19, 1899, p. 272 (1527), where this rather tolerant Roman Catholic says that he was invited to dinner by KSZ because «sie wolt gern mit ihm disputieren».

⁵⁶ M2r, C1v, D2v, D4r. N3r, F4r-v, J2v, K3v. M3v, M4v. For more on Christological interpretation, see KSZ's «Den Psalmen Miserere», C8r ff; see McKee, KSZ. See *Daniel Husser, Le plaidoyer pour la tolérance de Caspar Schwenckfeld et ses adeptes à Strasbourg (1529-1631)*, in: *Conscience et liberté* 25, 1983, pp. 74-86. Husser, esp. 81ff, cites KSZ's «Ein Briefff» as a fine example of the «aspiration profonde à la tolérance et au libre-choix en matière de foi.» He states that for Schwenckfelders tolerance did not mean indifference and withdrawal, but manifested itself as charitable activity, social justice, and personal morality rather than adherence to an intellectual system. Husser seems to ignore KSZ's clear affirmation of the «chief point» – which in fact is doctrinal – and the resulting limits. Rightly citing KSZ's hospitality as characteristic of Schwenckfeld's followers, Husser implies that this openness is owed to the fact that KSZ was a Schwenckfelder. He does not remind the reader that KSZ's activity in receiving refugees (including the examples which he cites, G2v-G3r) long antedates her acquaintance with Schwenckfeld.

⁵⁷ B1r; N4r, E2r, A4r. D1v (Rabus-Rome-Judaism).

⁵⁸ D3v-D4r. E1r.

simplistic, and she does not elaborate on the matter, although she has generally a positive attitude toward some aspects of civil involvement in church affairs⁵⁹. KSZ's main object here is, however, to combat coercion in spiritual matters. She comments favorably on the book which «the good man Martin Bellius» (Castellio) wrote about how to deal with those who err, who are called heretics. KSZ lists names of some of those whom Castellio quotes. She also speaks approvingly of (early) works by Luther and especially by Brenz, on how the civil authority should treat the Baptists. It is significant to note in this context that KSZ objects to the burning of «poor Servetus», but she does not defend Servetus' views⁶⁰. Whether or not the Zells ever offered hospitality to Servetus, this notorious figure may serve as an entry point into the Zells' own expression and practice of faith and tolerance.

For Matthew and Katharina Schütz Zell, Christian fellowship had certain boundaries; Christian charity had virtually none. It is important to note both factors. The Zells' approval of fellow believers had clear limits, but their acceptance extended more widely than that of most of their contemporaries. Repeatedly, Matthew affirmed that «wer Christum für den warn Suonn Gottes/ und den einigen Heilandt aller Menschen/ glaub unnd bekhen/ der soll theil und gemein an seinem (Zell's) Tisch und Herberg haben/ er wölle auch theil und gemein mit im im Himel haben»⁶¹.

What went for Matthew went equally for Katharina. She affirmed that she and her husband were never other than united in matters of faith and also in outward things. KSZ said she would not have married Matthew if she had not agreed with him in faith, and she spent her life trying to fulfill Matthew's requests because she understood these as in accordance with God's commands. When Rabus accused her of receiving heretics (Zwingli and Oecolampadius), KSZ responded that this hospitality was Matthew's will⁶².

In the conflict over Schwenckfeld, when he and the Strasbourg theologians disagreed on a number of points, KSZ insisted on remaining in fellowship with both sides.

«(E)r (Schwenckfeld) unnd sie (Strasbourgers)/ sich inn vilen dingen getrent/
Das Hauptstück aber/ das Christus das Lamb Gottes unnd unser einiger erlöser

⁵⁹ D4r, E1r. E. g., KSZ seems to express approval of a role for civil authorities in church order, when she reminds Rabus that he received God's call to be pastor in Strasbourg through the magistrates, and reproaches him for abandoning his vocation without giving them or others any notice (D1v).

⁶⁰ E1r-v. M2r, E1r, E3v. Probably: Luther, Von weltlicher Oberkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei, 1523, WA 11, 229-281. Probably: Brenz, Ob eyn weltliche Oberkeit,... möge die Widerteuffer... zum tod richten lassen, 1528, in: Johannes Brenz, Frühschriften, part 2, ed. *Martin Brecht ... et al.*, Tübingen 1974, 472ff (cf. 498ff).

⁶¹ D4r (quotation), H2v.

⁶² G4v-H1r, A2v; J3r; H1v-H2r, A2r-v. For KSZ, see esp. G2r, and McKee, KSZ.

sey/ hab ich alzeit auff beiden seitten befunden/ deshalb ich mich das ander nit hab lassen irren/ und beide theil geliebt/ unnd mich von niemants getrent»⁶³. The fellowship held with all who shared the chief point did not mean all were regarded as equally correct, but all were deserving of love.

«(E)s syen die/ so unserm lieben Doctor Luther angehangen/ oder Zwinglin/ oder Schwenckfelt/ und die armen Tauffbrüeder/ Reich und arm/ Weiß und unweiß/ nach der red des heiligen Pauli/ alle haben sie zuo uns dörrffen khummen/ was hatt uns ihre Nammen angangen/ wir seind auch nit gezwungen gewesen/ jedes meinung unnd Glaubens zuo sein/ seindt aber schuldig gewesen/ einem jeden/ Liebe/ Dienst/ unnd Barmhertzigkeit zuo beweisen/ das hatt uns unser Lehrmeister Christus geleret»⁶⁴.

The Zells refused no one their help. Matthew told Katharina frequently that everyone should have access to him, and Katharina took this for law, and continued it after his death. All are called to share in Christ's office – not that of redemption, but that of love for one's neighbour, doing for others as Christ has done for us. KSZ tells Rabus that he would be like the priest and levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan, not like the Samaritan himself, who helped and cared for the wounded man without asking of what faith he was⁶⁵.

4. KSZ's Counter-Charges against Rabus

Interwoven with KSZ's defense of her faith, her friends, and herself, is an increasingly sharp criticism of Rabus and his friends. A number of the criticisms have been touched on earlier, but an orderly and somewhat fuller summary may be helpful.

Essentially, the root of the problem seemed to KSZ to be that Rabus *et al.* had fallen away from the teaching and practice of the first reformers, literally degenerated⁶⁶. This is evident in the personal disrespect shown by Rabus. Furthermore the young are planting again some of the errors their elders rooted out at such enormous cost. The disrespect for Zell is demonstrated in Rabus' treatment of KSZ and in the way Rabus has altered Matthew's sacramental teaching, prayers, and practice. Rabus is not honoring Luther, as he thinks, but in fact behaving in some ways

⁶³ K4r-v. The 1553 letter is fundamentally an account of KSZ's self-defense on two fronts: to Rabus *et al.* for her ties with Schwenckfeld (3v-7r), and (at even greater length) how she answered Schwenckfelders who criticized her refusal to break with the established Strasbourg church (7v-12r). The picture which emerges is of a person who appreciates both sides and therefore refuses to be compelled to choose either one over against the other.

⁶⁴ H2v; see e. g., G3r.

⁶⁵ A2v, E2r, G2v, H2v, J1v. See Matthew's objection to mistreatment of poor (possibly Anabaptists): E1v-E2r, and 1553 letter, 4r.

⁶⁶ L3v-L4r, L4v-M1r, M2v, N5r, B4r, C1v, C2r, C2v, C3r, D1v-D2r, E1r, E1v, J2r, K3r, L1v, L2r, *et passim*. See 1553 letter, 5r-6v, for similar though less sharp criticism.

like Luther's papal opponents, and changing Luther's teachings, such as that on emergency baptism. It is notable that KSZ almost always appeals to Luther's «first and best» books, although she also cites his exhortation to the Zells on their visit in 1538 «never to let anything back in which has been removed and has no basis in scripture»⁶⁷.

A second and related criticism is Rabus' intolerance. Enough has been said above about this point.

Connected also with the falling away from the first teaching of the gospel is Rabus' fascination with Roman Catholic practices and ideas. One clear focus for this accusation is the re-introduction of various ceremonies and especially the use of the surplice. Another is the different interpretation of both the Lord's Supper and baptism. Echoing fears expressed by her husband, KSZ says that Rabus is making hearing sermons and attending the sacraments new «works», as he and his friends re-introduce the idea of objective presence in the elements of the Supper and the water of baptism. A third form of «papal» influence is related to power – clerical power and legalism, though KSZ believes people will not let themselves be deprived of gospel liberty⁶⁸.

KSZ sees Rabus' secret departure from Strasbourg as a kind of abandoning of his flock which calls into question his vocation (ordination). He is not behaving as a good pastor, as St. Paul or as those earlier reformers of whom he speaks so disparagingly. Rabus is in fact driving people away and blaming this on others⁶⁹.

The final group of criticisms might be called faults of character, the main ones being pride, ambition and a want of frankness, and perhaps a certain greed for material things. One of the foci of criticism is Rabus' doctorate. KSZ considered this a seeking after importance and status rather than a real concern for the gospel. When he first took his degree, Rabus and KSZ discussed the matter, and the latter rebuked her «son» for seeking such pomp, foolishness, and worldly honor when they were at the end of the world and the hangman was ready at hand. Rabus reminded KSZ that she had approved of Luther's doctorate. She answered that degrees taken in the time of ignorance of the gospel were the means to enter the pulpit, but since such degrees are no longer needed in order to preach, all the first reformers rejected such titles as doctor instead of seeking them. Perhaps one sees

⁶⁷ D4r, D4v, F3r, H3r, K4r. H3v, H4r, J2r, H4r-v *et passim*. D4r, J1r, J2v. L4r, M1v. On the question of weeds: M1r, C3r-v, D1v; KSZ accuses Rabus *et al.* of bringing back weeds rooted out by first reformers. The image is particularly interesting because the parable of wheat and tares often was a proof-text to justify the killing of heretics. See S. *Schwantès*, *L'ivraie et les hérétiques*, in: *Conscience et liberté* 25, 1983, pp. 47-52. KSZ never equates weeds with people but repeatedly calls doctrinal errors weeds.

⁶⁸ M1r, C4v ff, H4r, J2v. H3v, H4v (and n. 67), J3r, C3r. M2r. See 1553 letter, 6v (*opus operatus*) – one of KSZ's very rare Latin phrases.

⁶⁹ B2v ff. L4v, N4v. See KSZ's description of Rabus, E4r-v: a damning with faint praise. See 1553 letter, 10v on doctorate – probably related to the discussion which began the misunderstandings.

here an over-reaction on KSZ's part. At all events, she notes it as the beginning of problems between Rabus and herself⁷⁰.

Related to the matter of the doctorate is the issue of ecclesiastical power, especially the ambition to be superintendent of a church. Although he gives many fine reasons for going to Ulm, KSZ insists that what Rabus really wanted was an important position. This part of the indictment has a strongly humorous, almost slapstick quality. Simply put, Rabus says he leaves Strasbourg because he is fleeing the Mass (and sects). KSZ asks him how he can say so, when the Mass is also in Ulm. He may say that in Ulm it is only an old monk saying Mass in a corner, not preaching. KSZ says that preaching, even by a Roman Catholic, would include some reference to Christ and the gospel and so would be preferable to the Mass. As for the corner part: in Strasbourg the Mass is indeed in the cathedral, but does Rabus think that God is old and doesn't see well, and notices only what happens in the important places like the cathedral, and not what is done in corners⁷¹?

A third point of personal criticism focuses on money. Here KSZ may well have been somewhat insensitive, since she had a comfortable economic situation (though she spent her substance freely on others)⁷². A number of times, KSZ suggests that Rabus is more interested in money than is fitting for a minister. The primary bone of contention, however, was Rabus' martyrology, mentioned above. Twice he asked KSZ for information about her husband and the beginning of the reform in Strasbourg, to include in his book. After her first refusal and his rude letter, Rabus wrote to a Strasbourg pastor to ask KSZ again! KSZ refused to cooperate, because she objected to having Matthew in a «geldtbuoch», which she thought Rabus was writing more for the money than for the sake of the church, as he claimed. According to KSZ, her non-cooperation here was the second reason for Rabus' anger with her⁷³.

A final point might be termed «dissembling». KSZ accuses Rabus of not speaking honestly or truthfully, especially when he says she lies, or when he claims things contrary to historical fact – though she was there and he was not. One of the funnier points is KSZ's demand to know how Rabus can want to have her account of Matthew Zell if he, Rabus, is convinced she does not tell the truth? Does he want to publish the lies of a fool?⁷⁴

⁷⁰ C3v, G1v, K2v-K3r. L4r, M2v, C1v, C2v, C3v, D4v, F3r, G1v.

⁷¹ C2r, C2v, C3r, K3r; story: C3v-C4r.

⁷² G4v-H1r, H1v, A2v. See McKee, KSZ.

⁷³ C2v, C3r, F3r, G3v, K2r. Problem: G3v-G4r, K1r-v.

⁷⁴ G3v, K1v; also G4r. KSZ says that if he knew what happened before he was born he must be a child wonder (G2r).

Conclusion

The foregoing has not attempted to prove who were heretics and who not. Rather, it has sought to demonstrate how a lay Christian, a woman, argued in defense of her fellow-believers. KSZ's writing is by turns persuasive, humorous, and biting, but always the note of passionate conviction is heard, as she asserts and proves (at least to her own satisfaction and that of some contemporaries) that Schwenckfeld, Zwingli, the Baptists, and she herself were not heretics but faithful, though sinful, followers of the one Savior Christ.

Prof. Dr. Elsie Anne McKee, Princeton Theological Seminary, CN 821, Princeton, NJ 08542-0803