This collection of new translations into German of a small group of Olaus Petri’s religious writings is intended to broaden the German understanding of the Swedish Reformation by making available a selection of key documents by one of the leading polemical lights of the movement. The editors and translators, all part of the Abteilung für Nordische Philologie des Deutschen Seminars and the Institut für Schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte in the University of Zürich, have chosen five pamphlets and polemics from 1528 and 1531 to represent Olaus’ contribution to the theological argument of the early phase of the Reformation in Sweden. Their appearance in 2002 marks the 450th anniversary of the death of the Swedish reformer.

The essays follow a short general introduction by Hans Ulrich Bächtold, sketching the historical background out of which they come. Each of the translations is preceded by a brief note by its translator directed at the specific text, indicating its source, its contents, its relationship to earlier German texts—our trendy friend, “intertextuality,” makes an appearance here—its position within Olaus’ larger work, and its organization. The source of all these pieces is the critical edition, Olavus Petri, *Samlade skrifter*, 4 vols., ed. Bengt Hesselman (Uppsala: Sveriges kristliga studentrörelsers förlag, 1914-17).

The first of the five pieces is *Een liten boock om Sacramenten* (tr. Silvia Müller), a long essay on the central theological dispute between Luther and his Roman Catholic opponents, the nature of the sacraments, especially Holy Communion. This disagreement, which has mellowed with time in theological terms if not in prac-
tical ones, is still with us today. The second, *Een liten undervisning om Echteskapet* (tr. Karin Naumann), written three years after Olaus Petri himself married, covers the well-known arguments about why the clergy ought to marry. Olaus points out, as has almost everyone else, that a celibate clergy is a late (13th century) practice in the Church, but this made no difference to the Roman Catholic hierarchy then and seems not to now. *Een liten boock j huilko closterleffwerne fordarat warder* (tr. Anna Katharina Dömling), makes the argument that the cloistered life is, in fact, against the will of God (*Heuchelei und Apostasie*). The translator sees this text as “*eine Apologie der beginnenden Säkularisation.*” The translator of the last of the writings from 1528, *Om gudz ordh och menneskios bodh och stadhgar j thet andeligha* (tr. Hans Ulrich Bächtold), sees the piece, a discussion of how people ought to bring the Word of God into their lives, as a looking back at the religious unrest of the year and a looking forward to the provincial synod to come in Örebro the following February. The last piece in the collection, from 1531, is the shortest and takes up a practical matter touching all church-goers: *Orsack hwar före Messan böör wara pà thet tungonäl som then menighe man förstondelighet är* (tr. Hans-Peter Naumann). That the documents and acts of religion ought to be available to believers in their own language was not an early issue for Lutherans but it seems to be an obvious conclusion of a reform aimed at bringing church members into the closest possible communion with God expressed in and as the Word (*logos*), as we read in the opening sentence of the Gospel of John. Olaus Petri was a staunch supporter of vernacular worship, as his translations of the Mass texts and of the Bible (to whatever extent he participated in the latter) amply witness, and this is a brief explanation of why this ought to be so.

The book concludes with a miniscule bibliography, an *Index nominum*, and a register of all Bible citations, as well as brief biographies of the translators.
Olaus Petri has a seminal position in the history of modern Swedish. This is largely attributed to the influence of the translation of the so-called Gustaf Wasa Bible of 1550, in which he is said to have had a leading role. The nature of that role is in dispute, but what cannot be gainsaid is the accessible language of his prose, seen at its best in the fifth document above, a piece formally addressed directly to ordinary people. This raises, of course, the matter of literacy, presumed not to be widespread at this time. The style of the fifth piece suggests to me that it was a sermon first and was, perhaps, intended to provide homiletical guidance (and argument) to a not-quite-entirely reformed clergy. Given that Olaus Petri’s importance is seen today mostly in terms of his role in the development of the Swedish language, it is a shame that we could not have had a sample of that language, say, the Swedish text of the last essay. Otherwise, the book fulfills its modest aim.

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