from original and the best secondary sources, is an important addition to our knowledge about the political and religious climate of Poland in the time of the Reformation.

Much information from studies in Polish is made available to a wider public in this book. For example, I learned that from around 1600 there was a tendency for the Socinians, the Calvinists, and the Greek Orthodox to band together in common defense against Catholic attacks. Furthermore, I had not been aware that the Socinians, who are noted for their liberalism and tolerance, imposed a very strict censorship upon their printers.

The third section of the book is a bibliography, based on painstaking research in the libraries of Eastern and Western Europe and North America, of all the known items printed by Rodecki and Sternacki. Each item is described fully with a complete transcription of the title page. Anonymous and undated works have generally been identified. The current location of extant copies is also noted and there are even indices of former owners of the individual items and of annotations made in them to the end of the eighteenth century. These last features give very concrete evidence of the extent and rapidity of the dissemination of Socinian literature throughout Europe.

Later translations and editions are also noted. Furthermore, books printed clandestinely outside Poland that were falsely attributed to Rodecki and Sternacki are included along with their proper identification insofar as known. The bibliographical section alone of Kawecka-Gryczowa's study is of tremendous importance. It enables the scholar to find out quickly just what the early Socinians published and to locate the material for further study. This will be an essential tool for anyone working in this field.

The *Racovian Catechism* is generally acknowledged to be the single most important Socinian book as it put the essentials of the faith together in compact form and had the widest circulation of any Socinian publication. Kawecka-Gryczowa notes two editions of the *Racovian Catechism* (90a, 90b) not recorded in earlier standard studies. Both of these were London reprints of the 1609 Racovian edition and appeared around 1614 and 1623. This is extremely important as the earliest London edition had been thought to be that of 1651. It seems clear, then, that the impact of Socinianism in England in the early part of the seventeenth century must be rethought.

The fourth section of this book consists of 34 plates of scenes of modern Rakow, Socinus's tomb, typographical figures, and above all many sample pages of Rodecki's and Sternacki's work. Plates 22 and 23 are of the title pages of the "new" London editions of the *Racovian Catechism* (90a, 90b). The plates are all clearly reproduced on coated paper. Indeed, the entire book is very well printed and pleasant to the eye.

All in all, this is quite a good book, which I expect will become a standard reference volume for anyone doing Socinian studies. It is further evidence of the high quality of scholarly work done in Poland on the Reformation. In fact, I think I might have to learn Polish.

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Johannes Trithemius. *In Praise of Scribes (De Laude Scriptorum)*, ed. Klaus Arnold. Lawrence Kansas: Coronado Press, 1974. Pp. ix, 111. \$6.50.

Johannes Trithemius, who derived his name from the little town of Trittenheim on the Moselle river, is probably best remembered for his interest in witchcraft and the occult which connect-

ed him with the Faust legend. Moreover, he has been the object of scholarly interest because of his historical falsifications, which, unfortunately, distract from the fact that his contributions as a historiographer have really been quite significant. Also noteworthy among his more than eighty books are his literary biographies and his treatise on cryptography, which he presented to Emperor Maximilian I in person. *In Praise of Scribes* is neither very original nor in any way controversial. At first glance, its subject matter may seem rather absurd: an exhortation to and some advice about the copying of books at a time when the art of printing was rapidly growing out of its infancy; in addition, it came from a man who had active relationships with the printers at nearby Mainz, where most of his books were printed. Nevertheless, this treatise will serve well to complement our picture of the religious leader and scholar Trithemius, who was held in high esteem by such illustrious contemporaries as Celtis, Reuchlin and Paracelsus.

Klaus Arnold, who prepared this edition of *In Praise of Scribes*, has already some publications on the life and work of Trithemius to his credit. In a twenty-five-page introduction he gives a brief biographical sketch and also deals with such questions as the origin, sources and transmission of the text. There are also five plates, including an autograph of Trithemius. The Latin text, *De Laude Scriptorum*, is based on the first printed edition of 1494 and presented with a side-by-side English translation prepared by Roland Behrendt, O.S.B. A critical apparatus underneath the Latin text lists variants and sources, and a rather useful index of quotations, as well as a general index, completes the little volume. It is regrettable that there is no bibliography and no references to other studies on Trithemius and relevant subjects except for a reference to Arnold's own publications.

The factual and rather bland introduction only hints at what must have been a very interesting life at a time when western civilization was at a turning point. The decisive moment in Trithemius' life came when on his way home from Heidelberg he sought shelter from a winter storm in the Benedictine monastery at Sponheim; he stayed on and emerged as its abbot less than two years later, not yet twenty-three years old. After such a promising beginning he never climbed any higher in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and devoted the rest of his life to the goals of monastic reform, the promotion of learning and the collection of books.

All three of these concerns are reflected in the treatise *In Praise of Scribes*. In the sixteen brief chapters various aspects of scribal practices are discussed in some detail. But his interest is not limited to Scripture and the writings of the holy fathers: "By no means do we wish to exclude books on secular sciences" (73). There is an attempt by Trithemius to justify the efforts and expenditures of his constant search for books which eventually increased the holdings of Sponheim monastery from 48 to nearly 2000 volumes and made it a centre of learning. Finally, he raises the obvious question as to why books should be copied at all when printing can do the job so much more efficiently. His repeated argument here is that the printed book is made of paper and "will quickly disappear. But the scribe working with parchment ensures lasting remembrance for himself and for his text" (35). Such an argument becomes more convincing when we consider that his library contained codices which even then were more than 600 years old.

It seems, however, that not all the monks shared his "enthusiasm for books," and they appear to have needed a great deal of persuasion: "Let no one dare to shun copying if he wants to escape the punishment of idlers" (71). Trithemius repeatedly refers to the Rule of St. Benedict, "which so stresses labor that lazy monks are not recognized as monks at all," and quotes from Scripture that "the man who will not work shall not eat" (83). Thus it becomes quite clear that the copying of books which seemed so desirable to the humanist and scholar also tied in

with the goals of the reform-minded abbot to improve morale in the monasteries: "And so, being too indolent to pray, not well enough trained for contemplation, and exposed to the risk of being distracted by idle desires, we can best compensate for all these deficiencies by zealously copying books which will serve the edification of many" (55). But opposition to Trithemius finally became so strong that in 1506 he left Sponheim and spent the rest of his life as Abbot of St. James, a small monastery outside Würzburg.

It probably can be said that Trithemius was more of a conserver than an innovator. He died shortly before the era of change and turmoil during which the printing press became such an effective medium for so many new voices and messages. Yet his *In Praise of Scribes* will still strike a responsive chord with many who share his love of learning and believe with him that "No book is so poor that some profit cannot be derived from it" (95).

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