



# **The War against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany (Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany)**

*Michael B. Gross*

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"A lucid, innovative work of top-flight scholarship. Gross shows us the depths of anti-Catholicism in nineteenth-century Germany; he explains why the German Kulturkampf had such force and why prominent liberals imagined it as a turning point not only in Germany but in world history."

---Helmut Walser Smith, Vanderbilt University

"A marvelously original account of how the Kulturkampf emerged from the cultural, social, and gendered worlds of German liberalism. While not neglecting the 1870s, Gross's analysis directs historians' attention to the under-researched 1850s and 1860s—decades in which liberals' anti-Catholic arguments were formulated against a backdrop of religious revival, democratic innovation, national ambition, and the articulation of new roles for women in society, politics, and the church. The drama of these decades resonates in every chapter of Gross's fine study."

---James Retallack, University of Toronto

"Michael Gross has put the culture back into the Kulturkampf! Integrating social and political analysis with illuminating interpretations of visual and linguistic evidence, Gross explores the work of religious cleavage in defining German national identity. An emerging women's movement, liberal virtues, and Catholic difference come together to explain why, in a century of secularization, Germany's Catholics experienced a religious revival, and why its liberals responded with enmity and frustration. Vividly written and a pleasure to read, this groundbreaking study offers real surprises."

---Margaret Lavinia Anderson, University of California, Berkeley

An innovative study of the relationship between the two most significant, equally powerful, and irreconcilable movements in Germany, Catholicism and liberalism, in the decades following the 1848 Revolution.

After the defeat of liberalism in the Revolution of 1848, and in the face of the dramatic revival of popular Catholicism, German middle-class liberals used anti-Catholicism to orient themselves culturally in a new age. Michael B. Gross's study shows how anti-Catholicism and specifically the Kulturkampf, the campaign to break the power of the Catholic Church, were not simply attacks against the church nor were they merely an attempt to secure state autonomy. Gross shows that the liberal attack on Catholicism was actually a complex attempt to preserve moral, social, political, and sexual order during a period of dramatic pressures for change.

Gross argues that a culture of anti-Catholicism shaped the modern development of Germany including capitalist economics, industrial expansion, national unification, and gender roles. He demonstrates that images of priests, monks, nuns, and Catholics as medieval, backward, and sexually deviant asserted the liberal middle-class claim to social authority after the Revolution of 1848. He pays particular attention to the ways anti-Catholicism, Jesuitphobia, and antimonastic hysteria were laced with misogyny and expressed

deeper fears of mass culture and democracy in the liberal imagination. In doing so, he identifies the moral, social, and cultural imperatives behind the Kulturkampf in the 1870s.

By offering a provocative reinterpretation of liberalism and its relationship to the German anti-Catholic movement, this work ultimately demonstrates that in Germany, liberalism itself contributed to a culture of intolerance that would prove to be a serious liability in the twentieth century. It will be of particular interest to students and scholars of culture, ideology, religion, and politics.

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