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About Collection 11

Launched to coincide with the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, Collection 11 is the first *Early European Books* release to be curated fully thematically, made possible by the addition of a new search field. Since 2016, *Early European Books* has been enriched by the inclusion of 38 different [USTC subject classifications](#), allowing the user to identify titles by subject area and to navigate the product with enhanced selectivity. Curation steps from this collection onwards will also be informed by subject themes in *Early European Books*.

Where previous collections have tended to be assembled according to broader or more complex parameters, Collection 11 focuses squarely on religious works. The collection draws on material from 4 libraries in Europe: the Wellcome Library in London as well as from three national libraries - Italy's Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Denmark's Kongelige Bibliotek and Holland's Koninklijke Bibliotheek. The titles selected include devotional literature, bibles and bible commentaries, but also mystical writings, works on witchcraft and demonology and books of funeral orations, all of which reflect the rich terrain of early modern religious, spiritual and popular belief.

Establishing the theme of Collection 11 is one of the central works of devotional literature for the early modern period and beyond, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. Originally composed in the early 15th century, in print the work proved hugely popular and was translated into many different languages. As well as Dutch translations of the work, Collection 11 includes a number of editions of the original Latin-text version, *De imitando Christo*, all dating from the 1600s. Other religious works from the pre-Gutenberg era are also in evidence. These include a Venice, 1489 edition of St. Augustine's *De civitate Dei* as well as a multi-volume edition of his works published in Antwerp in 1700. Collection 11 also features an Antwerp edition of the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiasticae historiae* dating back to 1550, as well as late-fifteenth century editions of Anselm of Canterbury published in Germany and Italy.



Beyond the inclusion of earlier Christian writings, Collection 11 focuses strongly on texts of the early modern period, and in particular on titles which relate to the religious debates of the Reformation. What began in 1517 with the circulation of Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*, originally prompted as an outcry against the selling of indulgences by the Church, led to the most decisive schism within Western Christendom. Reflecting this historic shift, Collection 11 contains writings by many of the best-known figures of the Reformation. Editions of Luther's postils are exemplified, together with numerous works and commentaries by Jean Calvin. Among a multitude of other significant Protestant texts, a variety of writings by Huguenot minister Pierre du Moulin (1568-1658) are to be found, as well as works by the prolific French clergyman and scholar, David Blondel (1591-1655). Numerous titles by the Calvinist theologian Friedrich Spanheim (1600-1649) include a 1690 edition of his *Disquisitio historica de papa foemina* investigating the legend of Pope Joan, a frequent topic of discussion during these times. Reflecting the Reformation's impact on state and secular matters, Collection 11 features several German editions of lawyer Dietrich Reinking's *Tractatus de regimine seculari et ecclesiastico*. Other items of interest include a 1685 Dutch translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* author John Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1682), further Dutch editions of the writings of William Penn and an Amsterdam, 1637, Latin-text edition of Conrad Heresbach's letters to Erasmus on the subject of Anabaptism.



Roman Catholic voices are well represented in Collection 11 by a range of figures both spiritual and scholarly. A Brussels, 1692 paraphrase of the Psalms written by Cornelius Jansen, the father of Jansenism, is included, as are a number of works by the French priest and orientalist Richard Simon (1638-1712). Collection 11 also features sermons by the notorious Florentine Dominican friar, Giralomo Savonarola, as well as two works by the Paris-born Oratorian and thinker Nicolas Malebranche, who sought to reconcile the teachings of St. Augustine with the new Cartesian philosophy. The collection also gathers a handful of works by the fascinating, polymathic figure of Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), the German Jesuit whose interests embraced medicine, comparative religion and the subterranean make-up of the Earth. These titles include his famous book on Egyptology, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (Rome, 1653-4) and his *Arca Noë* (Amsterdam, 1675), a work exploring the biblical story of Noah's Ark and speculating upon the plight after the flood of the many different animal species Noah rescued.

Although the early modern period is known to mark the emergence of state and secular institutions and the birth of modern science, it remained a time of overlap in which, for example, even as giant a figure of the scientific revolution as Sir Isaac Newton could still be drawn to alchemy and other occult studies. As much as the Reformation was a break with the past, in the realm of religion and popular belief too, older ideas persisted, merging with or opposing

the new religious dispensation in all kinds of ways. The place of mysticism in Christianity has always been a central one and Collection 11 reflects this through its selection of mystic writings from medieval times like those of Gertrude the Great (1256-1302), and into the early modern period, with numerous works by the visionary Protestant theologian Jakob Böhme (1575-1624), including an Amsterdam, 1682 edition of *De Signatura Rerum*. The work of another influential German mystic, Valentin Weigel's *Der güldene Griff*, is also featured in a 1613 edition published in Halle. Venturing into the territory of popular belief, the prolific Jesuit theologian Martin Delrio's *Disquisitionum Magicarum* (known in English as *Magical Investigations*) proved hugely popular as an exploration of magic, superstition and witchcraft. The edition included here was published in Mainz in 1600. Collection 11 also features a 1604 edition of the *Daemonologia*, the famed study of necromancy by James I of England (James VI of Scotland) that was written in support of witch hunts and that is thought to have been a source for Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606). An earlier work on witchcraft, the Italian philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Strix* (1523), similarly spread knowledge about witches across Italy, chiefly through its translations into vernacular Italian. The first translation appeared as early as 1524, while the edition featured in Collection 11 is the 1555 version by Turino Turini printed in Pescia. While much of this literature served partly to fuel the witch hunt craze that was entwined with the religious upheavals of the Reformation, among the many Collection 11 titles by the Dutch pastor Balthasar Bekker (1634-1698) is a 1693 German translation of his *De Betoverde Weereld* (1691). Usually known in English as *The World Bewitched*, through his writing Bekker attacked popular superstitious belief in sorcery and magic and, in doing so, made an early contribution to the eventual demise of witch trials in Europe nearly a century later.

As well as marking the anniversary of a crucial turn in the history of Europe, Collection 11 is also a milestone in the story of *Early European Books*, providing, as it does, the first fully thematic gathering of content from four different libraries of world standing. Beyond some of the highlights detailed above, Collection 11 provides extensive access into the religious and spiritual writings of the early modern and Reformation period, and also includes a range of much older texts freshly circulated through the medium of print. Bearing the further distinction of incorporating around 60 incunabula titles, Collection 11 constitutes a richly rewarding addition to *Early European Books*.

