

University of Alberta

Manufacturing Places: Anabaptist Origins, Community and Ritual

by

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Abstract

Traditional analyses of Anabaptist action continue to be problematized by substantial theological, social, economic, ethical, and political disparities defining the early decades of sixteenth-century Anabaptist movements. This dissertation is offered as a “reconciliation,” as an attempt to address and explain these considerable disparities through the application of a spatial interpretation to early Anabaptist history. Spatial concerns were present in all early Anabaptist groups and a spatial focus provides an analytic suitable for the investigation of cultural conflict. Data and its analysis are ordered to form a coherent whole in the manner of a network or web and not, as is more common in historical discourse, as a straight line. Methodological issues and theoretical concerns constitute the centre, subject matter, and parameters of this work. This project is designed to provide the theoretical and methodological tools required for the investigative matrix it builds. Place is constructed in terms of its social and political investments, its relation to the exercise and contestation of power, and its relation to the development and maintenance of social order. Power is conceived spatially and not temporally in this project, and places are interpreted as sites for the exercise and negotiation of power. It establishes a focus that reflects the work of Michel Foucault in which power is regulatory, disciplinary, and spatially determined.

Anabaptists emerged as a direct and decisive reaction to sixteenth-century sacred places, the values with which they were imbued, and the power they exercised. The power medieval churches exercised was not (contra Anabaptist rhetoric) primarily or simply negative, oppressive, restricting or exclusionary. It was also

positive, constructing reality, producing rituals of truth, creating places.¹ Medieval churches were heavily invested pre-eminent socio-political places that exercised substantial cultural power, shaping all facets of medieval socio-political life. Anabaptists emerged as prime contesters of the power and authority of the medieval church, the claims it made, the social order it perpetuated, the relations it established, and the ritual program through which it maintained its privileged position. They developed alternative models, structures, and principles for the exercise of power. The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster provided an opportunity for imagining freedom from the dominant discourses of power and violence through the Münsterite development and utilization of the plenitude of “aesthetic space.” Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* were designed as *Heiligkeitsgemeinde* and constituted a substantial challenge to the existing social order. They were designed, constructed, propagated, and maintained as an ideal place for producing ideal human beings.

The spatial interpretation encouraged in this project operates as a broad form in the re-description of sixteenth-century Anabaptist history and Anabaptist origins by giving priority to Anabaptist socio-political attitudes, actions, and interests without reducing Anabaptists to those forces. Such a study holds the possibility of contributing to our understanding of the relation of place to group identity formation, the exercise of socio-political power through place(s), and the role of ritualization in the contestation, construction, and maintenance of culturally significant places during the sixteenth-century.

¹ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, Colin Gordon (ed.) and Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (trans.) (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 58-59.

Abbreviations

- ÄCHB* A. J. F. Zieglschmid, *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder: Ein Sprachdenkmal aus frühneuhochdeutscher Zeit*. Ithaca: Cayuga Press, 1943.
- AFM* Heinrich Detmer, ed., *Hermann von Kerrsbroch Anabaptistici Furoris Monasterium Inclitam Westphaliae Metropolim Evertentis Historica Narratio*. 2 vols. Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1899-1900.
- AUD*. "Auslegung des anderen Unterschieds Danielis," in Günther Franz (ed.) Band XXXIII, *Thomas Müntzer Schriften und Briefe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1968), 241-263.
- BDA* Carl Adolf Cornelius, ed., *Die Geschichtsquellen des Bistums Münster*. Vol. 2. Heinrich Gresbeck, *Berichte der Augenzeugen über das Münsterische Wiedertäuferreich*. Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1853.
- CADN* "An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation: von des Christlichen standes besserung." *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 6. Band. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1888; reprinted in Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1966.
- CWMS* Leonard Verduin (trans.) and J. C. Wenger (ed.) *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons c. 1496-1561*. Scottdale: PA; Kitchen: ON: Herald Press, 1956.
- DAN* *Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica*. 7 vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill
- FBZT* Adolf Laube, Annerose Schneider, and Ulmann Weiss (eds.) *Flugschriften vom Bauernkrieg zum Täuferreich (1526-1536)*. Vol. 2. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992.
- JH* Hans Fischer, *Jakob Huter: Leben, Froemmigketi, Briefe*, Newton, KS: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956.
- SBR* Robert Stupperich, ed. *Die Schriften der Münsterischen Täufer und ihrer Gegner*. Vol. I. *Die Schriften Bernhard Rothmanns*. Münster: Aschendorff Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970.

QZGWT/QZGT/QZGT Schweiz

*Quellen zur Geschichte der Widertäufer/
Täufer. 20 volumes.*

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Introduction

An Anabaptist Narrative, Ritual and Place

A letter from the Stuttgart governor and city council,¹ dated 6 April 1528 and addressed to King Ferdinand of the House of Hapsburg,² explains that despite the employment of every available strategy in their aggressive campaign against the heretical Anabaptist sect, its secretive practices, its many followers, and their alarming intentions, Stuttgart civil authorities have been unable to prevent Anabaptist³ error and evil from taking root [*einwurzung*] within their territory. They regretfully advise that a small place called Hegnisberg [Hegensberg], located within their jurisdiction and situated near the town of Esslingen,⁴ has proven especially resistant to their best efforts, with a large number of the area's residents permitting themselves to be re-baptized.⁵ A native of Hegensberg, Hans Zuber, is named as one

¹ See, *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, (1930), 6-7, for a transcription of this letter.

² Ferdinand (10 March 1503-25 July 1569) became king of Bohemia and Hungary in 1526, and was the Archduke of Austria from 1521-1564. He ruled the Austrian hereditary lands belonging to the Hapsburgs for much of his life, succeeding his brother Charles as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1558.

³ The term Anabaptist (formed from Greek *ana* (again) and *βαπτίζω* (baptize)) was employed as a term of derision for a socially and theologically disparate group of dissidents during the sixteenth century. Other common sixteenth-century labels include *Winckel Prediger* [corner preacher], *Gartenbrüder* [garden brother], *Rottengeister* [factitious spirits], and *Schwärmer* [enthusiast/zealot]. To be an Anabaptist or *Wiedertäufer* was to be re-baptized, and refers to the practice of baptizing those persons desiring to join Anabaptist separatist communities. Anabaptists did not typically refer to themselves as Anabaptist, largely because they did not recognize paedobaptism as valid. The term Anabaptist is used throughout this project as a descriptive, value-free signifier and not as a polemical term, even if it was primarily employed during the sixteenth century to discredit these dissidents. Though now overlaid with centuries of associations and often weighed down with negative connotations or confessional biases, the term Anabaptist remains an accurate, descriptive term when stripped of its polemical and confessional associations.

⁴ Esslingen was one of the places in which wealthy burghers first received Anabaptist baptism. See, Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History 1524-1618. Switzerland, Austria, Moravia, South and Central Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 312. Zurich and Augsburg were two other prominent early sites for Anabaptist baptism.

⁵ Sixteenth-century civil authorities consistently referred to the culturally peculiar and civilly unacceptable Anabaptist ritual as "re-baptism." The hyphenated term "re-baptism" is used throughout this project for the Anabaptist practice of baptism. Authorities typically presented Anabaptist initiates as passive agents. Re-baptism was something done to "simple people," according to civil authorities, with primary responsibility and culpability always resting with the baptizer and not the baptizand. Re-

of these re-baptized persons, and is listed as apprehended and imprisoned in Stuttgart, together with two other unnamed Anabaptists.⁶ Zuber had appeared before the Stuttgart city council 10 days earlier, and was thoroughly questioned regarding his Anabaptist activities and associations.⁷ According to the court record, Zuber simply and freely (that is, without the imposition of torture) answered all questions that were put to him.⁸ He willingly acknowledged that he had been re-baptized during the recently passed Christmas.⁹ Zuber explained to his interrogators that his re-baptism had taken place in the Feigenbutzen house situated in a small community called Hainbach near Esslingen. He described how a shoemaker from Esslingen named Felix Schuechmacher (Pfundler) had been present, and had presided over the ritual in the presence of a considerable number of witnesses.¹⁰

Given that the vast majority of baptizands in the German-speaking lands during the medieval period were new-born infants,¹¹ that the ritual was strictly

baptism was a capital civil crime during the period in question, but leniency was often extended to Anabaptists at their first trial if they recanted. Pardon was granted far less frequently in the case of a second court appearance, or when the accused had baptized others.

⁶ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 6.

⁷ See, *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914 ff. for a record of Zuber's interrogation.

⁸ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914.

⁹ Zuber recanted his re-baptism 8 days later begging forgiveness and pleading for mercy [*bit um verzig und beger gnad*]. He promised to improve in the future [*furo bessern*], and promised to behave as was fitting for an obedient subject [*halten als ain gehorsam underton*]. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 916. On 11 March 1530 Zuber recanted his participation in Anabaptist activities yet again, and agreed to forego the possibility of any legal defence should he neglect to comply with any condition of his confession and recantation. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 19-20.

¹⁰ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914.

¹¹ John Hammond, Taylor, trans., *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis. The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, Book 10:11 (New York: Newman Press, 1982). Augustine confirms that paedobaptism was an established tradition in the Christian church from at least the 4th century. See also, Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 43. Medieval church baptisms took place in an atrium or separate baptistery from about the High Middle Ages until the sixteenth century, with the ritual beginning just outside the church in the doorway with exorcisms and "acts of cleansing." Margrete Syrstad Andås, "Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone," in *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim: Architectural and Ritual Constructions in their European Context* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishing, 2007), 65.

associated with church buildings,¹² that the ritual's religious efficacy and effective performance were heavily dependent on ordained priests functioning as ritual specialists,¹³ that the performance of the ritual included an array of exorcisms and utilized a variety of accoutrements including oils, chrism, candles, and salt according to a strict liturgy that retained more-or-less fixed cultural and theological meanings,¹⁴ the baptism of Zuber was truly novel on many fronts. Zuber's baptism lacked the traditional trappings, trained clergy, and long-established medieval liturgical form, and, just as in so many other sixteenth-century Anabaptist baptisms, the baptizand was an adult, not an infant. Most importantly given our purposes, and most controversial during the period in question, Anabaptist ritualization and the spatial innovations it introduced disassociated baptism, a foundational and primary Christian rite, from the sacred precincts of the local parish church.¹⁵ In divorcing the ritual intimately associated with the construction and maintenance of medieval society from heavily invested, strictly controlled, and culturally sanctioned church buildings,

¹² Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 21-23; and, Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual*, 44.

¹³ Although "emergency baptisms" by midwives were permitted by church and civil authorities during labour and delivery crises, such baptisms did not relieve parents of their responsibility to present their newborn child to the parish priest should it live. On 1 February 1525 such a requirement was made law in Zurich, with Zurich council passing a resolution that ordered all infants to be baptized by a priest. If the infant was too weak and unlikely to survive the trip to the priest, it could be baptized in the home by the midwife, but thereafter had to be brought to the church and be placed in the priest's hands *QZGT, Schweiz*, 1, 44. Moreover, on the popular level emergency baptisms were often considered inferior, lacking the efficacy of a clergy-performed ritual replete with exorcisms.

¹⁴ For an overview of medieval baptism practice see John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual*; and, Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*.

¹⁵ Mircea Eliade's argument that the sacred is primarily and most fundamentally experienced in spatial terms is given credence in this project. Jonathan Z. Smith has similarly argued that sacrality is above all else a category of emplacement established through ritual practice. Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 104-109. However, sacrality is not understood as an inherent or essential quality of a particular place, but as something imputed to it. The term "sacred place" or "sacred precincts" are herein understood and employed "situationally" and not "substantially." Sacred places are devoid of inherent differences: places and things are declared sacred through ritualization, which always asserts difference, as Smith has effectively argued.

Zuber's re-baptism (like all other sixteenth-century Anabaptist baptisms) threatened to dislocate and thereby redefine the ideological foundation and very nature of medieval society.¹⁶ The dislocation, discontinuity, and disruption Anabaptist ritual practice introduced functioned as a decisive rejection of the medieval church and the values with which it was associated, and developed an altogether new range of spatial opportunities and social values through the Anabaptist identification of this culturally significant, socially important, and politically determinate ritual with comparatively "simple" domestic buildings, home environments, and outdoor spaces. The substantial spatial shift and corresponding challenge to the social order sixteenth-century Anabaptists effected through their ritualization was not lost on local and territorial authorities.

Yet, for all the novelty of the Anabaptist liturgical form, and despite the theological and spatial innovations sixteenth-century Anabaptist ritualization introduced, the proceedings of that past Christmas in the Feigenbutzen house, like other sixteenth-century Anabaptist baptisms, were not understood or propagated by Anabaptists as the invention of a new ritual. For all its innovations in form and content, Anabaptist ritual action continued to employ familiar medieval terminology and retained many established cultural associations. Just as Anabaptists did not present their ritual practice as the invention of a new ritual so civil and religious

¹⁶ A pre-Christian link between baptism and the construction of a separate community was noted by Josephus. He argues that John the Baptist formed a community through baptism. Josephus, *Antiquities*, xviii, 116-19, quoted in F.F. Bruce, *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 34-35. Moreover, the Anabaptist appropriation and subsequent transformation of baptism is not the first time baptism has been made to serve the ends of a competing tradition. One of the primary Mandaean scriptures, *The Book of John the Baptist (Draša d-Iahia)*, charges that the reviled "Holy Spirit" Ruha changed the Mandaean ritual of baptism into the reviled Christian ritual practice at John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus. Richard A. Horsley, *Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 107.

authorities tended to interpret it as a competing form, and therefore an entirely unacceptable, ritual practice. Anabaptists tended to present their practice of baptism as a return to the form and meanings with which it was associated in the primitive church. Their own practice purportedly stripped baptism of centuries' worth of illegitimate encumbrances, accretions, and associations. Anabaptist baptism was propagated as a simplified and purified rite, with their innovations confirming, not diminishing, its theological, epistemological, and social importance and validity. Anabaptist baptism directly contested some long-established cultural associations and meanings, but it also retained, appropriated, and built on other recognizable medieval social understandings, especially the long-held connection between baptism and the construction and maintenance of Christian community.¹⁷ Like medieval baptism before it, Anabaptist baptism was presented as socially expedient and religiously efficacious; it functioned as the primary mechanism for the creation of a godly

¹⁷ Dean Phillip Bell has mistakenly argued (in my mind) that “community” was a “vague concept during the later Middle Ages”. Dean Phillip Bell, *Sacred Communities: Jewish and Christian Identities in Fifteenth-century Germany* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 7. True, late medieval understandings of “community” were contested, multiple and complex, but that does not mean the term or what it signified was vague to its users. On the contrary, “community” and “common” were fully invested, foundationally important but pliable concepts, with Robert W. Scribner arguing that “common” was frequently and readily appropriated “to cover more abstract notions of collectivity”. Robert W. Scribner, “Communities and the Nature of Power,” in Robert W. Scribner, ed., *Germany: A New Social and Economic History, 1450–1630* (London, 1996), 292. The work of Peter Blickle, Johannes C. Wolfart, Heinz Schilling, Tom Scott, Robert W. Scribner, R. Po-chia Hsia and others does not present a single, or simple, understanding of *Gemeinde/ Gemeinschaft*, (commune, communal, parish, congregation, community, parliament, political body, fellowship). See Johannes C. Wolfart, *Religion, Government and Political Culture in Early Modern Germany: Lindau, 1520-1628* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 69, 73, 80, 159, and 112. See also Steinar Imsen and Günter Vogler, “Communal Autonomy and Peasant Resistance in Northern and Central Europe,” in Peter Blickle, ed., *Resistance, Representation, and Community* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5-43. Though representations of *Gemeinde* ranged widely, sixteenth-century usage tended toward the fusion of the “bodies politic and religious.” R. Po-Chia Hsia reminds us: “As a conceptual species, *Gemeinde* subsumes the subspecies of *Stadtgemeinde*, *Dorfgemeinde*, and *Kirchengemeinde*.” R. Po-chia Hsia, “The Myth of the Commune: Recent Historiography on City and Reformation in Germany,” *Central European History* 20 (1987), 203-215. Though the term *Gemeinde* was not inimical to hierarchy and lordship as Scribner points out, it came to be widely used during the sixteenth century by the “common people” as diametrically opposed to *Obrigkeith* and *Herrschaft* [authority and lordship]. Hsia, “Myth of the Commune,” 211. The pliability of *Gemeinde* made it an easily appropriated concept for a variety of political strategies.

community in both traditions. Paedobaptism strategically remedied the ubiquitous consequences of original sin through a purification process, preparing the infant for acceptance and induction into the medieval church and society.¹⁸ Although Anabaptist leaders did not hold baptism as the remedy for original sin, with most denying the validity of such a concept altogether, it was still employed as the primary mechanism through which the candidate was inducted into an altogether new, and entirely separate, social body.

Although the events described by Zuber occurred in a small community and within a private residence some 15 kilometres from the city of Stuttgart, they were of substantial interest to the Stuttgart governor and council of 1528. The court record documents their interest in the details of Zuber's baptism, with councilmen seeking information on how exactly the ritual was conducted, who had been re-baptized, who had been present for the baptism(s), in what capacity those present had participated, and where precisely the ritual had taken place.¹⁹ Zuber explained that while he was kneeling on the floor in the presence of those who had assembled,²⁰ Schuechmacher dipped water from a bowl with both hands, and proceeded to pour water over his head while proclaiming the action as being done in the "name of the father, the son, and the holy ghost." Following his home baptism, Zuber presented Schuechmacher with 3

¹⁸ Paedobaptism was thought to eradicate the effects of original sin, while conferring grace and increasing virtue through the merits of Christ. It was the mechanism by which an individual became a member of society. Jews were permitted to enter medieval communities such as Nuremberg through another legal instrument, an oath, by which they were granted protection and certain limited rights. Jews were required to fulfill the duties of citizenship but were to maintain distinctive dress so that they would not become "too much like insiders," according to Dean Phillip Bell, *Sacred Communities: Jewish and Christian Identities in Fifteenth-century Germany* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 86-89.

¹⁹ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914 - 915.

²⁰ Kneeling during the baptism ritual seems to have been a common feature in Anabaptist baptisms. Hans Hut often had the baptizand kneel before a table, whereas those baptized in open areas simply knelt before the one doing the baptizing.

creutzer for the Anabaptist communal purse [*gemainen seckel*] in his keeping.²¹

Zuber explained to Stuttgart council that this Anabaptist communal purse was established with a simple purpose: it was founded on the principle that all material goods were to be held in common, such that those who had few material resources should receive assistance through the contributions of those who had more.²²

Although consisting of comparatively “simple” actions and associations by Zuber’s description, Anabaptist baptism retained important ideological, social, economic and political implications for both established medieval society and the newly-created Anabaptist social body.²³

Additional testimony from Zuber was only obtained through the introduction of torture, according to the court record,²⁴ though the court recorder quickly qualifies this admission by explaining that no additional pain was inflicted on Zuber for the

²¹ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914. Clasen has argued that it was often difficult for a group of Anabaptists to “find a purse bearer to administer this fund, for it had the appearance of a communistic experiment or an unauthorized way of raising taxes”, which resulted in the purse frequently changing hands. Clasen, *Anabaptism A Social History*, 189. In some cities, such as sixteenth-century Augsburg, Anabaptists attached less than vital importance to the fund, whereas among their contemporary Hutterites it was a defining characteristic. Clasen also argues that there “was nothing revolutionary about the help provided by the Anabaptists for needy fellow believers. The poor were also supported by the community in Lutheran, Zwinglian, and Calvinistic cities and territories.” Clasen, *Anabaptism, A Social History*, 190-191. What was unquestionably unique about Anabaptist practice was its development into communal experiments in Moravia, where private property was determined to be irreconcilable with Christian faith. Many of the Anabaptists in the Tyrol, unlike the Anabaptists in Esslingen and Augsburg, contributed their entire estate and not merely “surplus money” to the common purse.

²² *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 915.

²³ In some instances the wealth being shared was substantial. Johannes Keßler states that wealthy male and female burghers from St. Laurenzen church freely and generously collectively gave about 10,000 Gulden from their wealth in 1526, most of which went to the poor. Johannes Keßler, *Sabbata: St. Galler Reformationschronik 1523-1539*, Traugott Schieß, ed. (Leipzig: Rudolf Haupt Kommissionsverlag, 1910), 64.

²⁴ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914. A letter written to King Ferdinand by Stuttgart council on 6 April 1528 also indicates that additional information from Zuber was only gained through torture, describing the use of pain as necessary when the thinking of Zuber had become “laboured” [*in bedenken beschwerlicheit*]. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 6.

sort of answers, or type of information he provided.²⁵ Zuber acknowledged, under torture, that Anabaptists had developed and employed a password whereby they could quickly and accurately identify one other.²⁶ According to Zuber, the recognition process began with a formulaic greeting, “May the peace of God be with you,” to which an Anabaptist would reply, “Amen, and may he be with you as well.”²⁷ It was in receiving this specific response to the greeting that the greeter could be assured, according to Zuber, that the respondent was also an Anabaptist and belonged to the social body being created.²⁸ Gaining information on the recognition and movement of

²⁵ A transcription of this particular interrogation can be found in *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914-916.

²⁶ Sixteenth-century authorities often expressed interest in determining what sort of signs of recognition were used among Anabaptists, and suspected that a distinctive greeting may have played an important part in such recognition. Peter Riedemann provides the ideological underpinnings for such a practice stating that “Greeting is well wishing, and therefore we ought to wish what is good to all who desire good. So when members of the church community [Anabaptists] meet each other, they should greet one another with this good wish, offering the blessed gift of the peace of Christ, which the Lord has given us.” Peter Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann’s Hutterite Confession of Faith*, trans. and ed. by John J. Friesen (Waterloo; Scottdale: Herald Press, 1999), 126.

²⁷ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914. In 1539 Jakob Hölin indicated that the greeting *Die Gnade des Herrn sei mit uns* [the grace of the Lord is with us] was a standard Anabaptist greeting. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 73. Variations of the latter wording are found frequently in the primary sources. See for example *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 136. Similarly, in 1540 Lienhard Raiffer testified before the Brixen city magistrate that Anabaptists recognize each other through their greeting. The one will say “God bless you” [*Got gesegen euch*] and the other will reply “I am already blessed” [*es ist schon gesegent*]. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 456.

²⁸ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914. According to Heinrich Gresbeck, Anabaptists in Münster developed a very similar sign for the identification of fellow Anabaptists. He states that one Anabaptist would greet the other with the words, “*lieve bruder Godes frede sei mit iw*,” [Beloved brother, may the peace of God be with you] to which an Anabaptist would simply reply, “Amen.” *BDA*, 12. Gresbeck notes that the greeting was gender specific. Female Anabaptists also employed a sign for recognition, but Gresbeck does not mention what it was. An anonymous author notes that Münsterite Anabaptists wished to be “so holy” and therefore did not want any form of contact with non-Anabaptists. The author states that Anabaptist men in Münster would extend their hands to each other, kiss each other on the mouth, and say: “Beloved brother, the peace of God be with you.” The author notes that Münsterite Anabaptist women were also distinctive in that they walked in public without a head-scarf but wore a cap, with the cap being their password. Richard van Dülmen, editor, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster, 1534-1535* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974), 45. In Hermann von Kerksenbrock’s account of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster he notes that Anabaptists in Münster employed both “verbal and silent” signs “by which they recognized each other even in a great crowd of people, and whenever these signs were betrayed, the old ones were replaced with new ones.” *AFM*, 476. Although Anabaptists were often suspected of having some sort of distinctive sign or mark on their houses, such an accusation was consistently denied. See for example, *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 137.

Anabaptists was naturally of substantial interest to authorities' intent on suppressing Anabaptist activities whenever and wherever possible.

Zuber revealed in the course of his interrogation that shortly after his baptism in Hainbach, on the Saturday before Whitsun Sunday, Felix Schuechmacher had travelled across the Neckar River to Blochingen, coming by night to the home of Katharina Kneplin, a widow at Hegensberg. When Schuechmacher arrived at the Kneplin residence, approximately 25 persons were already assembled there as had been agreed sometime earlier. Schuechmacher began to preach on the subject of re-baptism shortly after his arrival. His preaching developed a decidedly anti-clerical and anti-church focus, with Schuechmacher insisting that neither the clergy, nor paedobaptism, were of substantial value [*sei nichts*]. Justification for his culturally radical statements was developed through his construction of an argument in which the church and clergy were deprived of their traditionally accepted divine sanction. Schuechmacher declared the construction of church buildings, the institution of church programs, and the development of professional clergy devoid of divine initiative, and therefore necessarily lacking divine endorsement.²⁹ Having established the minimalist logic for his anti-church invective through a narrow literalist reading of the bible, Schuechmacher invalidated centuries of church practice as illegitimate accretions. He extended and intensified his criticism of the established Church and its practices, insisting that the Mass was to be rejected outright as an entirely ineffectual and worthless enterprise. It was declared to be nothing more than a useless human innovation, with Schuechmacher arguing that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated only as Jesus himself inaugurated it, as nothing other than a ritual of commemoration

²⁹ QZGWT, *Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914.

and remembrance. Schuechmacher went on to speak out against auricular confession, arguing that the practice is also without merit given that no person ought to confess their sins to any priest. He went on to deride other well-established and culturally significant church practices, repudiating the veneration and intercessory role of the saints, including that of the Virgin Mother Mary. He argued that saints are not to be petitioned in any way, or for any reason, as they are entirely incapable of coming to the assistance of anyone. Schuechmacher's insistence that no one should venerate or pray to the saints threatened to reverse the development, over the centuries, of their role and stature as vivid and effectual mediators, especially Mary as mediatrix, who was said to assume the attributes of Jesus Christ through her unique role in the incarnation.³⁰ His declaration that saints were unsuitable objects of worship and ineffectual intercessors was not founded on a form of psychopannychistic argument, as fellow Anabaptists such as Michael Sattler and Michael Servetus argued when preaching under similar circumstances,³¹ but on ontological grounds, with Schuechmacher arguing that God by virtue of his unique being is the only legitimate object of worship and prayer.³²

According to the testimony provided by Zuber, all who were assembled in the Kneplin home and listening to Schuechmacher were in whole-hearted agreement; participants claimed to be entirely of the same mind and understanding in the matters being discussed. They committed themselves to unwavering steadfastness, and resolute perseverance in the preservation of their newly established unity, and

³⁰ George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, third ed. (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2000), 479.

³¹ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 295.

³² *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 915.

collective social understandings.³³ Although Jerg and Hans, the widow Katharina Kneplin's two sons, had determined to be re-baptized at this meeting (prior to their first imprisonment)³⁴ signalling their commitment to the Anabaptist cause, and though all the men assembled in their mother's house apparently pleased them very much, both sons declined re-baptism that night; their zeal for the Anabaptist ritual had been substantially curbed by their recent imprisonment. Kneplin's two daughters, Barbara and Adelhait, were, however, re-baptized that night. Zuber noted that because many others were also re-baptized, and because Hainbach is a relatively small place, the majority of its residents became Anabaptists.

Toward the close of the Anabaptist meeting all who were assembled in the Kneplin house agreed to meet again at Easter in Reutlingen, where approximately 700 Anabaptists from Augsburg and Zurich were purportedly gathering for a meeting. These Hainbach Anabaptists determined that they would henceforth travel throughout the land killing all authorities, priests, and monks who were opposed to their Anabaptist thinking; they would destroy all churches and monasteries in their path while seeking to convert those persons who were not currently in agreement with, or not yet given to their particular understanding.³⁵ Arnoldts Bestlin, who had been imprisoned and tortured in Esslingen for his re-baptism and support of such Anabaptist re-baptisms, mentioned his eager desire to assist in the destruction of that particular city.

³³ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 915.

³⁴ It was quite common during the 1520's, especially in Thuringia, Franconia, and Augsburg, for persons to be baptized at the conclusion of the clandestine Anabaptist meeting they had attended. See, Clasen, *A Social History*, 103.

³⁵ Corresponding testimony was given by Hans Pfau in Heilbronn on March 24 before town council. He stated that "the [Anabaptist] brethren at Esslingen planned to "make their move" at Easter and baptize believers in towns, markets, and villages." Clasen, *Anabaptism A Social History*, 169.

Anabaptist baptism and the destruction of church property proposed in Hainbach were expressions of iconoclasm in which the symbolic discourse of medieval churches and monasteries was challenged and abruptly arrested.³⁶ Anabaptist acts of contestation and destruction, whether symbolic or actual, desired, intended, or accomplished were strategically focused and functioned as attempts to neutralize, reverse, or deconstruct the discourse with which medieval churches were intimately associated and inextricably identified.³⁷ The sort of aggression being proposed in Hainbach was not directed principally against individuals. According to the resolution adopted in the Kneplin home, individuals would only become targets of aggression when they proved obstinate and refused to accept an Anabaptist understanding of socio-political realities; they would be punished only to the extent that they continued to represent, defend, and perpetuate existing medieval church institutions and the social order these places maintained. The treatment to which church and civil authorities would be subjected would be determined by their own behaviour and recalcitrant commitments. The Anabaptist invention of an alternative ritual form constitutes a response to the social transformations they were experiencing, and functioned as a suitable form for negotiating the dislocations of their social order. The changing political and social environment provided challenges to the maintenance of existing power relations and offered new possibilities for the expression of power. These Anabaptist conversations and ritualized actions were, as Bruce Lincoln has effectively argued, an “attack launched by members of one

³⁶ Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 117-18.

³⁷ Such an understanding of iconoclasm provides a better understanding of why Anabaptists in Zollikon smashed their baptismal font in January 1525 and why the followers of Balthasar Hubmaier threw their baptismal font into the Rhine River.

segment of society against those of another, designed to isolate the latter and to deprive them of an important instrument with which they have in the past maintained social forms in which they hold privileged positions.”³⁸ Anabaptist iconoclasm and ritualization were a component in their socio-political campaign of resistance, and were directed at contesting the socio-political power exercised through medieval churches. The road to reformation chosen by Anabaptist radicals during the sixteenth century was first and foremost a road that involved the contestation, transfer or diffusion of power associated with and exercised by a specific type of place.

Anabaptist Ritualization, Place, and Social Exigencies

The narrative briefly outlined is of more than anecdotal interest: it is a first-hand account of how some individuals, living in the Esslingen area during the late 1520s, sought to negotiate a socially and politically tumultuous period of European history by becoming Anabaptist. What is of particular interest is the manner in which this narrative brings together many of the themes to be discussed in this project, facilitating and encouraging a spatial interpretation of sixteenth-century Anabaptist action. Sixteenth-century court records detailing the interrogation and testimony of Hans Zuber participate in a discourse in which early Anabaptists are identified by their ritual practice, and Anabaptist ritualization is interpreted in relation to church authority and civil power. The themes of power, authority, and ritual are developed in the court records through a primary focus on Anabaptist action (not Anabaptist

³⁸ Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 117. Lincoln argues that no “act of iconoclasm is ever carried out with the intent of destroying an icon’s sacred power, for iconoclasts—who are regularly estranged from their adversaries on lines of class, politics, or national origin as well as those of religion—act with the assurance either that the specific image under attack has no such power or the more radical conviction that there is no such thing as sacred power. It is their intent to demonstrate dramatically and in public the *powerlessness* of the image and thereby to inflict a double disgrace on its champions, first by exposing the bankruptcy of their vaunted symbols and, second, their impotence in the face of attack.” Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 120.

thought), with each theme intimately, inextricably, and necessarily linked to place(s), the social values with which those places were associated, the social order they created, the authority these places held, and the power they exercised.

The testimony of Zuber reveals that the newly-created Anabaptist association was birthed and empowered through ritual practice, and that Anabaptist identity was spatially conceived and spatially oriented from the beginning. Anabaptist ritualization developed within the context of a social gathering of like-minded persons who held deep-seated concerns regarding certain culturally influential socio-political places. Ritual participants are described as possessing a common negative attitude toward churches and monasteries, and toward the civil and religious authorities who maintain, control, and exercise power through them. Their actions challenged the notion developed in early Christianity that the holy was available in a single place, and that every such place was made available to a particular group in a way that precluded anyone else from accessing it from elsewhere.³⁹ The newly-developed Anabaptist ritual program and the community it brought into existence were typically defined in relation to culturally established sacred places. Anabaptists were readily identified by their rejection of churches, their contestation of the values embedded in those places including the meanings ascribed to them, their refusal to accept the alliances forged at them, and their contestation of the power exercised through them. Anabaptists in Hainbach resolved that they would be civilly disobedient in “all these matters,” attacking those places they held primarily responsible for the unacceptable

³⁹ See, Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and its Function* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 86. Brown argues that “the cult of the saints” “gloried in particularity” as the numerous grave inscriptions “*Hic locus est*” [Here is the place] testify. It was through its localizing of the holy, Brown argues, that “Christianity could feed on the facts of distance and on the joys of proximity.” Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 86-87.

conditions of medieval life. These Anabaptists were informed through itinerant preaching, empowered through ritualization, and activated by their understanding of social exigencies.⁴⁰ Whether Anabaptist resistance came in the form of establishing a competing ritual practice, avoiding participation in church services, disrupting church activities, destroying church property, experimenting with alternative social orders, or developing an alternative community, it was directed at contesting existing socio-political places, and the power they exercised in shaping of medieval society and cultural life. However, Anabaptist action was not exclusively “negative” and retained a strong positive dimension where it was concentrated on the creation of alternative, more “suitable,” places and therefore, a new and competing social order.

Thesis, Thesis Questions, and Place

My argument for critical attention to place develops a complex inter-relation between place(s), ritual practice, and Anabaptist resistance, more-or-less independently of theological considerations. I argue that places are primary sites for cultural contestation and that a discourse concerning place developed at the very centre of sixteenth-century Anabaptist resistance. The investigation of places as cultural matrices intimately aligned with the exercise of power provides valuable insight into social constructions. I introduce a spatial analysis of early sixteenth-century Anabaptist action through which I argue, firstly, that critical attention to place(s) and Anabaptist responses to them are crucial for understanding the origin, development, ritual practices, identity and social concerns of sixteenth-century

⁴⁰ Catherine Bell argues: “The ultimate purpose of ritualization is neither the immediate goals avowed by the community or the officiant nor the more abstract functions of social solidarity and conflict resolution; it is nothing other than the production of ritualized agents.” Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 221.

Anabaptists: and secondly, that ritualization was an essential component of the Anabaptist contestation of culturally established places and their creation and maintenance of competing communal places. Anabaptists, I argue, emerged as a direct response to medieval sacred places, the power these places exercised, the relations they forged, and the values with which they were associated in medieval society. Anabaptist experiments with alternative social orders and their construction of competing cultural structures were an attempt to escape and revise long-established medieval politics of place. It was an attempt to construct a new order whose systems, structures and function were conceived to be comparatively egalitarian, and therefore, substantially less oppressive.⁴¹ Ritualization is an essential component in the enactment, testing and restructuring of social order.⁴²

The questions I ask in the course of my investigation are not typically asked in the study of sixteenth-century Anabaptist history. A place focus such as I am proposing, in which negative sixteenth-century Anabaptist assessments of medieval sacred space and their positive attempts to construct suitable alternate socio-religious places for the foundation of society assume primary focus, is not to be found in the secondary literature. The explanation I tender for the origin and nature of sixteenth-century Anabaptist movements engage several theoretical issues, and draw on recent discussions of place and ritual theory. Although currently absent, an interpretive matrix in which “ideas” are decisively “attached” to “places” is not at all inappropriate—being “precisely the historians’ gesture,” as Michel de Certeau has

⁴¹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 138.

⁴² Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1997), 11.

argued. It is a complex investigative structure in which “every system of thought is referred to “places”—social, economic, cultural, and so on”, making the imagining of Anabaptist history an operation “equivalent to understanding it as the relation between a *place* [...] and the construction of a *text*.”⁴³ Places are an integral component in the discourses of a given society being constituted by the significations, meanings, values, and abstract references imputed to them, forming a “cultural script.” The method and theory adopted are focused on gaining an understanding of sixteenth-century places as they were conceptually created and rhetorically maintained, including the discourse in which they participated. This project is not necessarily limited to the investigation of geographical, physical, and material sites associated with sixteenth-century Anabaptist actors. The emphasis throughout is on theoretical issues rather than geographically focused research questions.

My dissertation takes into account a much larger geographically defined area of Anabaptist activity than is typically the case in a single study, including South and North Germany, the Netherlands, Moravia, and Switzerland. In addition to the numerous amorphous Anabaptist groups of the sixteenth century, this study considers the clearly identifiable and socially distinct Münsterite Anabaptists and Moravian Hutterites as two case studies. The temporal parameters of this study are, generally speaking, limited to the first 25 years of Anabaptist activity beginning with 1525 and ending in 1550, with the first fifteen years of the movements being of particular interest. Delimiting my discussion in this manner permits a sharper focus on Anabaptist origins, early Anabaptist attitudes toward place, and the relation of ritual

⁴³ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 56-57. The term “text” is employed in a generalized sense and distinguished from the notion of a piece of writing consisting of a series of words on a page.

to the production of place. It effectively generates an argument that is not dependent for its evidentiary support on the complex of events termed “confessionalization” developing during the latter half of the sixteenth century, and its relation to what Heinz Schilling has termed “nation building.”⁴⁴

Sources, Method, and Place

This project proceeds through a method of “reading in the margins:” it avoids much of the “normative” literature, building an argument for Anabaptist spatial history through a focused gleaning in available court records, official and lay correspondence, and selected sixteenth-century “histories.”⁴⁵ The method adopted and my choice of sources involves travelling an already-travelled road, but their combination introduces a new way of seeing, reading, and re-reading the sources at hand. It involves the application of an altogether new lens to Anabaptist history and especially Anabaptist beginnings that presents a pathway into a new collection of meanings. Because the question before us is centered on the choice of lens, with the textual object remaining the primary concern, the central issue is that of interpretation and the primary action the search for a new instrument of interpretation.

Many of the Anabaptist conversations, meetings, testimonies, confessions, recantations, descriptions, and stories discussed in this project emerged within the context of their direct, and often adversarial, contact with civil and church officials.

Although admittedly fragmentary, biased, disparate, and inherently critical of

⁴⁴ Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society: Essays in German and Dutch History* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1992), 209. See also, Heinz Schilling, “The Reformation and the Rise of the Early Modern State,” in James D. Tracy, ed., *Luther and the Modern State in Germany* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Bros., 1986), 29.

⁴⁵ Sixteenth-century sources retain limited information regarding the thoughts, hopes, dreams, anxieties, experiences, and words of sixteenth-century lay Anabaptists. It is in the court records that a comparatively substantial amount of such information is made available.

sixteenth-century Anabaptists, court records remain an exceptionally rich source containing some of the most vivid, detailed, and revealing testimonies provided by individual Anabaptists presently available to the researcher. The recurring themes, problems, and priorities these records establish cannot simply be ignored when they provide unparalleled access to the socio-political world of sixteenth-century Anabaptists.⁴⁶ Court records also provide a relatively accurate and detailed reflection of sixteenth-century city council priorities and their willingness to enforce them. Although inherently problematic and selectively employed they are not intended to reconstruct Anabaptist history. The interpretation being advanced is not intended as a complete story, nor does my use of these sources represent the only narrative that could be written through their employment. They are used to gain an understanding of some of the “simple folk,”⁴⁷ their concerns, and their priorities, without describing or defining “ordinary” sixteenth-century Anabaptists by the terms, concepts, language, priorities, and categories of Anabaptist leaders, and the normative literature of the Reformation period.

Primary textual evidence is drawn from published archival sources found in the *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer/Täufer* series,⁴⁸ *Documenta*

⁴⁶ Though these Anabaptist oral testimonies were generally produced under duress, it would be a mistake to conclude that they are, therefore, unreliable. A case for the opposite could be made in which they are held to be the most accurate available reflection of lay attitudes and priorities, and that, like the investigation of all other texts, they simply require that the researcher exercise substantial skill and care in their interpretation. In some instances, such as the interrogation of Ambrosius Spitelmeier, a record of questions is provided together with what can only be the actual responses of Spitelmeier to them. Spitelmeier’s interrogation, like a good many others, runs several pages and covers a wide range of topics, retaining an important trace of the priorities of the authorities and the responses of an individual to them. *QZGT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 25-28, and 32-39.

⁴⁷ Civil authorities frequently refer to accused Anabaptists as simple people (*ainfeltigen menschen*). They differentiated between Anabaptist leaders who were generally considered “stiff-necked” and followers who were simple or “deceived.”

⁴⁸ The first two volumes in this documentary series were published under the title *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer* in 1930 and 1934. The series title was amended to *Quellen zur*

Anabaptistica Neerlandica, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, Heinrich Gresbeck's *Berichte der Augenzeugen*,⁴⁹ Hermann von Kerksenbrock's *Anabaptistici Furoris Monasterium Inclitam Westphaliae Metropolitim Evertentis Historica Narratio*,⁵⁰ the Hutterite *Geschichtsbuech*,⁵¹ and from unpublished archival sources in the Stadtarchiv Augsburg and the Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

This study is exploratory and provisional; it questions and at times works to undermine the assumption that the Anabaptist past has been decisively settled by modern historians. Despite my advancement of a spatial interpretation of Anabaptist history, I intentionally avoid staking a claim to authoritative completeness or historical comprehensiveness. The theoretical and methodological choices I have made are an integral component of a self-aware method that resists attempts to construct narrative continuity. I shun any attempt to reconstruct early Anabaptist history or establish any form of continuum, chronological timeline, or over-arching meta-narrative. My treatment of the primary sources is not concerned with the reconstruction of sixteenth-century Anabaptist history, nor even with the historically probable, but with certain contingent, fragmentary, temporally-specific, and therefore, unrepeatable, Anabaptist activities. It is an interpretive perspective that is circumscribed by what the sources will permit one to say rather than the propagation

Geschichte der Täufer in all subsequent volumes. Though German-language scholarship no longer refers to these sixteenth-century dissidents as *Wiedertäufer* (re-baptizers), English-language scholarship continues to use the term Anabaptist with few exceptions. Claus-Peter Clasen is one notable exception.

⁴⁹ Carl Adolf Cornelius, ed., *Die Geschichtsquellen des Bistums Münster*, vol. 2, Heinrich Gresbeck, *Berichte der Augenzeugen über das Münsterische Wiedertäuferreich* (Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1853). Hereafter, *BDA*.

⁵⁰ Heinrich Detmer, ed., *Hermann von Kerksenbroch Anabaptistici Furoris Monasterium Inclitam Westphaliae Metropolitim Evertentis Historica Narratio*, 2 vols. (Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1899-1900). Hereafter, *AFM*.

⁵¹ A. J. F. Zieglschmid, editor, *Die Älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder: Ein Sprachdenkmal aus Frühneuhochdeutscher Zeit* (Ithaca: The Cayuga Press, 1943). Hereafter *ÄCHB*.

of a claim to sensitively, faithfully, and accurately represent historical actors, their mental states, or their personal experiences.⁵²

Traditional analyses of Anabaptist action continue to be problematized by significant theological, social, economic, ethical, and political disparities evident in the early decades of sixteenth-century Anabaptist movements.⁵³ Although obviously interconnected, any attempt to draw and privilege a common element from disparate and often mutually antagonistic early sixteenth-century Anabaptist groups remains dependent upon the development of an effective method and theory capable of negotiating these substantial disparities without simply ignoring, negating, minimizing or dismissing them. The spatial interpretation encouraged in this project operates as a broad form in the re-description of sixteenth-century Anabaptist history and Anabaptist origins by giving priority to Anabaptist socio-political attitudes, actions, and interests without reducing sixteenth-century Anabaptists to those forces.⁵⁴ Such a study holds the possibility of contributing to our understanding of the

⁵² Thomas A. Tweed aptly notes that theorists (of which historians are one type) simply “do not have access to those “states” or “experiences.”” Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 17.

⁵³ The plural rather than the singular is employed and preferred throughout this project. Such an action more accurately reflects sixteenth-century conditions in which an Anabaptist group tended to develop distinctives in both thought and practice, which precluded them from identifying and/or assimilating with other Anabaptist groups. The monolith “Anabaptism,” though in vogue and widely used today, ignores and obfuscates important regional, ethical, doctrinal, social, and political differences and issues within these Anabaptist movements that appeared as primary concerns to them. Disparities among Anabaptists were noted early in the sixteenth century with Heinrich Bullinger enumerating thirteen Anabaptist sects in 1531. Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Widertoeufferen Ursprung* (Zurich: Christoffel Froschower, 1531, reprinted in 1561), 17-55. Admittedly, Bullinger tended to label individuals or groups for which he had little empathy as Anabaptist. However, though often lumped together and widely prosecuted because of their common practices (baptism and church avoidance), sixteenth-century Anabaptists organized themselves and related to other Anabaptist groups in keeping with their differences. Sebastian Franck noted in the sixteenth century that such disunity and division [*vneynig vnd zerrissen*] existed among the Anabaptists that he hardly knew how to write anything meaningful about them. Sebastian Franck, *Chronica* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 193. Franck’s *Chronica* was first published in 1531 in Strasbourg.

⁵⁴ It is a matter of giving analytical preference to what Gary Taylor has termed one’s “substantial social and material identity” rather than the “secret subjectivity” that one imagines for herself. Gary

relation of place to group identity formation, the exercise of socio-political power through place(s), and the role of ritualization in the contestation, construction, and maintenance of culturally significant places during the sixteenth-century. This project is offered as an interpretive and explanatory, but provisional, enterprise that intentionally softens some well-established boundaries by self-consciously transgressing them. Traditional emphases in Anabaptist studies on the geographically particular and local have been relaxed in favour of the development of comparisons for the purpose of developing a broader explanatory model. Thus, the abandonment of a traditional positivist explanatory paradigm has not been wholly negative, but has opened up the possibility of new explanatory models, expanding and enriching historiographical production.

My reading of selected primary sources, both those written by sixteenth-century Anabaptists and those written about them, indicates that Anabaptist concerns vis-à-vis place(s) were present from the very beginning of the Anabaptist movements, and that spatial interests played a prominent role in the development, identity, activity, and self-understanding of sixteenth-century Anabaptists. A spatial reading of Anabaptist history proves to be significant for understanding and explaining the programs of social transformation sixteenth-century Anabaptists initiated and the alternative social orders they introduced. Moreover, seemingly disparate and irreconcilable Anabaptist actions, including their institution of a unique form of baptism, their practice of community of goods, their efforts to construct an alternative society with the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, and their communal experiments in

Taylor, "The Cultural Politics of Maybe," in Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay, and Richard Wilson, eds., *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 256.

Moravia become analyzable as expressions of social and political discontentment through a place interpretive matrix. A theological hermeneutic may be useful for explaining theological disparities within the Anabaptist movements, and it may prove helpful for investigating theological differences that developed between Anabaptists and other reformers, but it is severely limited as a tool for explaining Anabaptist origins, Anabaptist actions, and Anabaptist socio-political concerns. With places responsible for anchoring lives in social formations and always imbued with value,⁵⁵ and therefore always politically aligned, sixteenth-century places and Anabaptist attitudes toward them become an obvious and reasonable choice for the investigation of early sixteenth-century Anabaptist socio-political values and concerns.

Anabaptist Beginnings, Method and Place

The discourse of Anabaptist beginnings has been largely shaped by a method of intellectual history Patrick Collinson has described as focused on questions of genealogy regarding “the descent of religious bodies and systems”,⁵⁶ with questions regarding a single origin or a multiplicity of origins having relatively recently assumed a central position in the discussion. A monogenesis theory regarding Anabaptist beginnings was long accepted and virtually unquestioned even though it was “never really established”; it existed as an “unexamined assumption”, as James M. Stayer, Werner O. Packull and Klaus Deppermann have accurately pointed out.⁵⁷

Their collaborative work, “From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical

⁵⁵ Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe; New Mexico: School of American Research Press), 7.

⁵⁶ Patrick Collinson, “Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition,” in C. Robert Cole and Michael E. Moody, eds., *The Dissenting Tradition: Essays for Leland H. Carlson* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1975), 3.

⁵⁷ James M. Stayer, Werner O. Packull, and Klaus Deppermann, “From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 49:2 (1975): 85.

Discussion of Anabaptist Origins” decisively contested and dismissed the long-assumed monogenesis theory, but it did so without determining what sorts of factors may have been responsible for the emergence of sixteenth-century Anabaptists and the disparate trajectories that certain Anabaptist movements assumed. The research of Stayer, Packull and Deppermann was centred on the matter of ascertaining “intellectual relatedness and indebtedness” as a method for asserting “different memberships and theologies” and therefore independent intellectual origins, even though they openly admitted that it is “often hard to be precise on which medieval intellectual tradition was crucial for a particular Anabaptist leader or sect.”⁵⁸ The polygenesis account advanced by Stayer, Packull and Deppermann challenged the argument of earlier Mennonite historians who held that all Anabaptists were the successors of peaceful Swiss Anabaptists, and it disputed the position adopted in Protestant accounts in which all Anabaptists were said to be the successors of Thomas Müntzer. Understanding Anabaptist beginnings primarily in terms of Anabaptist intellectual history has extended beyond academic discussions to popular understandings and internet sites such as Wikipedia, where Anabaptist origins are described in terms of a common “faith” as determined through the postulation of familiar “medieval antecedents”:

Though opinion is that Anabaptists, by name, began with the Radical Reformers in the 16th century, certain people and groups may still legitimately be considered their forerunners. Peter Chelčický, 15th century Bohemian *Reformer*, taught most of the beliefs considered integral to Anabaptist theology. Medieval antecedents may include the Brethren of the Common

⁵⁸ Stayer, Packull, and Deppermann, “From Monogenesis to Polygenesis,” 90.

Life, the Hussites, Dutch Sacramentalists, and some forms of monasticism. The Waldensians also represent a faith similar to the Anabaptists.⁵⁹

Although Stayer, Packull and Deppermann have advanced an argument for a multiplicity of Anabaptist origins, they concede from the outset that “transcending all these theological differences was the essential conflict over authority.”⁶⁰ Despite such a concession, their own project does not develop an interpretive forum or theoretical framework suitable for determining the origin or nature of this “essential conflict over authority”; it does not focus on the determination of *why* Anabaptists emerged during the early years of the sixteenth century beyond offering conflicting intellectual commitments, and divergences in theological orientations, as possible sources.

Attempts to develop a connection between the emergence of Anabaptists and their intellectual pedigree have been used as a method of discrediting Anabaptists and as an opportunity to affect their vindication. Efforts to link Anabaptists to certain postulates as an antecedent to their condemnation were already in vogue with Martin Luther⁶¹ and Heinrich Bullinger⁶² in the sixteenth century. More recently, apologetically oriented scholars have staged arguments that not only work to vindicate but effectively privilege sixteenth-century Anabaptists by identifying their thinking with “modern” systems, or by defining them as visionary precursors of “modern” structures. Arguments that equate Anabaptists with their “religious

⁵⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anabaptist>. Quotation downloaded January 20, 2010. Though he fails to elaborate, Leonard Verduin has argued that the “contribution of Waldensianism to Anabaptism was considerable, much more than is commonly recognized.” Leonard Verduin, “The Chambers of Rhetoric and Anabaptist Origins in the Low Countries,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 34 (1960), 192.

⁶⁰ Stayer, Packull, and Deppermann, “From Monogenesis to Polygenesis,” 88.

⁶¹ Luther claimed, in reference to Anabaptists, that he did not know who they were, what their intentions are, or “what they were all about” because he did not know what they believed. In Luther’s thinking, understanding the belief system of an individual, group or movement provided the interpretive key to a person or a group’s identity, interests, and values. *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, WA 30, 3, p. 510.

⁶² Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Widertoeufferen Ursprung*, 17-55.

impulses and motivations” tend to interpret church history as a theological discipline, and Anabaptist origins as a theological narrative.⁶³

Although few scholars today would suggest that Anabaptists appeared *ex nihilo* during the sixteenth century, little is currently being done to link crucial Anabaptist themes to their emergence and subsequent development in the sixteenth century outside the construction of intellectual connectedness to particular antecedents. The theme of separation that organizes and underwrites early Anabaptist history and the social orders Anabaptists developed, such as the Schleithem Confession, and the consistency and prominence with which problems of authority and power in their relation to medieval place(s) surface in Anabaptist history are rarely linked to Anabaptist origins. When the themes of separation, social order, problems of authority, or resistance to the exercise of power appear in scholarly discussions they generally come into view as later developments in Anabaptist

⁶³ Andrea Strübind has responded strongly to recent Anabaptist “revisionist” historiography, the interpretive paradigm it has established, and especially to its “neglect” of what she considers to be the “religious impulses and motivations” at the centre of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movements. She has called for a return to privileging the theological convictions of Anabaptists as the best method for gaining an understanding of them. Strübind’s work is an effort to “revise the revisionists” [*“Diese vorliegende Studie bemüht sich um eine kritische Revision dieses “revisionistischen” Täuferbildes der neuen Forschung”*]. Andrea Strübind, *Eifriger als Zwingli: Die frühe Täuferbewegung in der Schweiz* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003), 14. Strübind’s insistence that Anabaptist “religious motivations” be taken “seriously” may be an effort to obviate their untimely dismissal or trivialization. However, her rhetorical posture also functions as a strategy in which her advocacy of “forestalling dismissal” or providing a “fair hearing” are simply thinly-veiled attempts to presume agreement and affirm the very thing under investigation. See, Elizabeth, A. Pritchard, “Seriously, What Does “Taking Religion Seriously” Mean?” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78: 4 (2010), 1088-89. Strübind has assumed a “traditional” but naïve understanding of “religion,” employing it as a signifier for something substantive, ethereal, and exalted, and not in a more academically vigorous manner, as Willi Braun advises, as a “concept [...] to allocate the stuff of the real world into a class of objects so as to position these objects for thought that is aimed toward explanation of their causes, functions, attractiveness to individuals and societies”. Willi Braun, “Religion,” in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2000), (reprinted 2006 and 2007), 9.

history, as responses to disappointment,⁶⁴ or as reactions to the harsh treatment Anabaptists received at the hands of religious and civil authorities, rather than reactions to issues at the very core of the genesis of the Anabaptist movements.

It is one of the primary contentions of this project that linear discussions of sixteenth-century Anabaptist history and Anabaptist beginnings, in which a continuum of Anabaptist thought is constructed through a “history of ideas” methodology, cannot but fail to do the very thing it purports to do because such a method extends too little credit to epistemic problems in discursive formations.⁶⁵ Such a method ignores, for example, a systemic problem to which Michel Foucault has drawn our attention, namely, the substantial problem attending the assumption of a “continuous, insensible transition” in discourse formation.⁶⁶ Assumptions of continuity in contemporary Anabaptist historiography ignore discursive breaks, ruptures, limits, and thresholds inherent to discursive formations.⁶⁷ Such an approach fails to acknowledge the fundamental dependence of theological discourse on the received view of history by which it is conditioned.

Some early explanations for the emergence of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century have been founded on the investigation of Anabaptist intentionality, without

⁶⁴ C. Arnold Snyder has adopted an interpretive position similar to Strübind’s in which Zurich radicals emerge as the “enthusiastic supporters of the reform initiatives of Ulrich Zwingli” until these radicals “became an embarrassment to him”. C. Arnold Snyder, “Swiss Anabaptism: The Beginnings,” in John D. Roth and James M. Stayer, eds., *Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 48.

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, translated by A.M. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 5.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, translated by A.M. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 139.

⁶⁷ Foucault argues that “systems of dispersion,” not unity or similarity, underwrite all discursive statements. Things such as similarity of expression, concepts and themes are not necessarily indicative of the unity of discursive statements but may in fact be conditions for their disunity and rupture. Rather than engage in the development of “chains of inference” for the purpose of satisfying and unifying “history of ideas,” Foucault recommends that an investigation of the disunity of discursive statements be taken as the scholar’s task. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 37.

such studies providing or otherwise demonstrating that the methodological tools for such an investigative matrix are available to us. Discussions claiming to investigate Anabaptist motivations have focused on one of a number of possible positions, with a given researcher arguing that sixteenth-century Anabaptists wished to reform the church, restore the church, or erect an altogether new church.⁶⁸ Each of the above possible explanations sets the emergence of Anabaptists in relation to the established church, but none could be described as a place-focused study. The emphasis on Anabaptist intentionality has ignored and even precludes a spatial interpretation in which the medieval church is constructed as a culturally significant socio-political place that did not meet the expectations, or satisfy the desires, of sixteenth-century Anabaptists. Many researchers have observed and have commented on the hostility sixteenth-century Anabaptists retained for the established church, its programs, its social values, and the political alliances it forged. But, these negative Anabaptist attitudes and actions are all-too-often interpreted as the product of emerging theological differences, and not as Anabaptist responses to the “unacceptable” nature of sixteenth-century places, and their desire to develop alternative places or competing understandings of place.

Chapter Structure and Argument Development

Methodological and theoretical concerns are at the centre, commanding the subject matter, themes, and parameters of this work. It is the chosen method that provides coherence to this work and not a strict focus on a particular geographic area or temporal period. This project is constructed as an attempt to provide the theoretical

⁶⁸ See for example, Hans Guderian, *Die Täufer in Augsburg: Ihre Geschichte und ihr Erbe* (Pfaffenhofen, Germany: W. Ludwig Verlag, 1984), 11.

and methodological tools for the investigative matrix it builds. My choice of authorial voice and analytical approach are not entirely constant, shifting between historical, literary and philosophical discussions. In the first chapter I develop an argument for revisionist historiography and its application to sixteenth-century Anabaptist history as a means of situating my own discussion. I argue that the writing of Anabaptist history has been a culturally determined and theory-conditioned process from its inception into the present, with this project offered as a continuation of an already well-established revisionist pattern within Anabaptist studies.⁶⁹ A spatial interpretation introduces place in terms of its social and political investments, its relation to the exercise and contestation of power, and its relation to the development and maintenance of a given social order. A place centered methodology holds places to be the primary nexus for the analysis of power struggles, and the principal tool in the investigation of competing definitions of godly community during the medieval period.⁷⁰

The second chapter stages my argument that sixteenth-century Anabaptists emerged as a direct and decisive reaction to sixteenth-century sacred places, the values with which they were imbued and the power they exercised by linking their genesis, within the broader context of the Reformation, to their inheritance and development of a shared interest in the quality of their dwelling. The context for constructing sixteenth-century Anabaptists as spatially oriented dissidents can be located in two familiar, paradigmatic, and representative sixteenth-century texts:

⁶⁹ See James M. Stayer's discussion of the evolution of twentieth-century Anabaptist historiography and some of its most "important" contributors. James M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1972), 7-23. See, John D. Roth and James M. Stayer, eds., *Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), xiii-xxiv, for another evaluation.

⁷⁰ Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*, 8-9.

Martin Luther's "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,"⁷¹ and Thomas Müntzer's "Sermon to the Princes."⁷²

In the third chapter I argue that medieval churches were heavily invested pre-eminent socio-political places, that they exercised substantial cultural power, and that they functioned as a vital component in the shaping and maintenance of medieval socio-political life. They were carefully designed to present a comprehensive, coherent and totalizing narrative of culturally shared symbols, values and meanings. As an institutional tool of enculturation, they were foundational to and instrumental in creating a particular type of subject, and a specific type of reality. Medieval churches not only propagated certain theologies but embodied the cosmographical claims they made; medieval churches inserted the cosmographical claims they propagated into the fabric of medieval society as one of its primary components.

The fourth chapter is constructed as an examination of Anabaptist responses to the narrative the medieval church represented, and the totalizing cosmology it presented. Anabaptists are shown to emerge as prime contesters of the power and authority of the medieval church, the claims it made, the social order it perpetuated, the relations it established, and the ritual program through which it maintained its privileged position.

⁷¹ The original title reads: "An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation: von des Christlichen standes besserung." *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 6. Band (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1888; reprinted in Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 404. Hereafter abbreviated, *CADN*.

⁷² The German title reads: "Auslegung des anderen Unterschieds Danielis," in Günther Franz, ed., Band XXXIII, *Thomas Müntzer Schriften und Briefe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1968), 241-263. Hereafter abbreviated, *AUD*.

The fifth chapter inaugurates a decisive shift away from the examination of negative sixteenth-century Anabaptist actions and attitudes to an investigation of the alternative models, structures, and principles for the exercise of power they introduced. I argue that the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster was the construction of a place that provided opportunities for imagining freedom from the dominant discourses of power and violence and the places through which they were exercised through the Münsterite development and utilization of the plenitude of “aesthetic space.” The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster is shown to have been designed and constructed as a theatre for displaying and ultimately for transcending coercion and dominance, even if the Anabaptist suspension of “reality” was only temporary and short-lived.

The sixth chapter introduces a second and final positive case study. Like the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, early sixteenth-century Hutterite attempts to establish a *Heiligkeitsgemeinde* [holy community] were designed as a substantial challenge to the existing social order, its inter-related social structures, institutions, practices, places, and ideals, all of which worked to establish, conserve, and reinforce culturally normative ways of behaving and relating. The competing social order introduced by Hutterites was often identified by them and their detractors as centered on the practice of community of goods [*Gütergemeinschaft*], and was worked into a comprehensive communal philosophy. Sixteenth-century Hutterite communities, like medieval monasteries, and like the Greek *polis* and a range of ancient philosophical

schools before them, were designed, constructed, propagated, and maintained as an ideal place for producing ideal human beings.⁷³

⁷³ Daniel F. Caner, ““Not of this World:” The Invention of Monasticism,” in P. Rousseau, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Late Antiquity* (London: Basil Blackwell, 2009), 588. Aristotle has argued: “We showed at the commencement of our inquiry that the virtue of the good man is necessarily the same as the virtue of the citizen of the perfect state.” Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Politics*, text of Immanuel Bekker, translated by W.E. Bolland, *Book III, Part VIII* (London: Longmans and Green, 1877).

1. Historiography, Anabaptist History, Theology, Ritual, and Place

Each and every academic work operates within a discourse, distinguishing itself, making a contribution through its particular manner of combining language, knowledge and power. Language does not merely reflect culture but produces it; it is not a simple tool for representing events but creates them through a process of forming “minds,” as Jacques Derrida has argued.¹ Because all academic projects, including those of a historical nature, emerge from within a given set of “categorical schemes and social contexts,”² the historical process necessarily precludes the production of an omniscient, atemporal, apolitical work that fails to exercise power and enact moral principles. Although historians are situated within a morally ambivalent position, their negotiation of power and their construction of meaning are never morally neutral, simply “socially conscious,” or essentially “disinterested accounts.”³ Discourses of “objectivity” and “apoliticism” in which the historian, it is claimed, occupies an interpretive position outside of the process being studied can now be dismissed as philosophically and epistemologically “naïve,” proving to be, as Friedrich Nietzsche has effectively argued, a process for “measuring past opinions and deeds by the universal public opinion of the moment.”⁴ Without exception, every project is defined by the discourse with which it is associated, the meaning it constructs and the power it exercises, with each individual work conditioned by the social, historical, and political circumstances in which it is produced and from which

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 169.

² Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 16.

³ Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 26-27.

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, reprint (Sioux Falls, SD: NuVision Publications, 2007), 41.

it emerges. The discourse in which this project operates, the significant problem it attempts to flesh out, and the solution it proposes to that problem are mapped within this first chapter as follows.

Firstly, I develop an argument for revisionist historiography and its ongoing value for Anabaptist studies as a means of contextualizing the spatial interpretation of Anabaptist history this project introduces. The writing of Anabaptist history has been a culturally determined, politically aligned, and theory-conditioned process from its beginnings into the present, with this current project offered as a continuation of an already well-established revisionist pattern within Anabaptist studies.⁵ Theory, as it is understood here, is not synonymous with hypothesis, nor is it concerned with the business of “guessing.” Theory has to do with representation, and refers to the primary assumptions embedded in a text or discourse. Theories are always “sightings from sites” as Friedrich Nietzsche has shown; they are always “positioned representations of a changing terrain by an itinerant cartographer,” as Thomas A. Tweed has argued.⁶ Representations are not only products, as Stephen Greenblatt has argued, but also producers, “capable of decisively altering the very forces that brought them into being.”⁷ “Theory” is a principal tool of the investigator; it provides any given text with its specificity and power, while defining and delimiting the scope and magnitude of the representations being made. Secondly, I provide a brief outline

⁵ See, James M. Stayer’s assessment of Anabaptist historiography and his discussion concerning some of its most “important” contributors. James M. *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1972), 7-23. For Stayer’s more recent assessment see, John D. Roth, and James M. Stayer, eds., *Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), xiii-xxiv. See also, C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995), 397-408, for Snyder’s review of Anabaptist historiography.

⁶ Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 13.

⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 6.

of recent Anabaptist historiography, and a description of the methodological considerations and theoretical preferences employed in past Anabaptist historiography and in this project, signalling the contribution this work is positioned to make. The problem I identify has been a defining characteristic, controlling influence, and continues to be a central problem in Anabaptist historiography, namely an over-valorization of ideation over action. The methodological problem identified perpetuates a well-established propensity to dichotomize and then privilege the mind over the body, theology over sociology.⁸ Thirdly, I present an invitation to rethink early sixteenth-century Anabaptist history, encouraging the adoption of a fresh approach to Anabaptist beginnings. The theoretically and methodologically oriented study of place, ritual, and power I present serves to overcome the excessive theological and thought-centered methodology currently restricting the production of better explanations for the emergence of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century. I conclude this chapter with the proposition that Anabaptists, their peculiar ritual practice, their experimental communities, and their alternative social orders developed as responses to medieval socio-political places and the power these places exercised. Sixteenth-century Anabaptists were not so much progenitors of a new cognitive system (or even perpetuators of an old one) as they were ritual innovators

⁸ The relation of theology to history in Anabaptist studies, particularly the assumption of theoretical continuity irrespective of obvious differences between “then and now,” is a problem to which Hans-Jürgen Goertz drew our attention in 1979. In a response to the then recent work of Claus-Peter Clasen and James M. Stayer, Goertz writes: “It is to be noted here that the appeal to theology as a hermeneutic *tertium comparationis* between Anabaptists then and the church today is problematic for both intellectual and social history. Religion and religiosity are something different in the sixteenth century and the twentieth century.” Hans-Jürgen Goertz, “History and Theology: A Major Problem of Anabaptist Research Today,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 53 (1979), 183. Goertz’s efforts to mediate and reconcile (“the term Goertz used is coordinate”) divergent interpretative perspectives lead him to conclude “that complementary historical and theological investigations of Anabaptism are possible without leading necessarily to an idealized distortion of the historical entity.” Goertz, “History and Theology,” 188.

giving expression to their spatial interests through their culturally peculiar ritual program. It was through ritualization that Anabaptists were fashioned,⁹ the existing social order contested and re-formed, and a new community, that is place, created.¹⁰

1.1 The Practice of History

In *The Idea of History*, Robin G. Collingwood calls for the perpetual revision of history, effectively precluding the possibility of an atemporal, definitive project. He writes: “[E]very new generation must rewrite history in its own way”.¹¹ In linking the production of history with a temporally defined community as Collingwood does, the writing of history becomes the development of a cluster of semantic conventions peculiar to the community responsible for their creation.¹² The production of history is always a particularistic discursive phenomenon.¹³ As a result, what is “real,” “important,” “true,” or “fact” is never axiomatic but always conditioned by the circumstances, preferences and proclivities of the present. The practice of history is itself always circumscribed by methodological and theoretical limitations that display and emphasize the situatedness of the historian vis-à-vis the *object* of study, displaying the historian’s relation to the *process* of study in a way that precludes the assignment of an epistemologically naïve position outside of the historical process to her. The historian is always defined, as Collingwood has forcibly shown, as an

⁹ Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 111; and, Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 221.

¹⁰ Tom Driver, *Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites That Transform Our Lives and Our Communities* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 132.

¹¹ Robin George Collingwood. *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 248.

¹² Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 183. Michel de Certeau notes similarly: “history is defined entirely by a relation of language to the (social) body, [...] entirely shaped by the system within which it is developed.” Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 68-69.

¹³ Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), xv.

integral “part of the process he is studying,” firmly setting the historian within “his own place in that process”.¹⁴ History is a “fully human process” subject to the vagaries and forces of the present.¹⁵ It is not simply the data collected, but the epistemological position assigned to the historian, the theoretical organization adopted, and the methodological tools brought to the investigative process that are ultimately responsible for shaping, controlling, and delimiting the picture that is generated, restricting the historian to a “point of view which at this present moment he occupies within it”,¹⁶ as Collingwood has effectively argued. Jonathan Z. Smith has argued that the philosopher may claim with Archimedes: “Give me a place to stand on and I will move the world”, but no such place is available to the historian.¹⁷ Smith’s description of the “less-than-flattering” position the historian must adopt introduces a level of arbitrariness to it, and does not provide for any other possibilities, because they simply remain unavailable:

There are no places on which he might stand apart from the messiness of the given world. There is for him no real beginning, but only the plunge which he takes at some arbitrary point to avoid the unhappy alternatives of infinite regress or silence. His standpoint is not discovered; rather it is erected with no claim beyond that of sheer survival. The historian’s point of view cannot sustain clear vision.¹⁸

The task of the historian, unlike the task of the translator, is not “to get it right,” but to celebrate opacity, variety and ambiguity. The historian does not clarify but complicate;¹⁹ the waters are not clear when the historian leaves but muddied.²⁰

¹⁴ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 248.

¹⁵ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, xv.

¹⁶ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 248.

¹⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 129.

¹⁸ Smith, *Map is Not Territory*, 129.

¹⁹ Smith, *Map is Not Territory*, 129.

The past is always constructed, represented and therefore distorted, coming into existence, becoming “history,” only by virtue of its representation.²¹ Although established as a forum for thinking and writing about the past, the practice of history has proven to be more the matter of “us” in the present than it is a matter of “them” in the past.²² Through its imaginative constructions, the writing of history has proven a suitable method for looking at the present through the lens of the past.²³ In his *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, Nietzsche sets the practice of history in relation to a given present age, culture, or people, defining it as a “natural relationship” in which the parties are “summoned” by desire, and regulated by “degree of need”.²⁴ History, in Nietzsche’s scheme, is always established in service of the present, in “the service of life,” and is always relegated to a subordinate position as the property of “the living person.”²⁵ Examinations of the past always permit the possibility of another

²⁰ Such a position takes seriously Michel Foucault’s statement that “There is no center, but only decenterings, series that register the halting passage from presence to absence, from excess to deficiency. The circle must be abandoned as a faulty principle of return; we must abandon our tendency to organize everything into a sphere.” Michel Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum,” cited in William Spanos, *Americia’s Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 31.

²¹ Eva Geulen, “Under Construction: Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’” in Gerhard Richter *Benjamin’s Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 128.

²² Edward Said, for example, has argued that European representations of their Oriental Other say a good deal more about Europeans than they do about Orientals, making the “Orient” itself “an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture.” Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 2.

²³ David Nirenberg has argued that nowhere in the “dictum that the present shapes the past [...] more evident than in the effects of World War II on historical writing about European minorities.” David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3. Anthony Arthur attempted such an approach, but failed to take adequate notice of the culturally contingent and temporally determined nature of concepts, language, and paradigms. His construction of the past and the present with respect to Anabaptist theology are such that transitions between them are often seamless. He writes: “My reason for telling their [Münsterite Anabaptist] story is that I think it provides insight into our own time as well as theirs.” Anthony Arthur, *The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 1.

²⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, 27.

²⁵ Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, 15-16.

history, that of the present. History must always be written “from the perspective of a future that does not yet exist,”²⁶ and from a standpoint that has yet to be determined.

Critical acceptance of such a relation between the past and the present does not reduce the practice of history to an absurdity, nor does the process ultimately or necessarily succumb to radical scepticism, as is frequently charged.²⁷ Framing the process of history as an imaginative construct that is always temporally conditioned, culturally determined, and socially specific does not mean that the method is entirely arbitrary,²⁸ lacking intellectual value, or devoid of cultural importance. On the contrary, its definition and delimitation as a culturally and temporally contingent hermeneutic applied to the past imbues the process with power, establishing its social relevance and cultural value. It effectively substantiates and concretizes the process of history, investing it with meaning and authority through its identification with a temporally and spatially-specific hermeneutical community. History is the product of specific social, political and discursive practices, defining the process itself by the limits it sets, thereby avoiding many of the positivist²⁹ and moralist pitfalls of nineteenth-century historicism.³⁰ The commonplace expressions “to take place,” “took place,” and “will take place” reveal the inseparable and intimate spatial-temporal connection underwriting the historical process. Method and object are established as

²⁶ Geulen, “Under Construction,” 129.

²⁷ Gabrielle Spiegel has asked whether “history is “made up,” and develops an argument for keeping it “an open issue.” The problem, as she observes, is not whether or not there is a “past out there” but very much the question of “how we reach it.” The question before the researcher is what methodological and theoretical tools are available that provide access to the past in a way that respects its integrity. Gabrielle, Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 22.

²⁸ De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 82 and 78.

²⁹ Paul Ricoeur has effectively dismissed what Philip Sheldrake has termed the “positivist myth of history,” which Sheldrake observes has dominated historiographical projects from the nineteenth century into the present. Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 19-20.

³⁰ Nietzsche stated the matter plainly, arguing that “times and generations never have the right to be judges of all earlier times and generations,” Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, 44.

the historian's contingent constructions within such an analytical system, with the relation of the historian to the social body firmly set as the fluctuating object of history.³¹

The interpretive perspective encouraged within this project establishes the relative, culturally peculiar, temporally specific, incomplete, and provisional nature of all history writing, subjecting process and outcome at all times to the possibility of amendment, revision, and debate regardless of any achievements claimed for it. The situation vis-à-vis the writing of history could hardly be otherwise when we concede that all writing (of which history is only one particular form) is necessarily dependent upon a system of reference, and that all systems or theories (of which writing is only one example) are, as Mark C. Taylor has aptly pointed out, always subject to “the circulation of broader religious, social, political, and economic currents.”³² The matter has been stated slightly more generally but just as emphatically by Michel de Certeau: “historical practice is entirely relative to the structure of society.”³³ Every individual result generated in and through the process of writing Anabaptist history is nothing more, nor less, than an integral part of the broader cultural network to which it is related. Anabaptist history, past and present, like all history writing, is a politically positioned, culturally-determined representation of an ever-changing terrain,³⁴ dialectically influencing the culture or community with which it is identified while always remaining fundamentally dependent on it.³⁵ As an active and dynamic

³¹ De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 62, 82.

³² Mark C. Taylor, “Refiguring Religion, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77: 1 (2009), 105.

³³ De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 66.

³⁴ Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 13.

³⁵ De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 64.

practice, not the “passive reception and reflection of what has gone before,”³⁶ the writing of Anabaptist history has been and continues to be a process that attempts to understand the past through the imposition of socially constructed categories, with the matter of interpretation involving a search for patterns, connections, and answers to questions that are socially relevant, (though always contested), in and for the present,³⁷ always reflecting the historian’s own cultural and moral biases.³⁸

In addition to establishing the parameters of *how* the historian can know, Collingwood’s work demonstrates, through the “discovery of a second dimension of historical thought, the history of history,”³⁹ that certain restrictions also attend *what* can be known. Although Leopold von Ranke’s historical method was adopted by many subsequent generations of historians and though it enjoyed widespread success until relatively recently, the presuppositions on which it was founded have proven naïve and unsustainable: simple realism, with its assumption of a stable object and an unqualified confidence in the accuracy of its representations no longer constitute a philosophically justifiable purpose, or an epistemologically defensible method. Growing awareness that all perception, cognition, and imagination are mediated by linguistic structures aligned with particular discourses has problematized the writing of history.⁴⁰ Historians do not enjoy any form of direct access to the past, its events or

³⁶ Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 195.

³⁷ Such a statement does not “naturalize the present as a model for understanding the past” but establishes a method in which the past is interpreted as a product of, and in relation to, the present. Such an approach recognizes, to some degree at least, that constructions of the past always involve the exercise of power. The perspective adopted avoids “presentism.” Andrew Gow, “Teaching Method and Theory to Undergraduates: Intellectual Challenges and Professional Responsibilities, *History Compass*, 8/3 (2010) 262.

³⁸ Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 195.

³⁹ This is Collingwood’s phrase. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 248.

⁴⁰ Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 46. Spiegel argues that there are “multiple models of mediation,” but argues that the two most frequently used or assumed are, first, that mediation is an

its persons, which would enable constructions that enjoy some form of profound independence of the discourses shaping historical study. Daniel J. Boorstin has argued that our view of the past is always a function of the available evidence, and the available evidence, despite its display of what is often a remarkable consistency, is incomplete and often skewed; it is invested with values and importance by the historian that exceeds that which it used to have.⁴¹ What the investigation of texts offers the historian is “an index of socially constructable meanings” and not “an image of reality,” according to Gabrielle Spiegel.⁴² The confidence that Ranke and subsequent historians placed in the faithfulness of the historian, the adequacy of the empirical method, and the authority, adequacy, and accuracy of the historical record can now be regarded as epistemologically naïve.⁴³ The production of history is not the narration of the past but its mediated and therefore troubled representation.⁴⁴ The Rankean method reflects an understanding of history that fails to recognize or

analytical device that attempts to establish a relation between two distinct orders or phenomenon, and, secondly, that mediation is internal to the object itself, and not something between a given object and “that to which it is brought.” Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 47-51.

⁴¹ See Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers* (New York: Random House, 1983), 576-624. According to Witold Rybczynski, what survives in the record and is made available to the researcher is not the “fittest” but the “richest,” the “immovable, the valuable, the durable, the collected and protected, and the academically classified.” Witold Rybczynski, *The Most Beautiful House in the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 6. Many medieval Gothic cathedrals, for example, enter the present as traces of the past, but very rarely are the emotions, thoughts, and actions of feudal peasants preserved. It is the exotic and not the ordinary that so often endures producing a skewed, slanted or biased view of the past. Social standing and not “quality” determines the longevity of an artefact. Rybczynski, *The Most Beautiful House*, 12.

⁴² Spiegel, *Past as Text*, 5

⁴³ Leopold von Ranke made the following declaration: “And thus I proceeded boldly to the completion of this work; persuaded that when an inquirer has made researches of some extent in authentic records, with an earnest spirit and a genuine ardour for truth, though later discoveries may throw clearer and more certain light on details, they can only strengthen his fundamental conceptions of the subject:—for truth can be but one.” “Author’s Preface,” in Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, translated by Sarah Austin (London: Routledge, 1905), xi.

⁴⁴ It involves a “transformation” in which historical documents are understood as “texts” and not as “sources.” Such a shift in understanding suggests opacity and instability, and questions the “professional legitimacy” of trained historians, according to Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 73-74.

otherwise acknowledge the hidden “I” of the original author(s), the active hand of the earlier compiler(s), and acts of ventriloquism by subsequent historian(s) animating the past.⁴⁵ These forces can now be credited with responsibility for distorting the very thing they presume to re-present, with their presumptive encouragement of developing a picture of the past that purports to be in keeping with the “way it really was” [*Wie es eigentlich gewesen*] decisively challenged.⁴⁶

1.2 Anabaptist Historiography Past and Present

In keeping with the letter of Collingwood’s dictum if not its spirit, Harold S. Bender triumphantly announced, during the middle of the twentieth century, that Anabaptist history which was “formerly the privilege of its enemies” had effectively been reclaimed from earlier “biased presentations.”⁴⁷ The revisionist presentation of Anabaptist history Bender introduced was made possible through a shift in methodology when “historians took the trouble of becoming acquainted with the writings of Anabaptist leaders and the testimony of the victims of persecution”.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁵ It was not until the mid and especially the later twentieth century that “historical facts” were recognized as the products of an earlier selection process involving interpretation as part of a rhetorical strategy that introduced meaning into so-called “objectivity” through the organizing structure of theory. Contra Ranke and Geoffrey R. Elton, Edward H. Carr writes: “Our picture has been pre-selected and predetermined for us, not so much by accident as by people who were consciously or unconsciously imbued with a particular view and thought the facts which supported that view worth preserving.” Edward H. Carr, *What is History*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 8. “Facts” are “choices” which are, as de Certeau argues, “precedents, and which are therefore not the result of observation—and which are not even verifiable but, thanks to critical examination, are only “falsifiable.”” De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 59.

⁴⁶ Ranke issued this dictum: “Nicht das Amt die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zukünftiger Jahre zu belehren, sondern bloß zu zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen.” (Not for the purpose of judging the past, nor to instruct one’s contemporaries regarding the future, but rather, only to show how it actually was.) Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der Romanischen und Germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* (1824).

⁴⁷ Harold Bender, “The Historiography of the Anabaptists” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 31 (1957), 88. Guy F. Herschberger has presented a very similar perspective: “Anabaptist historiography was formerly the prerogative of its enemies”. Guy F. Herschberger, *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1957), 1.

⁴⁸ Harold S. Bender, “The Historiography of the Anabaptists,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 31 (1957), 90.

new focus that was set claimed to effectively and accurately reflect the “nature and goals of the Anabaptist movement,”⁴⁹ setting a normative mode of inquiry for subsequent generations of scholars. Bender’s announcement retained the implicit assertion that the new interpretive method, and by extension the results it generated, were substantially free of bias and prejudice. The decisive shift in method initiated by Bender birthed a new orthodoxy for Anabaptist studies that was positioned vis-à-vis older orthodoxies, with the emphasis that emerged often more a matter of reconciling and playing off sources and historical actors than it was a matter of providing a critical assessment. Bender’s revisionist historiography proved important in the production of influential Anabaptist histories, theologies, articles, and reference materials including *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*. Through the ardent efforts of North American Mennonite historians and others, Anabaptist history and Anabaptist historiography were substantially revised during the middle to later decades of the twentieth century.⁵⁰

The view of Anabaptist history that emerged in the mid-twentieth century was predicated on an essence that anachronistically marginalized and somewhat arbitrarily identified, assessed, and subsequently dismissed as aberrations any groups or persons who failed to conform to the portrait that was being created by revisionist Mennonite

⁴⁹ Bender, “The Historiography of the Anabaptists,” 89.

⁵⁰ The *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* makes the following statement: “More than half a century ago American historian Carl Becker observed that every generation must rewrite its own history. His dictum is illustrated nowhere more amply than in Anabaptist historiography of the past 25-30 years. A body of ardent revisionists has staked out claims to fresh, stimulating interpretations.” <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/H594ME.html> (1989 Update). It seems that the *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* may have conflated and/or wrongly attributed Collingwood’s words to Carl Becker. During his 1931, “Everyman His Own Historian,” Presidential Address to the American Historical Association, Becker said: “It should be a relief to us to renounce omniscience, to recognize that every generation, our own included, will, must inevitably, understand the past and anticipate the future in the light of its own restricted experience”. Carl Becker, *American Historical Review*, 37: 2 (1931), 221-236.

historians. Despite differences elsewhere, scholars such as Hans Hillerbrand lent their support to Bender's new-found methodological perspective and its attendant quest to essentialize the Anabaptist movements. Hillerbrand decisively linked the essence of the Anabaptist movement to the documents Anabaptists produced: "It is only through documents originating with the Anabaptist movement that the essence of the Anabaptist movement can finally be understood."⁵¹ His statements confirmed the normative quality of Anabaptist sources for the investigation of Anabaptist history, with the perspective, self-understandings, and self-descriptions that these documents presented decisively privileged in the process. Seldom are texts produced by sixteenth-century Anabaptists recognized as inherently seductive, ideologically mystifying and thoroughly strategic, and should be approached with suspicion. Implicit in Hillerbrand's argument lies the assumption that the rhetorical strategies and comments embedded in Anabaptist literature were trustworthy, that Anabaptist leaders speak for the laity, and that Anabaptist literati accurately represent the concerns and interests of illiterate Anabaptists. The essentialized approach encouraged by Bender, Hillerbrand and others helped shape a monolith termed "Anabaptism" [or *Täuferium*], which was projected into the historical record, and now enjoys a ubiquitous and virtually unquestioned presence in the secondary literature. Required unity for the strategic construction of an "Anabaptism" monolith was gained through the elitist paradigm that was firmly set in which Anabaptists were thought to have been primarily concerned with "the meaning and centrality of a core

⁵¹ [Nur in von Täufern selbst stammenden Dokumenten und Quellen wird man letztlich das Wesen der täuferischen Bewegung können.] Hans Joachim Hillerbrand, *Die Politische Ethik des oberdeutschen Täufertums: Eine Untersuchung zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte des Reformationszeitalters* (Leiden; Köln: E. J. Brill, 1962), 3.

of biblical texts relating to church reform”,⁵² and through the selective connections and associations Anabaptist historians developed, creating a sanitized but rhetorically strategic picture of sixteenth-century Anabaptists, and a continuum of Anabaptist action and Anabaptist interests into the present that is still largely in vogue.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the writing of Anabaptist history has become increasingly dominated by Mennonite scholars to the point that it is virtually their exclusive domain, with sympathetic,⁵³ apologetic, and on occasion confessional attitudes⁵⁴ being fundamental and not secondary to the investigations and representations being made.⁵⁵ Confessional, “sympathetic,” and “liberal-secular”⁵⁶ biases have effectively displaced earlier hostile interpretations of Anabaptist history, providing shape to the current dominant investigative paradigm,

⁵² C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995), 159.

⁵³ Werner O. Packull, for example, has stated that he is “decidedly on the side of the victims of sixteenth-century oppression”, with his writing of Anabaptist history an attempt “to provide a sympathetic account of the incredible difficulties encountered and overcome by those valiant women and men seeking the kingdom of God in community.” Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1995), 11.

⁵⁴ Snyder, for example, has positioned himself “within the Mennonite faith tradition,” and has described his concluding chapter as a “dandy sermon” addressing “issues facing contemporary Believers’ Churches”. Snyder, *Anabaptist Theology and History*, 8.

⁵⁵ James M. Stayer has recently argued that “self-labelling our perspectives is a very serious [problem]”, with Stayer arguing that the application of what he calls a “tag” interfering with “making it [historical work] understood.” He argues that “labels or tags can be very glib, not nearly so nuanced as the work of the historical scholarship that they supposedly illuminate”. John D. Roth, and James M. Stayer, eds., *Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), xv. While the application of “glib tags” to a particular project or scholar may be a form of academic injustice, the refusal or failure to disclose one’s “perspective or interpretive biases” and therein purport to present a “pure” and “objective” view of the past is also an injustice, and may even be deceptive, as it fails to disclose the hand purportedly unveiling the mystery of “history.” See, Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York; London; Routledge, 1996). Stayer’s comments are “naïve” to the degree that they assume a picture of the past that is independent of the machinations of the historian. Moreover, they demonstrate a misunderstanding of what it is that historians do. Bruce Lincoln has observed: “When one permits those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood, suspends one’s interest in the temporal and contingent, or fails to distinguish between “truths”, “truth-claims”, and “regimes of truth”, one has ceased to function as historian or scholar.” Bruce Lincoln, “Theses on Method,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 8 (1996), 227.

⁵⁶ Stayer describes himself as a “profane historian with a liberal perspective”. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, 6.

which can be characterized as the postulation of an interdependent connection between Anabaptist history and theology (or thought) as its primary interpretive nexus.⁵⁷

My investigation into sixteenth-century Anabaptist historiography has confirmed that the writing of Anabaptist history is, as Mary Fulbrook has cogently argued, “whether the historians acknowledge this or not, an intrinsically theoretical as well as empirical enterprise.”⁵⁸ Anabaptist historiography, like all knowledge production, has been an eminently theory-conditioned cultural process even when the precise terms of its production remain hidden and undisclosed. All attempts to locate ourselves vis-à-vis our object of study are partial at best, but they effectively preclude the presentation of a view from “nowhere.” The practice of Anabaptist history, like the writing of all history, has involved a complex process of negotiation and reconciliation in which the mistakes, aberrations and passions of earlier generations of scholars (always made visible in a later present generation) are confronted. It has also been a process through which the present generation actively works toward the satisfaction of its obligations to earlier generations: writing history is a practice that

⁵⁷ Such an interpretive perspective is evident in Snyder’s, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, and in the work of Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *The Anabaptists* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.

⁵⁸ Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 4. Brad S. Gregory has argued, not only that historical work can be conducted independently of “theory”, but that “theories [...] are the problem,” interfering with the investigation of historical questions. It is “convictions” not “theories” that explain Anabaptist history in his thinking. He claims that martyrdom provides conclusive evidence for his argument that “theories” are incapable of explaining “past, lived experience.” “No social scientific or cultural theory undergirded by a tacit atheism, the historical imagination of which is restricted to people competing for influence, striving for power, resisting the exercise of power, “constructing” themselves, “reinventing” themselves, manipulating symbols, and the like, can explain martyrdom.” Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 350-51.

seeks to address earlier injustices and thereby satisfy an inherited debt felt most acutely by historians, archivists, and collectors.⁵⁹

Although significantly nuanced over time, much recent scholarship continues to rely on and privilege the perspective that documents produced by sixteenth-century Anabaptists provide. The back cover of a recent publication, *Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster, 1530-35*, for example, claims to provide a “revised account of Münster’s Reformation” through its reliance on “evidence from the protagonists of Münster’s Reformation in both its Anabaptist and pre-Anabaptist phases.”⁶⁰ Mennonite historians have substantially broadened the terms of their investigations to include a variety of social, economic and political factors (against an exclusively theological and ecclesiastical hermeneutic), but the influences of the earlier essentialized thought centered method continue to be evident. With few exceptions, historians of sixteenth-century Anabaptist history content themselves with the task of providing new answers to old questions, expanding on rather than substantially revising the questions themselves.⁶¹ Discussions in Anabaptist studies continue to rely heavily on the critical paradigms, questions, categories, structures, concepts, language, descriptions, and methods widely employed during the mid-twentieth century. Sociological, political, and economic factors have been absorbed into the investigation, resulting in some corresponding adjustments, but the theoretical nature and methodological structure of the discussion remain largely unchanged, and continue to depend on an investigative framework that reflects a form

⁵⁹ The historian functions as an heir and is obligated by duty; it is to the neglected, despised and ignored past that the historian is “naturally” drawn.

⁶⁰ Willem de Bakker, Michael Driedger, and James Stayer, *Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster, 1530-35* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2009).

⁶¹ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 248.

of Cartesian dualism that presupposes a dichotomous hierarchy of thought and action. The binary established structures a way of thinking about the past and historical actors that creates an important divide where a substantial bond exists, treating body and mentality as separate and separable for analytical purposes. Within such an investigative structure, thought always precedes and remains primary over action. It is the invisible, unassailable and ideal reality of thought that substantiates action within this interpretive paradigm, providing understanding and meaning to action. The employment of a theoretical armature in which thought is the antecedent of action traces Anabaptist action back to Anabaptist thought, which is generally aligned with, and assumed to be, the outworking of some theological tenet held by the Anabaptist in question or the group in general.

In his most recent monograph, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation*, Werner O. Packull charges that current Anabaptist historiography evinces an important methodological shift introduced during the later decades of the twentieth century, which he describes as the “detheologizing and rehistoricizing” of “events collectively known as the Reformation”.⁶² However, this “new method” that Packull claims as currently representative of Anabaptist studies is not the radical departure from earlier historiography claimed for it.⁶³ The method Packull describes continues to privilege Anabaptist thought and Anabaptist theological interests as its primary explanatory

⁶² Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 5.

⁶³ Stayer too has followed the trajectory set by Bender, arguing that the “most glaring technical weakness of the traditional high Protestant polemical historiography of Anabaptism was its willful neglect of the most pertinent sources, the doctrinal writings of Anabaptists and their statements from the records of court proceedings against them.” He claims to have attempted “to rely as heavily as possible on the sixteenth-century Anabaptists themselves as a source for their history”, and laments that it is “a maxim that cannot be followed completely.” Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, 5-6.

nexus,⁶⁴ casting sixteenth-century Anabaptist identity, Anabaptist action, and ritual practice in terms of Anabaptist theological, ecclesiological, or intellectual thought.⁶⁵ Packull acknowledges his own indebtedness to Bender for a biblicist understanding of Anabaptist beginnings, declaring Anabaptist convictions, interests and motivations to have been squarely and solely situated in relation to “biblical fountains.” He argues:

According to scholarly consensus, the Swiss Anabaptists were radical biblicists who broke with Ulrich Zwingli because he reneged on the principle of *sola scriptura* when political push came to shove on practical issues. Harold Bender put it pointedly when he wrote that “the Anabaptists were biblicists and it was from the biblical fountains alone that they drank.”⁶⁶

Modern “revisionist” Anabaptist scholarship continues to function through a particular Christian frame of reference, perpetuating a peculiarly Protestant hermeneutic in which thought and/or belief are privileged as primary investigative and meaningful categories.⁶⁷ These categories are imbued with substantial explanatory power with few Anabaptist historians acknowledging the biases attending such choices. “Faith,” “belief,” and “thought” are decisively privileged over cultural production as explanatory and not merely descriptive categories, stressing interiority at the expense of external forms. Despite the “insights” a thought-centered interpretive stance might claim it cannot establish itself without promoting a

⁶⁴ Contemporary Anabaptist studies (with few exceptions) continue to be ensnared within a frame of reference, including the categories, concepts, language, and method inherited from earlier scholarship. This is a state of affairs recognized by Stayer as early as 1972, but from which he did not successfully escape. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, 9.

⁶⁵ Henry Suderman, “Place and Power in Radical Baptism,” *Studies in Religion*, 39:2 (2010),

⁶⁶ Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 15.

⁶⁷ Brad S. Gregory’s work is an example of such an interpretive posture. Gregory repeatedly treats “faith” and “belief” not only as explanatory categories but imbues them with preeminent explanatory powers when applied to sixteenth-century Anabaptists. See for example, Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 342-44.

theoretical framework in which Anabaptist activity is understood and presented as the dramatization of conceptual entities.⁶⁸ It reflects a long-standing Protestant assessment of ritual as “empty,” associating ritualization from the time of the Reformation with “blind and thoughtless habit.”⁶⁹ Most problematic given this project and my own interests, a thought centered method consistently casts spatial metaphors, statements, and actions in relation to biblical or theological antecedents, such that the method ignores, even precludes, the potential productivity of examining them in their own right. What Packull terms “religious consciousness and meaning” is privileged as primary and is inserted into what he terms “immediate historic circumstances,” rendering place little more than container, or backdrop for “thought;” the “main event.”⁷⁰ Such an approach to history reduces place to a *stage* where history happens, giving pre-eminence to the “unfolding of time.” It has been called the production of “imperial history” by Paul Carter, who sets it as the diametrical opposite of spatial history.⁷¹ Spatial history, Carter argues, challenges the primary methodological assumptions built into imperial history.

My own ideological commitments regarding Anabaptist history are such that I have limited intellectual interest in what historical actors may have thought, but

⁶⁸ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 38.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 103.

⁷⁰ The work of Stayer displays just such an approach to Anabaptist history in relation to place. Packull has observed: “Stayer was not only interested in the intellectual pedigree of ideas but in their social location”, with the latter functioning as the context or stage for the former. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 10.

⁷¹ Paul Carter argues that the primary objective of imperial history “is not to understand or to interpret: it is to legitimate.” Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), xiv-xvi. Carter traces the origins of imperial history to the assumptions embedded in enlightenment philosophy and positivist science.

considerable interest in what they may have done and the way in which their actions, and the power they exercised, shaped the world in which they lived.

1.3 The Possibility of Place

While all methodological choices necessarily restrict investigative processes, setting a pre-determined limit to what can be thought, excluding from their discourse that which does not form its basis, a thought-centred structure is particularly ill-suited to furthering our understanding of sixteenth-century Anabaptist socio-political action. Conversely, a spatial interpretation of sixteenth-century Anabaptist history provides a suitable forum for engaging questions surrounding the genesis of the Anabaptist movements and the shape these movements took. Anabaptist dissatisfaction with the nature and shape of society, that is, their spatial interests, and their efforts directed at the creation of alternative social structures, orders, and systems are given fuller expression through a place focus, without such labour reductively subordinating Anabaptist action to their theological interests.

An effective starting point for analysis given our place-oriented purposes is available in Michel Foucault's "analytics of power" in which power is constructed as a network of discursive relations that acts on bodies and is constitutive of the actions and attitudes of everyday life through which it circulates,⁷² forming discourses, inserting itself into bodies, actions, attitudes, learning processes and everyday lives through its intimate association with culturally constructed and socially maintained places.⁷³ The place centered hermeneutic being proposed is not new to understandings of human emplacement and conflict, and offers a conceptual

⁷² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 27.

⁷³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 39.

framework for rethinking the redistribution and decentralization of power sixteenth-century Anabaptists sought. The Greek term *topomachia* (formed from *Topos* (place/space) and *macheo* (to struggle or wage war), for example, appears from time to time in the writings of Strabo and Plutarch,⁷⁴ and can be found in geographical writings in the early Augustan period when finding “place in imperial space” had become an important issue.⁷⁵ Willi Braun has observed that though *topomachia* is a term that “most literally means war over territory it also comes to have a more metaphorical meaning, in the sense of thinking geographically or spatially about emplacement in a space that has been configured and signified perhaps in a hegemonic way.”⁷⁶ Laura Salah Nasrallah is less reticent, arguing that *topomachia* “literally means a “place of battle,” and Horace Jones translates the term “guerilla warfare.”⁷⁷ Braun has observed that *topomachia* involves the “negotiation of subcultures under conditions of empire, negotiating resistance and assimilation, insisting on one's own territory (materially, socially, and symbolically) within a larger cultural, religious space.”⁷⁸ Because places are always human constructions, the products of human ingenuity and effort, and always “politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions,” as Margaret Rodman argues,⁷⁹ they prove to be fertile topoi for the articulation of power relations, being also

⁷⁴ Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 52-53.

⁷⁵ Willi Braun, email conversation 7 March 2011 at the University of Alberta. Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture*, 55-56.

⁷⁶ Willi Braun, email conversation 7 March 2011 at the University of Alberta.

⁷⁷ Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture*, 52.

⁷⁸ Willi Braun, email conversation 7 March 2011 at the University of Alberta.

⁷⁹ Margaret Rodman, “Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality,” *American Anthropologist* 94:3 (1992), 641.

constitutive of them. Places, including sacred places,⁸⁰ do not exist independently of human activity, but function in a relation of reciprocity, exercising significant influence over human action, drawing human responses. The interrelation of place and power is such that places are necessarily dynamic and not simply static repositories for human activity,⁸¹ inert containers into which thought can be inserted, as is often assumed in Anabaptist studies. The values with which places are imbued and the power they exercise are always “moving;” they are contingent structures of power dominating the lives of people and their consciousness in ways that necessarily draw human responses, though the discipline they affect is not always necessary, or even desirable.⁸² As the products of social relations as well as their creator, places determine socio-political interaction. Hence, it is through an analytics of place, power, and their interrelation during the sixteenth century that a better understanding of Anabaptist behaviour and a socio-political analysis of their ritual program becomes possible.

1.4 Place and Ritual in Scholarship

The work of Henri Lefebvre on the social construction of space was an early attempt to provide a heuristically useful distinction between material, physical space and abstract, imagined space.⁸³ Lefebvre argued that representations and

⁸⁰ The “sacred” is not herein understood substantially and associated with the “real,” as Mircea Eliade would have it, but situationally established in the “nexus of human practices and social projects” as Smith uses it. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal trace the thinking of Smith in this area back to the work of Emile Durkheim. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 5.

⁸¹ Rodman, “Empowering Place,” 641.

⁸² Thomas Heilke, “At the Table? Toward an Anabaptist Political Science,” in Ashley Woodiwiss and Thomas Heilke, eds., *The Re-enchantment of Political Science: Christian Scholars Engage Their Discipline* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 51.

⁸³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

understandings of space, regardless of whether such space is abstract or material, are always historically contingent, and culturally determined matters.⁸⁴ Megan Cassidy-Welch has effectively challenged the presumed widespread applicability of Lefebvre's thesis, arguing that the division between "material and abstract space" Lefebvre advanced was "not always neatly effected or envisaged" during the medieval period, and hence, that it is of little heuristic value in the interpretation of this period.⁸⁵ However, Lefebvre's argument that "space" is always temporally specific and culturally determined has effectively resisted scrutiny despite the ever-changing representations, values, and meanings with which places are imbued. Places continue to constitute a crucial and critical site for cultural analysis. The only reality that a human being can come to know is that which is filtered by what Donna Peuquet has called "our perceptions cast in the context of an innate sense of space and time."⁸⁶

"Space," according to Foucault, has the privilege of today forming the "horizon of our concerns, our theory, our systems" even though it cannot be said to be a "recent innovation."⁸⁷ Foucault argues that "space" has a "history in Western experience" traceable to the Middle Ages and its "hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places; protected places and open, exposed places; urban places and rural places",⁸⁸ prompting his assessment that places "concern the real life of men."⁸⁹ Although Galileo is credited with opening up what Foucault terms this

⁸⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 254-55.

⁸⁵ Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth Century English Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 252.

⁸⁶ Donna Peuquet, *Representations of Space and Time* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2002), 22.

⁸⁷ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, translated by Jay Miskowiec 16:1 (1986), 22. Foucault states: "I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time." Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 23.

⁸⁸ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 22.

⁸⁹ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 22.

“medieval space of emplacement” signalling a “certain theoretical desanctification of space,”⁹⁰ it is not Galileo, but Kantian and Newtonian philosophy that have come to inform contemporary anthropological theoretical discourse.⁹¹ Immanuel Kant’s interest in spatial matters was intimately tied to his epistemology, forming an essential component in his effort to “mediate the debate between Newton and Leibniz over “absolute space,””⁹² as Jonathan Z. Smith has observed. Kant directed significant attention at the problem of human orientation, the matter of determining how it is that humans place themselves.⁹³ In Kant’s 1768 paper titled “On the First Ground of the Distinction of Regions in Space” he established absolute space as necessary given the relation of parts of space to each other.⁹⁴ It introduced a philosophical shift that launched the dichotomization of space and place, with the assumed “priority of space over place” becoming “virtually axiomatic” in post-Kantian and post-Newtonian philosophy and anthropology.⁹⁵ Because contemporary anthropological, philosophical, cultural, and historical discourses have been decisively influenced by Kantian philosophy they reflect their inheritance of a theoretical structure in which places are simply assumed to be the “determinations of an already existing monolith of Space.” Such a construction of space is offered as

⁹⁰ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 23.

⁹¹ Edward S. Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time,” in Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso eds., *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe; New Mexico: School of American Research Press), 14-15.

⁹² Smith, *To Take Place*, 27.

⁹³ Smith, *To Take Place*, 27.

⁹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1900), 377-78; John Handyside, ed., *Kant’s Inaugural Dissertation and Early Writings on Space* (Chicago; London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1929), 20.

⁹⁵ Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 14.

“absolute and infinite as well as empty and a priori in status,”⁹⁶ necessarily relegating places to positions of “mere apportionings of space, its compartmentalizations,”⁹⁷ according to Edward S. Casey. Contemporary Kantian constructions of “space” are generally strictly dependent on its constitution as a *tabula rasa*, that is, as both a neutral and pre-given medium onto which “the particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed.”⁹⁸ The influential work of Yi-Fu Tuan reflects just such a space-place dichotomous theoretical perspective: “Space lies open; it suggests the future and invites action. [...]. Open space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed. Enclosed and humanized space is place. Compared to space, place is a calm center of established values.”⁹⁹ Tuan’s efforts to further his adopted interpretive position and secure his epistemological foundation require that he fall back onto the employment of metaphor for his rhetorical strategy, with Tuan claiming that “a farmer has to cut down trees to create space for his farmstead and fields”; forest, like the “bare plain” constitutes a “trackless region of possibility.”¹⁰⁰

Acceptance of such an originary “blank environment” that retains endless possibilities and awaits the “cultural configurations” of place founders on its necessary pre-condition of what constitutes an ill-defined and largely unexamined “process by which space becomes ‘country’”, as Casey notes.¹⁰¹ For all the epistemological differences and philosophical nuances that the respective arguments

⁹⁶ Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 14.

⁹⁷ Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 14.

⁹⁸ Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 14.

⁹⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977, 2001), 54.

¹⁰⁰ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 56.

¹⁰¹ Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 14.

of Casey¹⁰² and Smith¹⁰³ hold, they evince an understanding of the relation of the emplaced body, understood as the product of cultural and social processes, to perception, including perceptions of oneself, that bear striking similarities concerning the orientation of human beings in place as a process conferring meaning to place(s). Smith and Casey effectively argue that humans are not only always in places, but also always responsible for bringing them into existence, while being shaped by them.¹⁰⁴ The argument has been further nuanced through the work of David Ley who has stipulated, rather provocatively, that scholarly debate in the last 100 years concerning the relation of place and space can be traced to the discourse of modernity where the “struggle to define the language of space and place has often formed part of a larger struggle for the definition of culture itself”.¹⁰⁵ It is through language, acts of naming, describing and forming, and its attendant exercise of power that places are brought into existence; and it is places, and the power they exercise, that render culture visible. It would follow from the acceptance of such an argument, especially with a view to its evolution, that variability in world views and corresponding differences in social understandings, such as that expressed by Anabaptist radicals during the sixteenth-century, in spite of commonality elsewhere, requires a corresponding variability in spatial understandings.

Casey’s claim that phenomenology provides a viable solution to the contemporary space/place dichotomy, and its attendant problems, brings embodiment and emplacement into relation with the “anthropological problem of knowing,”

¹⁰² Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 19.

¹⁰³ Smith, *To Take Place*, 28.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *To Take Place*, 28. See also, Casey “From Space to Place,” 19.

¹⁰⁵ David Ley, “Modernism, Post-Modernism and the Struggle for Place,” in John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan, eds., *The Power of Place* (London; Sydney; Wellington: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 45.

effectively establishing place as the primary “form of embodied experience.”¹⁰⁶ His argument presents a strong alternative to Kantian and Newtonian philosophy and the controlling influence they have exerted on modern anthropological and philosophical discourse, challenging the thesis that human life is lived in an essentially homogenous and empty space within which people and things are placed. Although Casey’s argument also retains the advantage of honouring, perhaps even privileging, the view from below, that is, the emplaced “experience” of actors in its investigations, it is not a particularly effective or useful theoretical and methodological tool in analyses where little sensuous data describing the “body sensing and moving,”¹⁰⁷ is available in the historical record.

A more promising starting point, given my purposes and the nature of the resources available for the investigation of Anabaptist history, may be accessible in a method that theorises place in terms of social and political investments, the role of places in contestations of power, and, in constructions of place as the primary site for the analysis of power struggles.¹⁰⁸ With such a working understanding of place, places are always shown to be sharply identitarian and therefore cannot possibly be neutral, easily shared, or “naturally” suitable for the harmonization of cultures. Such an approach takes seriously Foucault’s argument that we do not live in some sort of void filled and shaped by human activity, but within a set of relations that delineate places “which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on

¹⁰⁶ Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, eds., *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NH: School of American Research Press, 1996), 9.

¹⁰⁷ Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 17.

¹⁰⁸ Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*, 8-9.

one another.”¹⁰⁹ Cultural conflict is very often spatial conflict, and spatial conflict requires spatial renovations and spatial innovations, not accommodations.

In foregoing broad philosophical discussion and theological speculation in favour of a theoretically sensitive ethnographic approach centred on socio-political issues of power, its exercise, and its contestation in relation to sixteenth-century Anabaptists, a series of questions regarding the production, ownership, maintenance, contestation, and re-creation of place during the medieval and early modern period is opened-up. Contrary to the rhetoric that was frequently employed by sixteenth-century religious actors in their descriptions, and unlike the interpretations of some modern historians, sixteenth-century places, and especially sacred spaces, were not primarily concerned with or limited to mythological categories and “religious” expressions; they inevitably and necessarily concerned significant social, economic and political forces that established relations of dominance and subordination, dispossession and appropriation, exclusion and inclusion.¹¹⁰ My review of the primary evidence would suggest that sixteenth-century authorities recognized this state of affairs in their strategic construction and utilization of sixteenth-century cultural places, making Anabaptist re-baptism and political resistance virtually synonymous in their thinking and practice. Sacred space, as it was constructed and maintained during the medieval period was afforded privileged status, with the exercise of power inherent to such a condition always also open to the possibility of resistance to the exercise of such power, with sacred places becoming highly contested sites with the emergence of Anabaptist radicals. Menno Simons rejected the

¹⁰⁹ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 23.

¹¹⁰ Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 17.

“differentiation of places,” insisting that the privileging of one place over another was “contrary to His Word,” with privileged places emerging as products of “false doctrine.”¹¹¹

In accepting Foucault’s conceptualization of place as heterogeneous and decisively associated with power,¹¹² all competing theoretical considerations of place that would reify it or construct it as amorphous, a homogenous or inert container, as a backdrop or stage for human activity, are necessarily rejected. My project follows an alternative model such as that provided by Margaret Rodman in which places are always multiple and local, historically specific and culturally relative constructions,¹¹³ taking issue with those theoretical positions that interpret place in the singular as the concrete and the real.¹¹⁴ Rodman’s work encourages acceptance of a multiplicity of places and therefore a multiplicity of realities existing in any given space as one of its essential components, without dichotomizing these places into abstract and material categories, such that every place constitutes a reality unique to each inhabitant.¹¹⁵ Such an understanding of place does not restrict its conceptualization to geographical sites or to “its materializations,”¹¹⁶ but also accepts its designation for the relation between physical location and human narrative as

¹¹¹ *CWMS*, 300-01.

¹¹² Michel Foucault writes: “The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and knaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space.” Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 23.

¹¹³ Rodman, “Empowering Place,” 641.

¹¹⁴ Clifford Geertz suggests that “place” “makes a poor abstraction” such that when it is separated “from its materializations, it has little meaning.” Clifford Geertz, “Afterword,” in Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, eds., *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe; New Mexico: School of American Research Press), 259. Geertz further insists that “No one really has a theory of it”, and that the only way to profitably study place or someone’s sense of place requires that one “hang around with them—to attend to them as experiencing subjects”. Geertz, “Afterword,” 260.

¹¹⁵ Rodman, “Empowering Place” 643.

¹¹⁶ This is Geertz’s phrase. Geertz, “Afterword,” 259.

entirely legitimate,¹¹⁷ with places not only featuring in human narratives but constituting narratives in their own right.¹¹⁸ Places, therefore, are not reducible to a single kind of thing and may be conceptual, physical, historical, social and cultural constructions that are imbued with value and therefore always potential sites for conflict.¹¹⁹ Places are not discovered but manufactured, such that the places in which we as humans live, walk and dream are the space of “our “primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions”,¹²⁰ producing what Foucault has termed “fantasmatic space,” consisting of a body of social relations.¹²¹ Foucault separates all places into one of two types, “utopias” and “real places” also called “heterotopias,”¹²² but every place regardless of the category to which it is relegated in Foucault’s scheme exhibits what Philip Sheldrake argues are “three essential characteristics – it emerges with our identity, with our relationships and with our history”.¹²³ Identity, whether individual or communal, is determined dialogically as the product of places and in cooperation with our social relations.¹²⁴

Practitioners of ritual studies, with ritual studies defined as a method of investigation, have on occasion been attentive to the importance of place in their enquiries. However, scholars have not generally been sensitive to the way in which ritualization is intertwined with and fundamental to the manufacture, maintenance,

¹¹⁷ Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 1.

¹¹⁸ Rodman, “Empowering Place,” 642.

¹¹⁹ Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 31.

¹²⁰ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 23.

¹²¹ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 23.

¹²² Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 24.

¹²³ Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, 9.

¹²⁴ Paul Brink, “Selves in Relation: Theories of Community and the Imago Dei Doctrine,” in Ashley Woodiwiss and Thomas Heilke, eds., *The Re-enchantment of Political Science: Christian Scholars Engage Their Discipline* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 94.

and contestation of place(s).¹²⁵ Likewise, scholars whose attention is focused on place have not, generally speaking, been particularly concerned with the role that ritual plays in the manufacture of place(s), or the manner in which it provides a place with its distinctive character and moral value. Explorations and analyses in ritual studies are generally concerned with the way in which rituals work, what it is that ritual action accomplishes, (which is most often presented in terms of its effects on ritual actors), and, how ritual action does or does not differ from other forms of social action. Catherine Bell, like Jonathan Z. Smith, has forcibly challenged the long-accepted theoretical paradigm and its privileging of ritualized actions, arguing that rituals be removed from “their isolated position as special paradigmatic acts,” advocating their restoration “to the context of social activity in general.”¹²⁶ Although often understood as exceptional, Bell argues that ritual practice should be understood as “ordinary,” with ritualization best understood, as David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal have also argued, as “embodied spatial practice”.¹²⁷ Smith has observed that ritualization is “first and foremost, a mode of paying attention; it is a process for marking interest,”¹²⁸ a method for the “assertion of difference.”¹²⁹ It is through this work of marking difference that ritualization establishes profane places and/or sacred places, imbuing them with particular meanings, securing their social value. Ritualization is a structural mechanism effectively fusing thought and action,¹³⁰

¹²⁵ The work of Jonathan Z. Smith forms a notable exception. Smith has effectively argued that places are inherently empty signifiers sacralized through culturally-peculiar and temporally-specific ritual practices. The sacred is an adjectival form that is the product of, and derives its meaning from ritualized cultural practices. Smith, *To Take Place*.

¹²⁶ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 7.

¹²⁷ Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 9.

¹²⁸ Smith, *To Take Place*, 103.

¹²⁹ Smith, *To Take Place*, 109.

¹³⁰ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 16-21.

producing social relations and cultural knowledge. In discussing the effects of ritualization, Bell once again challenges accepted understandings, arguing that the “ultimate purpose of ritualization is neither the immediate goals avowed by the community or the officiant nor the more abstract functions of social solidarity and conflict resolution; it is nothing other than the production of ritualized agents.”¹³¹ While Bell’s alignment of ritualization with strategies of power effectively establishes ritual practice as a “strategy for the construction of a limited and limiting power relationship,”¹³² she circumscribes her discussion with an understanding of ritualization that maintains the practice as an “intrinsically and categorically conservative” process by its very “nature.”¹³³

Many theorists of ritual, including prominent scholars such as Edith Turner, Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Arnold Van Gennep, Ronald L. Grimes and Roy A. Rappaport tend to assume or explicitly argue that ritual action is socially conservative, with occasional exceptions made for carnival or burlesque, which are then typically characterized as temporary inversions of the social and political order that ultimately work to reinforce the existing structure.¹³⁴ Little is said of the extent to which ritual, like art and architecture, function as schemata for the exercise of

¹³¹ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 221.

¹³² Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 8.

¹³³ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 212. Bell seems to have modified her position in a subsequent publication where she argues that ritual can be used to challenge the dominant value system, and that it can be instrumental in shaping communities based on a competing vision for society. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 252.

¹³⁴ Martha Ellen Stortz is an exception to the general trend. Martha Ellen Stortz, “Ritual Power, Ritual Theory: Configurations and Reconfigurations in the Era of Manifestations,” in Michael B Aune and Valerie DeMarinis, eds., *Religious and Social Rituals: Interdisciplinary Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 106.

political and religious power, and/or resistance to the exercise of power.¹³⁵ My investigation of sixteenth-century Anabaptist ritual practice suggests that ritual is not *necessarily* or *categorically* conservative, and may in fact be effectively employed for socially subversive purposes, including the production of competing cultural places. It is primarily through ritual as an emplaced spatial practice that a symbolic and imaginative reshaping of the world becomes possible. By virtue of the attachment to place generated through ritualization, a particular understanding or sense of place is produced, shaping perspectives of reality, creating a certain dependence on place, making it suitable for culturally subversive acts of resistance. In linking the production of culturally important and temporally specific places to ritualization,¹³⁶ ritual action in the case of sixteenth-century Anabaptist practice is shown to be foundational to identity formation and the acquisition of a sense of empowerment, becoming an essential component in their program of social resistance and political contestation.

Sixteenth-century Anabaptist ritual practice established a forum for contesting cultural places and imagining alternative social structures, potentially affecting a radical restructuring of medieval socio-political society where it was adopted. By virtue of ritualization's essential link to the construction and maintenance of culturally distinct and socially privileged places, many of which were considered sacred during the medieval period, the contestation of places through ritual practice becomes a "natural" choice when socially constructed and politically maintained

¹³⁵ Margrete, Syrstad Andås, "Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone," in Margrete, Syrstad Andås, ed., *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim: Architectural and Ritual Constructions in their European Context* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishing, 2007), 123.

¹³⁶ I am following the trajectory set by Smith, *To Take Place*, xii.

places are deemed undesirable, in need of modification, or when “more overt” resistance becomes unwise or impossible.¹³⁷ Thus, ritualization is more than simply a tool of social control or instrumental in the production of ritualized agents,¹³⁸ it is also a socio-political, fully malleable process linked to the manufacture of place(s). It is entirely suitable as a tool of social and political contestation, being as readily available to groups in their campaigns of resistance as it is appropriate to the designs of dominant groups who leverage their power with it.

Bell’s argument, that “ritual practices are produced with an intent to order, rectify, or transform a particular situation” even in those cases where ritualization “does not see how it actively creates place, force, event, and tradition, how it redefines or generates the circumstances to which it is responding”,¹³⁹ provides a particularly suitable analytic for assisting our understanding of sixteenth-century Anabaptist ritual practice. Their novel ritual behaviour was strategically employed and capable of ordering, rectifying and transforming what they understood to be an entirely undesirable and unacceptable situation, even though most sixteenth-century Anabaptists failed to fully understand the sociological implications or the cultural effects of their ritual program. Analysis of Anabaptist ritual behaviour reveals that it was not only culturally distinctive, but that it also developed in response to medieval cultural/religious places (primarily churches) and the power such places exercised, with Anabaptists contesting the meanings ascribed to such places, resisting the cosmology and power relations these places propagated. Their ritual program included a positive dimension where it was centred on the manufacture of singularly

¹³⁷ Be., *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 27.

¹³⁸ See Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 221.

¹³⁹ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 108-109.

significant alternative places for social formation and identity construction, precluding the uncritical acceptance of sixteenth-century Anabaptist rhetoric and the argument that Anabaptist ritual practice was a “purely religious” act, exclusively concerned with piety in both its orientation and its affects. As a politically informed and socially strategic action, Anabaptist ritualization retained socio-political implications that extend well beyond the constraints of sixteenth-century Anabaptist explanations, self-descriptions and self-understandings. Therefore, the terms and categories sixteenth-century Anabaptists endorsed and employed prove inadequate for an effective place critical analysis of their behaviour and thinking.

1.5 The Sacred, the Medieval Landscape and Anabaptists

Some limited options for religious diversity existed during the medieval period, but Eamon Duffy notes that the pervasive influence of medieval Catholicism meant that “there was a remarkable degree of religious and imaginative homogeneity across the social spectrum,” extending to “a shared repertoire of symbols, prayers, and beliefs which crossed and bridge even the gulf between the literate and the illiterate.”¹⁴⁰ Will Coster and Andrew Spicer have introduced a spatial metaphor into their own description, arguing that late medieval Catholicism was a highly sophisticated “landscape of the sacred”, and that this landscape was instrumental in shaping and ordering important facets of medieval life, having as one of its primary effects the dependency it generated.¹⁴¹ This medieval landscape of the sacred and the

¹⁴⁰ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 3.

¹⁴¹ Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, eds. *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4.

spatial relations it created were interiorized as structure.¹⁴² The spatial description of late medieval Europe as a “landscape filled and defined by points of access to the holy” establishes an important relation between church and land in which the latter is preeminent but “haunted by the Church”,¹⁴³ from which there was limited reprieve, release or escape.

This “haunting” of the land engendered and maintained by medieval Catholicism provided social order and political structure for centuries, enjoining social relations through its successful permeation, distribution and maintenance of culturally important places during the medieval period. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso have argued that continuing acceptance of the comprehensive and totalizing worldview medieval Catholicism provided, the cosmographical claims upon which it was founded, the values it established, and the map of the sacred it propagated, including the power relations embedded within it, were contingent on the church maintaining a “vigorous hold over the imagination” of medieval people, all of which became vulnerable when that map was seriously challenged or in danger of being redrawn.¹⁴⁴ Sixteenth-century Anabaptists emerged as a direct and decisive challenge to the map late medieval Catholicism presented, emerging as resistance to the social order it had created through its pervasive “haunting” and control of sacred space. Anabaptist resistance was fashioned at hidden, sequestered social sites as authorities were wont to complain, where resistance to totalizing cosmologies and the exercise of power can be nurtured and given meaning.

¹⁴² Stortz, “Ritual Power, Ritual Theory,” 129.

¹⁴³ Coster and Spicer, *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Coster and Spicer, *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, 4.

Pre-Reformation Europe has often been presented as a collection of systems that were in desperate need of wholesale revision as judged through the lens of modern values, systems and structures, frequently resulting in the application of a dismissive attitude toward medieval life and all it entailed. Although such interpretations lend a quality of inevitability to the Reformation, Duffy has effectively argued for a vibrant pre-Reformation European religiosity, including strong lay enthusiasm for the social system and religious worldview Catholicism provided, denying the European Reformation any sort of inevitability:

Medieval Catholicism exerted an enormously strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination and the loyalty of the people up to the very moment of Reformation. Traditional religion had about it no particular marks of exhaustion or decay, and indeed in a whole host of ways, from the multiplication of vernacular religious books to adaptations within the national and regional cult of the saints, was showing itself well able to meet new needs and new conditions. Nor does it seem to me that tendencies towards the “privatizing” of religion, or growing lay activism and power in gild and parish, had in them that drive toward Protestantism which some historians have discerned.¹⁴⁵

Despite the rejection of any characterizations of the Reformation as inevitable, responses of resistance to totalizing cosmologies are foreseeable and can be expected when the places with which they are most intimately associated, and through which they exercise considerable cultural power, no longer meet the desires and

¹⁴⁵ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 4. Andrew Pettegree offers a similar assessment: “In many parts of Europe the church was clearly neither in an advanced state of decay, nor deeply unpopular. Rather the church and its institutions continued to enjoy the confidence of the vast majority of lay people, who were investing in its institutions *increasing* amounts of their time, wealth and emotional energy.” Andrew Pettegree, *The Reformation World* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 3. In adding his voice to the challenge of a long-standing paradigm, R. N. Swanson writes: “Moreover, whatever the complaints about institutional arrangements and personal defects, there is little evidence of antipathy to Catholicism as such: among the populace the religion remained vital, its manifestations often exuberant, even flamboyant. In their search for personal salvation [...] there is little sign of any decline in people’s commitment or investment – often the reverse.” R. N. Swanson, “The Pre-Reformation Church,” in Andrew Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 28-29.

expectations of those they affect most directly and most intimately. Anabaptist resistance to the exercise of power, their contestation of the places with which cultural power was most intimately associated, their problem with authority and their propagation of reform were not so much responses to fault-lines inherent in medieval Catholicism, or even their reactions to fault-lines that developed over time, as they were expressions of dissatisfaction with certain social realities as Anabaptists perceived them in relation to culturally significant sacred places.

Feld and Basso have argued for an understanding of place that includes human responses to a given place as one of its more important defining characteristics: “People don’t just dwell in comfort or misery, in centers or margins, in place or out of place, empowered or disempowered. People everywhere act on the integrity of their dwelling.”¹⁴⁶ If they are correct, and this project is structured as an extended argument to substantiate that point with respect to Anabaptist history, then an important interpretive paradigm can be established for the origin of sixteenth-century Anabaptist movements and the direction that their development took. Through an examination of Anabaptist responses to the built environment and the power it exercised, Anabaptists can be constructed as a direct and determined response to culturally established and maintained sacred places, with Anabaptists emerging as an overt reaction to what they saw as a significant and unacceptable deterioration in the “integrity of their dwelling.”

My study of the early years of the Anabaptist movements reveals that Anabaptist responses to established religious places most often came in the form of their denigration, with early Anabaptists contesting those places they held primarily

¹⁴⁶ Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*, 11.

responsible for engendering, maintaining, and propagating what they claimed were the most undesirable qualities and unacceptable conditions of their lives. Their vigorous contestation of the long-accepted map of the sacred medieval Catholicism had developed, including the orientation it provided, was resisted to the point of yielding their lives to hostile forces rather than perpetuate unacceptable social structures and therefore, unacceptable living conditions. Anabaptist identity and resistance were birthed in relation to the contestation of existing social formations, the culturally privileged sacred places through which they were established, and the cosmographical claims these places perpetuated. Anabaptist sensitivity to place, including perceptions of their own place within society and the values with which sacred places were invested during the medieval period, developed into a conditioned pattern of action. Anabaptist action, actual, imagined and symbolic, was oriented toward the contestation and active denigration, and at times physical destruction, of churches, altars, shrines, and images long thought effective conduits of divine presence and power.¹⁴⁷

The perceived “integrity” of any group’s “dwelling” is always conditional on the widespread ability of culturally significant places to draw the requisite human attitudes and responses, informing in multiple ways the complex interaction of memories, myths, imagination, moralities, loss, exercises of power and their contestations, desires and reflections, which are active in shaping identities, affecting further action.¹⁴⁸ Place is active in the shaping of human beings, but it is also set in a

¹⁴⁷ Bridget Heal, “Sacred Image and Sacred Spaces in Lutheran Germany,” in Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45.

¹⁴⁸ Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*, 11.

relation of mutuality being constitutive and absorptive of human action,¹⁴⁹ becoming product and producer simultaneously. The relation between place and human action is not restricted to humans creating places and places drawing responses important as such a relation is, but remains critically dependent on an intimate form of reciprocity in which place is decisively established not as the “recipient but rather the creation of the human project,”¹⁵⁰ as Jonathan Z. Smith has argued. Within such a scheme, places become “an active product of intellectualism rather than its passive receptacle”,¹⁵¹ while determining the very nature of their human constructions. The place of one’s birth “makes all the difference,” with places retaining their significance in the construction of human identity from the very beginnings of a human life and throughout its duration. An understanding of place in which its shaping power vis-à-vis human beings is immediate, direct and effective provides a useful analytic for understanding sixteenth-century Anabaptist resistance to the power sacred places exercised and their desire to create alternate socio-political places. In framing the emergence of sixteenth-century Anabaptists as a reaction to sixteenth-century places, a better understanding of their ritual practices, and a fuller appreciation of their disparate efforts to create alternate community structures become possible.

Not only is the nature and orientation of sixteenth-century Anabaptist resistance analyzable through an examination of medieval churches and other culturally significant places, but such a focus becomes crucial, as the following chapter will argue, given that the Anabaptist struggle was initiated in response to a particular view of the world, and involved the further propagation of that worldview,

¹⁴⁹ Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place,” 18.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, *To Take Place*, 26.

¹⁵¹ Smith, *To Take Place*, 26.

which was decidedly centered on very particular understandings, usages, contestations and constructions of place. Anabaptist power struggles traceable to competing representations of place and the values with which places were invested during the sixteenth century indicate that conflict over place can constitute some of the most socially radical, though not necessarily the most physically violent, forms of human conflict.

2. Anabaptist Origins and the Reform of Place

The construction of Anabaptists as a direct response to medieval sacred places, with their emergence a reaction to the power these places exercised, the relations they established, the social order they created, and the values they propagated, can be accomplished by linking their genesis to a system of cultural values, a rhetorical posture and worldview shared by sixteenth-century reformers. Reformers assumed, or otherwise argued, that a substantial decline in culturally important sacred place(s) had occurred, and that this situation required immediate redressing so that a purer and better form of Christendom could be reinstated; that is, a more desirable church and society or place be created. This system of shared values and common worldview, and therefore, the emergence of sixteenth-century Anabaptists, can be traced to two early, familiar, paradigmatic and representative sixteenth-century texts, Martin Luther's "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,"¹ described as "the keynote of the rural Reformation" by James M. Stayer,² and Thomas Müntzer's "Sermon to the Princes",³ referred to as a "masterpiece" that was the synthesis of "his ideology into a coherent whole" by Abraham Friesen.⁴ Friesen's assessment of Müntzer's "Sermon to the Princes" as a masterpiece is founded on his contention that

¹ The original title reads: "An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation: von des Christlichen standes besserung." *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 6. Band (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1888; reprinted in Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 404. Hereafter abbreviated, *CADN*.

² James M. Stayer, "The German Peasants' War and the Rural Reformation," in Andrew Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 127.

³ The German title reads: "Auslegung des anderen Unterschieds Danielis," in Günther Franz, editor, Band XXXIII, *Thomas Müntzer Schriften und Briefe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1968), 241-263. Hereafter abbreviated *AUD*.

⁴ Abraham Friesen, *Thomas Muentzer: Destroyer of the Godless* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 210. See also Michael G. Baylor, *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xvi-xvii.

it “brought together his [Müntzer’s] view of Church history, his mystical theology of regeneration, his eschatology, his emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and his prescription for reforming the political-ecclesiastical situation he found himself in.”⁵

Through a close reading of these texts, with special attention paid to the negative worldview they display, I establish the cultural context and evidential support for my argument. My reading argues that though the attitudes and approaches of early sixteenth-century reformers were widely divergent, covering a broad spectrum of issues and concerns,⁶ these texts demonstrate a profound interest in spatial matters and display a similar rhetorical assessment. Despite their very dissimilar theologies, eschatologies, and reform programs they are centered on the investigation of the “integrity of their dwelling,” which is consistently assigned negative values, with all such constructions functioning rhetorically as the platform for their respective programs of reform.⁷ Neither text describes the world it creates or the human situation it presents in eschatological terms; they do not detail individual and communal life on earth as somehow independent of, or isolated from “history.” The rhetorical structures of the Open Letter and the Sermon to the Princes, including their proposed programs of reform, require the “enduring of history” and the continuation of human life, without which these texts would quickly become conceptually empty.⁸ Both texts are centred on the propagation of a program of

⁵ Friesen, *Destroyer of the Godless*, 210.

⁶ See for example, Carl Hinrichs, *Luther und Müntzer: Ihre Auseinandersetzung über Obrigkeit und Widerstandsrecht* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1962).

⁷ This is not to suggest that we can know what was directly taken over by Anabaptists, or that we can know to what degree critical reception of a tradition was applied, but only to suggest that certain features appear to be held in common.

⁸ Gerhard Ebeling writes: “It would no longer be possible to identify the kingdom of Christ as a kingdom which is not of this world, if it were not understood, and witness were not borne to it, in this

social, political, and economic reform that is dependent on the worldview being presented. Each text encourages the acceptance of a particular set of actions said to be capable of halting further socio-political decline and are declared fully suitable for working toward the creation of a more desirable society. They demonstrate a strategic understanding of sixteenth-century church and society as places, presenting reform as the arresting of further socio-political degeneration and the amelioration of both the church and larger society, and therefore the reform of socially significant and politically important places.

2.1 Anabaptist Beginnings and the Peasants' War

The causes of the Peasants' War continue to be the subject of scholarly debate,⁹ and the exact nature of the relation of the Peasants' War to the emergence of Anabaptists remains contested,¹⁰ but the two events are connected programmatically and conceptually, functioning as different but equally determined spatially-conscious responses to what were perceived as unacceptable socio-political conditions. Both were inextricably linked to a particular understanding of what reformation meant. Reformation that did not result in a decisive and substantial spatial improvement, as they defined it, was no reformation. Norman Cohn has built a strong case against the likeness of social and economic conditions in Germany having deteriorated to the

world, and if it were not in confrontation with the kingdom of the world." Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to his Thought*, translated by R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 176.

⁹ The debate has often been centered on disagreement over the assumed motivations of peasants, which are variously described as primarily "religious," economic, political, or in some limited cases social. Peasant concerns are often said to have arisen as a result of depressed economic conditions, their loss of power, and/or their loss of certain ancestral rights and privileges. In any event, the Peasants' War was immersed in the rhetoric of Martin Luther, and challenged many of the traditional rights and privileges of the medieval church.

¹⁰ The debate concerning the relation of the Peasants' War to Anabaptist beginnings has often assumed an "essentialized Anabaptism," and has been centered on the determination of whether "all" Anabaptists were basically peaceful or "revolutionaries." Despite some sporadic interest in the topic, the conversation became more-or-less sterile by the end of the twentieth century.

extent suggested by peasants and reformers in their various campaigns, but readily acknowledges that the perception of substantial decline informed, and acted as a significant catalyst for the genesis and advancement of, the peasants' program.¹¹ Cohn has argued that the position of the peasants in Germany had actually been improving in the years immediately preceding the Peasants' War, not declining, as reformers and peasants were wont to suggest. Peasants, like Luther and Müntzer, self-identified as persons engaged in an all-important struggle for improved socio-political conditions, and did not present indications that they were acting out of sheer desperation or overwhelming need:

The well-being of the German peasantry was greater than it had ever been and particularly the peasants who everywhere took the initiative in the insurrection, so far from being driven on by sheer misery and desperation, belonged to a rising and self-confident class. They were people whose position was improving both socially and economically and who for that very reason were impatient of the obstacles which stood in the way of further advance. It is therefore not surprising that in their efforts to remove these obstacles the peasants showed themselves not at all eschatologically minded but, on the contrary, politically minded in the sense that they thought in terms of real situations and realizable possibilities.¹²

While Cohn claims that it is extremely doubtful that economic conditions were as desperate as the Peasant program suggested, he concedes that it can be argued that the German-speaking lands had disintegrated politically into a loose collection of warring feudal authorities, despite the "absolutist principalities" established by territorial

¹¹ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 245. Michelle Zelinsky Hanson has speculated that "tensions" responsible for "the unrest that erupted in the early Reformation" period were not necessarily due to overall decreased wealth and prosperity but rather to the "widening gulf between the wealthy and poor". Michelle Zelinsky Hanson, *Religious Identity in an Early Reformation Community: Augsburg, 1517 to 1555* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 11.

¹² Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, 245.

princes at the onset of the Peasants' War.¹³ It was feudal differentiation and the advancement of "class interests," not a united "corpus christianum" that defined social relations during the late medieval period.¹⁴ Thomas A. Brady argues that princes were eager to assimilate the assets of free cities, bringing them "under their direct control" after shattering the South German urban league in 1449-1453.¹⁵ Moreover, the Habsburgs proved to be incapable of providing free German cities with the law, order, and good government that they wanted most in the face of these "warring feudal authorities."¹⁶ Although evidence adduced for socio-political decline in the pre-reformation period has come under increased scrutiny, the issue in this project is not whether or not plagues, wars, or economic dislocation were becoming increasingly serious issues during the period under investigation, but rather how such constructions were utilized rhetorically, how they were strategically employed by early reformers, shaping the lens through which sixteenth-century Anabaptists came to see the world and their own place in it.

Through the work of George Huntston Williams and subsequent scholarship it can now be said with some degree of certainty that the emergence of Anabaptists during the sixteenth century was "in part the reaction to the failure of the evangelical socio-constitutional movement of the peasants."¹⁷ Williams' evidence for his interpretation of Anabaptist beginnings is drawn from his examination of the Low Countries where Anabaptists represented the "first major onslaught of organized

¹³ Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, 246.

¹⁴ R. Po-chia Hsia, "The Myth of the Commune: Recent Historiography on City and Reformation in Germany," *Central European History* 20 (1987), 209.

¹⁵ Thomas A. Brady, "In Search of the Godly City: The Domestication of Religion in the German Reformation," in Ronald Po-Chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 18.

¹⁶ Brady, "In Search of the Godly City," 18.

¹⁷ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 138.

popular reformation”, with Anabaptists the bearers of what he calls “a fully separatist, religiously-oriented Dutch-Flemish national self-consciousness”.¹⁸ Williams argues that in most other German-speaking centres and territories Anabaptists grew out of “dissatisfaction with the Magisterial Reformation”.¹⁹ His argument that these latter Anabaptists were disaffected Protestants who developed a “basic posture” that was “anti-Protestant” assigns normative qualities and values to disputes such as that of Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz with Ulrich Zwingli, and undervalues the preponderance of lay Anabaptist testimonies in which the medieval Catholic church, not Protestants or Protestant action, is offered as the primary reason for their discontent.

Anabaptists and their program of social renewal were conceptually linked to the Peasants’ War by their contemporaries, even when Anabaptists could not accurately be accused of having practically or personally participated in the revolt of 1524-1525. Programmatic links and assessments of continuity between the Peasants’ War and Anabaptist activity in which both became interpreted as responses to socio-political conditions were frequently made during the sixteenth century. Albrecht Gailing, for example, noted in his letter to the governor and council of Ansbach in 1532 that Ulrich Hutscher who had long been imprisoned in Ansbach had once again surfaced in Oberntief, where he was starting afresh what Gailing describes as the process of “bringing others into his sect.” Gailing describes the socio-political situation in 1532 with the emergence of Anabaptists as very similar to conditions

¹⁸ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 527.

¹⁹ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 527.

immediately prior to the Peasants' War,²⁰ establishing a form of continuity between the two social forces in his letter while arguing that both emerged and developed as responses to similar social, political, and economic "conditions." An anonymous letter describing the Anabaptist trek from Holland and Friesland to Münster in 1533-1535 claims that Anabaptists emulated peasants, who a decade earlier, tended to assemble in a very similar manner.²¹ The anonymous author suggests that these assemblies brought about a unity that was not present earlier. Although the Peasants' War and the emergence of Anabaptists can be said to be temporally separated but contiguous reactions to perceptions of deteriorating and/or unacceptable social, political and economic conditions, they are not congruous responses; nor, does the one necessarily, naturally or logically follow the other.

2.2 Luther, Müntzer and the Anabaptists: Common Elements

Luther's "Open Letter" and Müntzer's "Sermon to the Princes" demonstrate a shared rhetorical posture concerning the "integrity of their dwelling" founded on the assumption that their collective life has been and remains in a state of serious moral, political, and social decline,²² with such decline providing the impetus for their respective programs of socio-political reform. Luther's perception of substantial and ongoing degeneration establishes a forum for action and a rhetorical posture that

²⁰ *OZGT, Markgraftum Brandenburg (Bayern I)*, 331; and 337-38.

²¹ Richard van Dülmen, ed., *Das Täuferreich zu Münster, 1534-1535* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974), 43.

²² The assessment that medieval life, culture and religion had become degenerate during the late Middle Ages was not only the perspective of many sixteenth-century reformers, but a perspective adopted by future generations of historians. The influential work of Johan Huizinga continues to perpetuate such a point of view. Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, translated by Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Andrew Colin Gow has described as typical of Luther, but not unique to him.²³ Gow has forcibly and cogently argued that Luther's perception and propagation of decline was a common element among his contemporaries, and formed the basis of a strategy in which it became a defining characteristic and enduring quality of the worldview being advanced:

Their [Luther and his contemporaries] theme was always to suggest that there was something truly rotten in the state of late-medieval Christendom—that the Church, led by a succession of princelings and even the odd condottiere, had declined precipitously to a state of utter corruption under the Borgia and Medici popes, selling offices and even salvation itself for cash in its rush to the trough.²⁴

Gow concludes: “The real trouble with all these narratives of decadence and decline is that they are so often wrong. Late medieval religion, [...] though it had problems enough [...] seems to have been a healthy and viable set of ideas, beliefs, and practices.”²⁵ Bernd Moeller is unequivocal in voicing a similar interpretation of late medieval religiosity: “[T]he late fifteenth century in Germany was marked by greater

²³ Andrew Colin Gow, “Challenging the Protestant Paradigm: Bible Reading in Lay and Urban Contexts of the Later Middle Ages,” in Thomas Heffernan, ed., *Scripture and Pluralism. The Study of the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 173.

²⁴ Gow, “Challenging the Protestant Paradigm,” 173. Despite little evidence that a “soteriological crisis or ‘problem’” existed in the late Medieval period prior to the Reformation, Gow notes that scholarship has often uncritically accepted Luther's assessment to that effect, even though such analyses are “anachronistic” and deeply “whiggish,” presenting “Luther and Wittenberg in a light available to no one in 1517”. Gow, “Challenging the Protestant Paradigm,” 172. Gerald Strauss has adopted a somewhat similar perspective with respect to medieval political structure, arguing: “Absence of national unity and lack of centralization were not necessarily disadvantages, though contemporary patriots thought this state of affairs a disgrace, and German historians have not ceased to deplore it down to our day.” Gerald Strauss, ed., *Pre-Reformation Germany* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 10. Strauss argues that the “legal and judicial structure of the Holy Roman Empire underwent a major transformation”, beginning in the fourteenth century. This substantial change “permanently changed the way Germans thought about law, litigated, judged, and governed” through the introduction of “Roman Law.” Gerald Strauss, *Law, Resistance, and the State: The Opposition to Roman Law in Reformation Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 56.

²⁵ Gow, “Challenging the Protestant Paradigm,” 174.

fidelity to the church than in any other medieval epoch.”²⁶ Anabaptists, who emerged as reformers after Luther and Müntzer chronologically, accepted, participated in and perpetuated the negative worldview their immediate predecessors propagated, such that their concerns over the deteriorating state of their communal life appear as an inherited or culturally shared condition.²⁷ William J. Bouwsma has argued that “heightened anxiety” characterized late medieval Europe, and traces it to a general perception of deterioration in social relations.²⁸ The fundamental problem for Bouwsma, according to Dean Phillip Bell, lies with medieval cosmology, its “very ordering of the world”,²⁹ which came to be contested in the Reformation period, generating anxiety as a result. Preeminent among the social changes affecting medieval culture, according to Bouwsma, was the dissolution of the distinction between the sacred and the profane through the “growing responsibility and dignity of lay activity and the secular state.”³⁰ In the case of sixteenth-century Anabaptists, blame for the degenerated condition of the world became narrowly focused on medieval churches and related “religious” institutions, which were collectively held responsible for deteriorated and degenerating socio-religious conditions. An indisputable connection was developed by Luther, Müntzer and the Anabaptists

²⁶ Bernd Moeller, “Religious Life in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation,” in Gerald Strauss, ed., *Pre-Reformation Germany* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 25.

²⁷ Heiko A. Oberman has argued: “There was complete agreement on the fact that the Church was in a state of sharp decline, down to its noblest institutions, the mendicant orders.” Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, translated by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 141.

²⁸ William J. Bouwsma, “Anxiety and the Formation of Early Modern Culture, in William J. Bouwsma, ed., *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 157-189.

²⁹ Dean Phillip Bell, *Sacred Communities: Jewish and Christian Identities in Fifteenth-century Germany* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 36.

³⁰ Bouwsma, “Anxiety and the Formation of Early Modern Culture,” 172. Though a strict sacred/profane binary is anachronistic when medieval cathedrals, for example, were secular palaces and the bishop’s seat simultaneously, it does not invalidate the observation of Bouwsma that the “dignity” of “lay responsibility” was “growing” during the early modern period.

between the state of their degenerated world and the need for reformation, with a growing sense of national consciousness and personal responsibility for communal wellbeing that was firmly rooted in place quickly becoming axiomatic.³¹ It was through their adoption of a language and paradigm of decline that Anabaptists self-identified and developed their spatially specific value judgements.

2.3 Martin Luther's Open Letter

Luther's Open Letter to the Christian Nobility describes the Christian Estates, and especially the German-speaking lands,³² as "burdened" or "pushed down" through "distress" and "oppression," with its inhabitants suffering and crying out time and time again.³³ Although Luther describes this state of decline and current distress as widespread, the German lands are presented for special consideration as a "suffering nation,"³⁴ being the recipient of an extra measure of "oppression" and therefore in most desperate need of deliverance.³⁵ Luther acknowledges earlier

³¹ Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 41. Oberman has argued that Luther "did not go [Ulrich von] Hutten's way of German liberation through national mobilization", but concedes that Luther was very much the "hero of national liberation". Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 45-47. Oberman has argued unconvincingly that Luther's reluctance to embrace the sort of national liberation being advanced was due to his refusal to resolve "spiritual questions by government pressure, let alone by armed force." Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 49. Oberman's efforts to construct Luther as a man who was "very much counter to the temperament of his age" does not accurately reflect the depth of Luther's complicity in the princely exercise of political and military power in Electoral Saxony and Hesse. Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 64. Luther's encouragement of violence in the suppression of the Peasants' Revolt ("stab, slay, strangle whoever you can") as a means to a "blessed death", and his refusal to accept the "mixing" of violence and the gospel by the peasants would suggest Luther's attitudes toward violence and the state were more "complicated" than Oberman has suggested. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 18. Band (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger), 361; and 24-26.

³² CADN, 405.

³³ CADN, 405.

³⁴ CADN, 405.

³⁵ Luther's assessment may have lent considerable rhetorical force to his argument for reform, but it was not necessarily in keeping with current conditions and practices. R. N. Swanson has argued that sixteenth-century conciliar reform arguments consistently railed against annates but that "Rome's ability to bleed the localities was limited and its powers to tax the church as a whole were negligible by 1500." R. N. Swanson, "The Pre-Reformation Church," in Andrew Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 13. Not surprisingly, Johannes Keßler presented a

attempts at reform as initiatives undertaken by former church councils, but determines that their best efforts were consistently waylaid by what he describes as “certain evil men.” Though well-intentioned, earlier councils failed to arrest social, moral, and economic decline, with the net result that degeneration continued unabated, and things went from bad to worse in Luther’s assessment.³⁶ It is in light of these earlier reform efforts having been decisively thwarted that Luther’s Open Letter calls for vigilance and perseverance on the part of the nobility, encouraging the adoption and cultivation of a particular frame of mind as necessary for avoiding the repetition of past failures and as fully capable of arresting degenerating conditions in what he terms the German nation.³⁷

Luther presented his reform program as activity alleviating the suffering of the German people, and as entirely effective for staying further national decline. Luther is adamant in his Open Letter that the initiative for reform is divine and that its success is not dependent on human power, imbuing the reform process with a quality of inevitability while investing the future with absolute certainty and security.³⁸ For all his confidence in the inevitability of reform and its outcomes, given that it is presented as a divine initiative and that it will be accomplished through divine action, Luther sets himself the task of convincing the nobility that social conditions have become desperate, alerting them to circumstances that demand their immediate attention and direct intervention. He insists that in order for reform to become a

very different picture during the sixteenth century and followed Luther’s thinking by claiming that in excess of 20,000 Gulden flowed out of Germany annually in the form of annates, and that 130,000 English Gulden was taken out of England every year. Johannes Keßler, *Johannes Keßlers Sabbata: St. Galler Reformationschronik 1523-1539* (Leipzig: Rudolf Haupt, 1911), 21.

³⁶ CADN, 405.

³⁷ CADN, 406.

³⁸ CADN, 405.

substantial reality, certain attitudes and actions on the part of the nobility must be fully engaged, and other actions and attitudes must be strictly avoided. Although the initiative, power and program of reform are said to have divine origins, Luther argues that all Germans must actively cultivate a receptive attitude as their contribution toward reform, an attitude that recognizes the current desperate condition of Germany. It is only through the cultivation of such a perspective as a necessary precondition, Luther argues, that the required reform will become a reality. He describes the attitude that must be cultivated and the orientation that must be adopted to assure success: “We must go at this work despairing of physical force and humbly trusting God; we must seek God’s help with earnest prayer, and fix our eyes on nothing else than the misery and distress of suffering Christendom”.³⁹

Luther uses the term “Romanist” to describe those individuals he claims advocate a strict form of papal supremacy that operates at the expense of the German nation’s autonomy and well-being. Their activities and intentions are presented, through the employment of spatial metaphors and allusions, as action focused on the construction of three walls. The Romanists are said to occupy an entrenched but essentially defensive strategic position from which they reign supremely, abrogating any and every challenge to their claim of absolute authority. Their refusal to acknowledge the legitimate priority of secular authority over the authority of the church is described as “wickedness” [*boszeit*], which has resulted in the deprivation of German liberties and the devastation of their land. The social, economic and political losses of the German nation are all traced to the presumption of the Romanists and their activities. Their systematic plundering of the German lands

³⁹ *CADN*, 406.

generated conditions in which German cities had become “decayed,” and both land and people were “laid waste.” In comparison with the walls of Jericho the Romanist walls are said to fall easily and quickly,⁴⁰ making them far more vulnerable to the divine will than the walls of Jericho, rendering these Romanist walls ineffective as defensive strategies against the divine will.

The historic and continuing movement toward degeneration is presented by Luther as cosmic conflict finding earthly expression; the devil is presented as assuming an increasing portion or role in daily German life at the expense of poor German souls.⁴¹ Within the cosmology that Luther establishes, the papal court assumes a demonic, hostile, overtly aggressive, and entirely destructive presence on earth; it is a foreign power that lies in wait for German souls just as wolves lie in wait for sheep.⁴² Wolves are, as Luther undoubtedly knew, a constant threat to domesticated and especially to defenceless domesticated animals such as sheep. Direct links are created in Luther’s rhetorical scheme between the current papal court’s actions, the possibility of salvation, and the German quality of life and reform. Luther’s employment of the term “salvation” is not limited to the satisfaction of sin or the restoration of a person’s relation to the divine, but includes and is centered on, the restoration of an earlier and more desirable form of community. Luther’s insistence on *sola Christus* and *sola gratia* elsewhere are, as Hans-Werner Scheele has argued, intimately connected with a particular community and therefore a particular place

⁴⁰ *CADN*, 407.

⁴¹ *CADN*, 415.

⁴² *CADN*, 417. Luther is not drawing a simple allusion to Matthew 7:15-16 where Jesus warns his disciples of future “false prophets” who masquerade as sheep, but is extending the wolf metaphor as descriptive of what happens when certain social and economic policies are adopted and enforced.

such that “to go to the sacrament” always means “to take part in this fellowship.”⁴³ The dispensation of grace always remains dependent on a specific community for Luther, and is therefore, a spatial phenomenon. Deteriorated socio-economic conditions are described as the product of bad earlier court decisions, with the multiplication of these bad decisions continuing to exact their toll on the German-speaking lands, such that Luther claims it is an absolute wonder that the German people should have anything at all to eat,⁴⁴ inconceivable as that might be to some.⁴⁵

Luther constructs an argument in his Open Letter for restricting the principal authority of the church to its moral function,⁴⁶ while insisting that civil authority be extended whatever freedom is necessary for satisfying its broader, but not clearly defined, responsibilities.⁴⁷ Had they been fully implemented, Luther’s proposals for reform would have effectively reversed earlier Gregorian political reform strategies in which “sacred” matters took priority over “temporal matters,” and sacred power was established as preeminent.⁴⁸ Gregory VII argued that only clerics, not kings, possessed thaumaturgical skills and thereby emphasized the inferiority of kings to priests. He asked: “What emperor or king has ever [...] restored health to the lepers?”⁴⁹ Gregorian proposals subjected everyone who “wanted eternal life,” including the emperor, to the precepts of prelates, with such an order “translated

⁴³ Stephen Boyd: “Community as Sacrament in the Theology of Hans Schlaffer” in Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism Revisited: Essays on Anabaptist/ Mennonite Studies in Honor of C. J. Dyck* (Scottsdale; Waterloo: Herald Press, 1992), 59.

⁴⁴ *CADN*, 418.

⁴⁵ *CADN*, 415.

⁴⁶ *CADN*, 414.

⁴⁷ *CADN*, 409.

⁴⁸ Maureen Miller notes that one of the “most paradoxical effects of the Gregorian reform movement” was the “liberation” of bishops “from the control of rulers,” which ironically resulted in a reduction of their influence in public life. Maureen Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 256.

⁴⁹ As quoted in David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 59.

easily to urban governance”, according to Maureen Miller.⁵⁰ The degree to which Luther advocated a reversal in church and state relations becomes apparent in his insistence that one of the primary responsibilities of civil authorities includes taking direct action against the church and its authorities so that “lost liberties” are reclaimed, and “stolen” goods and property are recovered,⁵¹ re-establishing German control and sovereignty over its land and wealth. Luther advises the German nobility set itself against the pope as against a familiar enemy and destroyer, not only of the German Nation but also of Christendom.⁵² Luther argues that civil authorities not only have the right to do so as God’s ordained authorities, but an absolute duty to do so.⁵³ It was not a Roman bishop but the Emperor Constantine I who convoked the Council of Nicea in 325 CE for the purpose of generating unity in the Christian faith through the definition and imposition of orthodoxy.⁵⁴ And, it was Luther’s construction of this historical Constantine and not the pope who served as a model for Luther’s “Christian Sovereign” in his Open Letter,⁵⁵ with Constantine becoming a primary weapon in his arsenal for curbing and even abrogating the power of the pope.

Humanism established a particular attitude and orientation vis-à-vis Christian origins, in which a return to classical forms was presented as an effective purifying

⁵⁰ Maureen Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace*, 143. Moreover, Gregorian reforms and the gaining influence of canon law during the eleventh and twelfth centuries changed the earlier practice that permitted “secular” lords to be proprietors of churches and abbeys. Even when founding a new church or monastery, under the new order lay lords could not be owners and they and their successors had to be content with a role as patrons. As a result of Gregorian reforms many lay landlords were persuaded to surrender their rights over churches to monks and bishops. C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Longman, 1989), 133-36.

⁵¹ *CADN*, 420.

⁵² *CADN*, 428.

⁵³ *CADN*, 427.

⁵⁴ The Council of Nicea was convened by Constantine upon the recommendations of a synod of bishops mandated to look into the Arian controversy.

⁵⁵ Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 262.

principle. Luther's argument for a return to an earlier church structure and social life employed a similar form of logic in which a return to the "pure" origins of primitive Christianity was thought to necessarily regenerate "corrupted faith."⁵⁶ In "Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed" Luther makes a similar rhetorical point, advising that specific action be taken to purify the land, claiming that it is only by driving out the enemies of Christ that the land becomes "cleansed."⁵⁷

The "protection" of Luther's Germany lies at the core of his argument for reform in his Open Letter, and it is presented as a necessary and pressing noble duty that curtails further exploitation and devastation, halting any further socio-political disintegration and economic deterioration.⁵⁸ Any action taken by the nobility that halts the process of decline and establishes a more desirable society, and hence develops a more satisfactory dwelling is described as actively working toward "the salvation of the poor souls" being ruined through the tyranny of the pope.⁵⁹ Claiming complete transparency in his intentions, Luther encourages the nobility to satisfy their obligation to provide protection, and actively reverse the socio-economic and political damage done to German lands and the German nation by the Roman curia and pope. He declares: "All I wish to do is to arouse and set to thinking those who have the ability and the inclination to help the German nation become once more free

⁵⁶ The similarity in Luther's thinking to that of Anabaptist elite (those Franklin Hamelin Littell refers to as "main-line Anabaptists") is strikingly obvious here. Franklin Hamelin Littell writes: "The dominant theme in the thinking of the main-line Anabaptists was the recovery of the life and virtue of the Early Church." Franklin Hamelin Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church: A Study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958), 79.

⁵⁷ Timothy Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 699.

⁵⁸ CADN, 419.

⁵⁹ CADN, 428.

and Christian, after the wretched, heathenish and unchristian rule of the pope.”⁶⁰

Luther’s references to pope and curia describe them as foreign forces associated with scheming, invasion, and exploitation. Luther’s complaint that material interests had corroded and even supplanted the church’s spiritual purpose are reminiscent of the tirade launched by Matthew of Cracow against the “squalors of the curia” (*De squaloribus curie* 7) more than a century earlier (1402/03), in which Matthew held the entire upper church leadership guilty of simony.⁶¹ Acceptance of the bifurcation of government Luther proposes, and the hierarchical promotion of civil authority over ecclesiastical authority, imbuing the former with a quasi-spiritual mandate, Luther establishes the possibility of the nobility moving beyond providing protective services to initiating and imposing widespread socio-economic reforms, securing their direct involvement in the work of salvation through their construction and maintenance of a suitable and godly Christian community.

Luther’s employment of the terms “salvation” and “reform” in his Open Letter are not restricted to metaphysical speculation or descriptions of religious renewal, but function as malleable concepts capable of targeting specific socio-political concerns such as the shedding of an unjust tyrannical regime, which he claims abuses body and soul, and destroys the land. Reform re-establishes lost

⁶⁰ C. M. Jacobs, ed. and translator, *Three Treatises: An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (Philadelphia: Muhlenbert Press, 1947), 50.

⁶¹ John van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 163. Van Engen observes that many solutions were proposed but none accepted, such that with the papal schism of 1378 and the passage of time the “dealing in offices and properties” multiplied. Numerous measures were proposed at the councils of Pisa (1409), Constance (1414-18), and Basel (1431-49) but none were agreed upon and adopted. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 163. Charges of simony were often compared with usury, an offense most commonly associated with “Jews” during the medieval period. Bell argues that in some places “clerics even seem to have taken over the usurious functions of Jews” during the fifteenth century. Bell, *Sacred Communities*, 48.

freedoms through the restoration of what Luther understands as an autonomous German nation as the best possible form of “dwelling.” His rhetorical focus is clearly fixed on the past and a strategic perception of it as the best method for redeeming the present.⁶² Luther’s vision of reform re-establishes the highest social good by re-creating a desirable place, turning the present wilderness back into an earlier land of abundance,⁶³ which in turn establishes “what the people need for their salvation”.⁶⁴ Reform is the recovery of what has been lost through the eradication of the undesirable, and the purification of the land through the expulsion of those who spoil it. Salvation of souls, reform, and the safety and well-being offered through a prosperous and sovereign homeland are not altogether different things in the scheme of Luther’s Open Letter. Luther’s vision of reform actively works toward re-establishing a particular state and set of relations within Christendom that were thought to be capable of reversing some of the most unfortunate consequences of its recent “fall,” even if its full positive realization is held to be impossible.

The case of Italy serves as an example of what happens when the Roman curia pillages the faithful, according to Luther. Left to their own devices higher church authorities create a wilderness out of a prosperous and abundant land through their deliberate pillaging of wealth from rich monasteries, bishoprics, prelacies, and parishes by transferring their riches to Rome,⁶⁵ leaving cities in decay, and land and inhabitants laid waste.⁶⁶ Luther claims that no Turkish invasion could so effectively and completely have devastated Italy. With Italy’s destruction more-or-less complete,

⁶² Keßler *Sabbata*, 21.

⁶³ *CADN*, 466.

⁶⁴ *CADN*, 428.

⁶⁵ *CADN*, 416.

⁶⁶ *CADN*, 416.

in Luther's thinking, the Roman curia set its sights on prosperous Germany.⁶⁷

Luther's criticism of the Church's presumptive use and distribution of tithes, in which they are treated as part of the legitimate revenues and traditional rights of the Church, which can be collected, controlled, and distributed as it wishes, is a reminder that the Roman Curia did not always have such powers or subscribe to such practices. Giles Constable has observed that as late as the latter part of the "tenth century, Abbo of Fleury denied the bishops any share of the oblations".⁶⁸ It was only very gradually that the traditional tripartite distribution of tithes between the poor, church clergy, and the fabric of the parish church gave way to their designation as "normal ecclesiastical revenue," making them subject to the Church's sovereign rules of control and distribution.⁶⁹ It was only after about the twelfth century that tithes became a form of real property, a due to be paid from the land.⁷⁰

Luther's description of the desperate state of his dwelling, as a result of the practices and policies of the Roman curia, is reinforced and its affect magnified by his effective use of wilderness imagery.⁷¹ Metaphors of destruction such as waste land, swarming vermin, robbers, and ravening wolves are strategically employed throughout the text.⁷² Collectively these images create a landscape that symbolizes a

⁶⁷ CADN, 416.

⁶⁸ Giles Constable, *Monastic Tithes: From Their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 56.

⁶⁹ Constable, *Monastic Tithes*, 56.

⁷⁰ Constable, *Monastic Tithes*, 307.

⁷¹ Boyd has suggested an interesting parallel in the thought of Hans Schlaffer, arguing that Schlaffer held that "the gospel is most convincingly preached, not by proof-texting or even an erudite exegesis of the scriptural text, but by the use of images, metaphors, or similes which refer to the natural world." Boyd: "Community as Sacrament in the Theology of Hans Schlaffer," 58.

⁷² Jakob Hutter was fond of many of these same metaphors and employed them in reference to authorities. See for example, Hans Fischer: *Leben, Froemmigketi, Briefe* (Newton, KS: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956), Teil III, 9; and 37. Hereafter abbreviated *JH*. Hutter's self-referential descriptions and his descriptions of fellow Anabaptist leaders utilize pastoral metaphors such as shepherd(s) or arch-shepherd(s) [*Hirten, Erzhirten*], suggesting that Anabaptist leaders held a very

particular state of mind and dwelling, with changes in landscape a material expression of a new state of mind, heralding a changing economic situation.⁷³ Though common throughout Europe in the early medieval period, wolf sightings were very rare in late medieval Germany as a result of their widespread extermination. Despite, or perhaps because they were hunted to near extinction, a mythology grew around them in which they acquired inordinately fierce, large and aggressive qualities,⁷⁴ with wolf imagery coming to exert a powerful hold on the popular imagination as representations of the presence of danger, signalling a dramatic change in the environment.⁷⁵ Wolves were symbolic of evil and often of demonic forces in late medieval literature; they were employed in medieval moral pamphlets as representations of the aggressive strong that victimize the weak.⁷⁶ Luther's strategic employment of cultural tropes and popular images functioned as indicators of the desperate condition of the German lands, to which the forces of nature were responding. These tropes and images also served as important incentives to action through their deployment as mnemonic devices, recalling popular images of potential danger and destruction, and reminding secular rulers of their sworn obligation to protect the people and lands entrusted to their care, both of which were consistently portrayed as vulnerable and as defenceless as sheep. The decisive action Luther

different sort of attitude toward their subjects, and developed a very different relation with them. As a shepherd, Luther imagined himself to occupy a role in which he protected, cared for, nourished, and led his "sheep."

⁷³ In his study of "The City and the Dead" Vito Fumagalli has argued that medieval writers frequently "used landscapes to symbolize states of mind." Vito, Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear: Perceptions of Nature and the City in the Middle Ages*, translated by Shayne Mitchell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 128, and 134.

⁷⁴ Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear*, 127.

⁷⁵ Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear*, 142.

⁷⁶ Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear*, 141. Fumagalli notes that the "symbolism attached to animals can vary and can even be superficially inconsistent, one animal being used to exemplify different, even opposite qualities." Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear*, 127.

advises be taken against the Roman church and the ravaging wolves it has set loose on a vulnerable and unsuspecting German land, remains dependent upon a particular spatial understanding.⁷⁷ It is conditional on the reader accepting Luther's portrayal of substantial socio-political and economic decline, and his understanding of reform as the empowering of the nobility to act as legitimate agents of salvation.

Much of Luther's rhetorical concern with "the integrity of his dwelling" is centred on the economic exploitation he claims the German people suffer at the hands of the Roman curia. His insistence that the nobility are obligated to take decisive action against the Roman church derives from his conviction that to do otherwise is simply irresponsible, "leaving their land and people open to these ravaging wolves"⁷⁸ that destroy Christendom "in body and soul".⁷⁹ Luther's advice to act against the pope is presented as the defence of land and people; it develops a direct link between acts of resistance and work undertaken for the "salvation of poor souls",⁸⁰ bringing people and land into a relation of mutuality in which losses and gains, at either end, whether positive or negative, are always shared. Though the physicality of the land and the spirituality of its inhabitants are not synonymous within the text, they are much more than tangentially related. Luther brings land (place) into relation with the narrative of salvation and call to action he weaves, portraying them as relating to each other in a reciprocally deterministic manner. A socially rich, economically secure and politically effective land provides opportunity for salvation in his view, while a

⁷⁷ Menno Simons employs the wolf metaphor in reference to secular princes and Catholic clergy, with both groups constructed as antagonistic to "pure doctrine" and complicit in their hostility toward "true Christians." See for example, *CWMS*, 296, 308-09, and 316-17.

⁷⁸ *CADN*, 421.

⁷⁹ *CADN*, 427.

⁸⁰ *CADN*, 428.

devastated nation precludes the possibility of redemption. By virtue of the connection that exists between the land and salvation, and because the latter is secured through the former, Luther disparages rootlessness of any sort, including that of the mendicant orders, which he describes as “wandering about the land”.⁸¹ He claims that such a lifestyle has never brought about any good and never will as all such individuals simply consume resources necessary for the salvation of the common people.⁸² Luther’s anxiety regarding travelling or unknown persons, whether belonging to a religious order or not, as necessarily untrustworthy and illegitimate consumers of scarce resources, is also reflected in the 30th article of the Merano Articles drawn up 30 May 1525: “No foreign person, male or female, should be allowed to move around idly in any town or jurisdiction for more than three days, unless they be asked what their business and trade is.”⁸³ Like Luther, this particular Merano article develops a connection between place, security and salvation that requires commitment to fixedness, restricting individual mobility as a security and resource-based issue that bears directly on the possibility of personal and corporate salvation. Luther’s Open Letter establishes a cosmology and relational structure between the qualities of a particular place and salvation that sixteenth-century Anabaptists came to share.

2.4 Thomas Müntzer’s Sermon to the Princes

Like Luther’s Open Letter, Thomas Müntzer’s Sermon to the Princes presents an argument to the nobility in which their immediate and direct involvement in

⁸¹ *CADN*, 438.

⁸² *CADN*, 438.

⁸³ Tom Scott and Robert W. Scribner, ed., *The German Peasants’ War: A History in Documents* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ; London: Humanities Press, 1991), 91.

reform is solicited,⁸⁴ with the ideological justification and impetus for such engagement derived from what Müntzer describes as Christendom's serious and unacceptable regress.⁸⁵ Through his reinterpretation of the Hebrew prophet Daniel's apocalypticism as history, Müntzer attempts to awaken the nobility to the possibility of their predestined role as divinely appointed executives in reform, whose express and essential purpose is to punish the godless who do not possess any inherent right to life aside from that life the elect choose to extend to them.⁸⁶ Like Luther, Müntzer warns that the realization of reform remains conditional on the cultivation of a right attitude, informing the princes that they are ultimately incapable of carrying out their divinely appointed tasks without it. The attitude that Müntzer argues must be cultivated requires their unreserved submission to divinely instituted and divinely endowed authority figures. Civil authorities must become informed of God's purposes through prophetic figures, made possible through the courtly presence of a righteous advisor, who functions in Müntzer's scheme much as Daniel did in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.⁸⁷ Like Luther's portrayal of the condition of the German

⁸⁴ Müntzer's "Auslegung des anderen Unterschieds Danielis" ("Sermon to the Princes") was purportedly preached as a sermon on 13 July 1524 before Duke John, John Fredrick and "several officials of the government of electoral Saxony as well as local authorities" at the castle at Allstedt, and was thereafter published. Baylor, *The Radical Reformation*, 11.

⁸⁵ The competition between reformers for influence with an audience did not necessarily mean that all important facets of their message or program for reform were at odds. In fact, reformers often shared convictions or cosmographical perspective. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 243.

⁸⁶ *AUD*, 262. According to Jakob Hutter, the destruction of the godless was to be concurrent with the salvation of the righteous, which acted as a warning to the faithful against any form of compromise with the "world," which would result in their divine condemnation. Hutter does not mention the righteous being involved in the destruction of the godless and speaks only of God and his angels acting as destroyers of the godless, making their plight and suffering worse than any human being could possibly make it. *JH*, 58-59. The illegitimate actions of the godless against the righteous are frequently described as a wild raging [*die Gottlosen toben gar grausam*] by Hutter, with which the godly, he claims, are all too familiar. *JH*, 2.

⁸⁷ Müntzer apparently changed his mind about the role princes would play in reformation within a short period of time. Shortly after being summoned before Duke John in Weimar and being told to "refrain from making any provocative pronouncements until the matter had been considered by the Elector," Cohn notes that Müntzer produced his "The Explicit Unmasking of the False Belief of the

nation, Müntzer presents Christendom as existing in a state of continuing and significant decline, with its current condition described as “poor, miserable, and disintegrating”.⁸⁸ His negative perspective regarding medieval society and its current socio-political condition is not localized or region-specific; Müntzer asserts that entirely undesirable conditions are now widespread, leaving Christendom “dilapidated in every place.”⁸⁹ Like Luther, Müntzer’s rhetoric is salted with metaphors and images that establish a particular imaginative understanding of their collective dwelling that supports his rhetorical position. Müntzer argues that Christendom is being devastated by “ravaging wolves” that are busily turning the chosen “vineyard of God” into a wilderness.⁹⁰ Müntzer’s rhetorical strategy is oriented toward the past as a time in which socio-economic conditions were immeasurably more favourable. Unlike Luther, Müntzer does not strictly identify the wolves responsible for the plundering and destruction of “God’s vineyard” with the Roman curia. He employs the metaphor in a more provincial, localized sense for “lazy and negligent ministers”,⁹¹ even though his perspective and assessment are said to be geographically broader than Luther’s, taking in not just the German nation but all of Christendom. Local clergy are singled out as “false spiritual ones,”⁹² “incorrigible scoundrels,”⁹³ “rascals,”⁹⁴ and “inexperienced scribes”⁹⁵ who are

Faithless World,” which declared princes unfit for playing a decisive role in the inauguration of the Millennium. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 241.

⁸⁸ *AUD*, 242.

⁸⁹ *AUD*, 243.

⁹⁰ *AUD*, 242.

⁹¹ *AUD*, 243.

⁹² *AUD*, 257.

⁹³ *AUD*, 257.

⁹⁴ *AUD*, 248.

⁹⁵ *AUD*, 247.

constantly “blubbing” and “wailing loudly”⁹⁶ but ineffectually. Müntzer’s castigation of the clergy is not simply “a demagogic echo” of what Hans-Jürgen Goertz has defined as the “anticlerical mood of the early Reformation”, but a decided focus on contemporary issues and a determined effort to stop Christendom’s decay.⁹⁷ Though both Müntzer and Luther employ some eschatological language and imagery in their assessments, developing a worldview and cosmology in which the last days are said to be at hand, their concerns are entirely centred on those very practical and immediate social, economic, political and religious concerns they hold responsible for their poor and undesirable quality of life. Both texts construct places as deterministically influential in human affairs, with their dwelling endowed with quasi-spiritual qualities and redemptive capabilities.

Müntzer’s portrayal of disintegrating Christendom, like Luther’s, suggests that something important has been lost, diminishing not the value of the world itself but the individual’s experience of it, and her prospects in it. A loss or degeneration of place, according to Müntzer and Luther, places serious limits on the all-important possibility of experiencing or participating in God’s salvation. Like Luther, Müntzer insists that the nobility have a responsibility to undertake significant and immediate interventions against the places and practices of the Catholic Church as a divinely required obligation that checks further loss, and operates as a method of keeping the prospect of salvation for the German people open. Such noble action in the interests of reform and therefore salvation would re-establish an earlier and more desirable

⁹⁶ *AUD*, 247.

⁹⁷ Hans-Jürgen Goertz, “Karlstadt, Müntzer and the Reformation of the Commoners, 1521-1525” in John D. Roth and James M. Stayer, eds., *Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 25.

community even where it does not exactly duplicate, replicate, re-establish or re-create earlier conditions and circumstances.

Both Luther and Müntzer focus blame for the current state of medieval society, that is, for the desperate and degenerate condition of their world and hence the poor quality of living offered Germans, on church authorities, even though they direct blame at very different levels and even types of church authority. Müntzer's focus is fixed on the local and lowest levels of church representatives, on the "lazy negligent ministers" who he claims have not followed the pattern set by Christ, his apostles and the prophets before them, whereas Luther's focus of blame is set on the highest levels of church authority, the Roman curia and the pope.⁹⁸ Employing place-sensitive agricultural metaphors, Müntzer blames church authorities for actively spoiling the vineyard of God (Christendom) by neglecting to plant "the true word of God in the hearts of the elect".⁹⁹ This failure of clergy is responsible for a state of affairs in which an absence of growth and lack of maturity are the most evident conditions of the "vineyard" with which they are entrusted. Their failure to act diligently is blamed on self-interest,¹⁰⁰ on their setting a focus that is turned away from the pursuit of "the interests of Jesus Christ."¹⁰¹ Thus, the vineyard of which the clergy act as stewards is being vigorously destroyed, and the conditions necessary for a prosperous and healthy vineyard actively abrogated.

⁹⁸ Bernhard Rothmann followed Luther's lead in blaming higher clergy for what he termed "abuses," and consequently, for what he saw as the undesirable features of sixteenth-century church and society. It was only when Rothmann gained the support of "influential merchants, magistrates, and guild leaders" that he "broadened his critique to questioning the doctrines of the Old Church", according to R. Po-chia Hsia. R. Po-chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535-1618* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1984), 3.

⁹⁹ *AUD*, 243.

¹⁰⁰ *AUD*, 243.

¹⁰¹ *AUD*, 243.

Müntzer's strong anti-clerical statements within the text are consistently framed in reference to the role and responsibility clergy occupy in relation to the places they manage and from which they operate. It is through their inaction as well as by their attitudes and actions, according to Müntzer, that clergy have obviated the creation of a godly community, precluding the development and maintenance of a community structure in which a desirable quality of dwelling, which he associates with "the spirit of Christ," is established. Müntzer maintains that among the clergy, "It is just as clear as day that nothing [...] is respected as little as the spirit of Christ."¹⁰² Müntzer's comments expose a clerical attitude he holds responsible for incurring the wrath of God on the larger community.¹⁰³ Hence, it is through the removal of a negligent clergy hostile to the development of a godly dwelling place, and whose continued existence functions as an obstacle to the realization of the individual's privileged position as the dwelling place of God, that divine wrath on the community is assuaged, and the creation of a more desirable dwelling becomes possible.¹⁰⁴ For Müntzer as for Luther, the realization of the medieval dream of a godly Christian city devoid of sin and vice, and a model of prosperity and purity, requires the eradication of the undesirable. Müntzer's metaphorical language establishes a new textual reality that draws listener and/or reader (assuming that Müntzer's Sermon to the Princes was conceived and first delivered as a sermon) into a consensual construction that works to shape and reshape phenomenal reality. The imaginative reality that is constructed through the literacy space a text provides, and into which the nobility are invited as active participants, collapses the boundary

¹⁰² *AUD*, 244.

¹⁰³ *AUD*, 260.

¹⁰⁴ *AUD*, 252.

between textual and phenomenal reality in its presentation and encourages acceptance of a radical alternate world.¹⁰⁵

Müntzer informs his noble audience that the “corruption of holy Christendom”¹⁰⁶ has become indescribable,¹⁰⁷ and the proposition that princes “should do nothing more than maintain public unity”,¹⁰⁸ an inappropriately passive response.¹⁰⁹ The current state of affairs demands that princes take up their swords and couple them to the “power of God” as the only strategy by which the desire of Christ to “lead the government” in establishing a truly Christian community becomes possible.¹¹⁰ Müntzer’s call to the nobility assumes that the princes have both the authority and the ability to create such a community: that is, a place very unlike their current society. He warns the nobility to guard themselves against the potentially paralyzing deceitfulness of the “excessive babbling of the unsaved scribes,”¹¹¹ to whom, he claims, the laity have already fallen victim. The secrets of God, divine wisdom and knowledge as conditions through which a suitable quality of dwelling is both created and maintained,¹¹² are only available through a restored emphasis on the spirit of God, according to Müntzer. Reformation is certain, absolutely necessary and

¹⁰⁵ Hans-Jürgen Goertz argued that not only did Müntzer’s language in his Sermon to the Princes advocate “world-changing” [*weltveränderung*] actions, but that Müntzer recognized such possibilities, exploiting them in a self-aware manner. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer: Mystiker, Apokalyptiker, Revolutionär* (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1989), 107.

¹⁰⁶ *AUD*, 257.

¹⁰⁷ *AUD*, 257.

¹⁰⁸ *AUD*, 257.

¹⁰⁹ Tom Scott argues that Luther “assigns the princes an essentially negative, or restraining, role: to preserve peace and public order in a sinful world. [...] Müntzer, by contrast, enjoins upon princes a positive duty, that of promoting the Gospel and true faith, both by upholding evangelical preaching and by destroying opponents of the Gospel.” Tom Scott, *Thomas Müntzer: Theology and Revolution in the German Reformation* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 75.

¹¹⁰ *AUD*, 258-259.

¹¹¹ *AUD*, 247.

¹¹² *AUD*, 246-249.

its essential nature already clearly revealed to “many elected pious people,”¹¹³ with lay acceptance of Müntzer’s preaching held responsible for the clearer vision of the “common” people. The reformation of society and the form of governance being advocated by Müntzer is dependent on the nobility learning “their knowledge directly out of the mouth of God”.¹¹⁴ The socio-political structure Müntzer advocates establishes an immediate relation between community, the nobility, the divine, and the intermediary function of prophets; the community that is being shaped rhetorically is devoid of professional clergy, who are consistently presented as obstacles to the creation of a suitable dwelling. The widespread failure to cultivate a “spirit of wisdom” and therefore a better dwelling, according to Müntzer, comes from a preference for human reason, through which the individual falls victim to the seduction of flattering priests.¹¹⁵ Reliance on reason, and by extension on the priesthood with which it is most intimately associated, has resulted in the creation of a “clever, carnal and sensual world” that precludes salvation, obviating the construction of a community marked by divine presence.

Like Luther, Müntzer presents a worldview in which its most apparent qualities, given his rhetorical purposes, are social degeneration and political disintegration. The cosmographical claims on which their respective arguments for reform are founded, and by which their programs are justified, are said to reflect real and current conditions, including popular knowledge of them, even if such conditions are not self-evident, and popular testimony to that effect not forthcoming. In both instances, reform is presented as the reform of church and society, which is defined as

¹¹³ *AUD*, 255.

¹¹⁴ *AUD*, 257.

¹¹⁵ *AUD*, 256.

the construction of a godly community. The desired results are held as unachievable unless rulers become fully engaged, and an empty phrase if they and their actions do not establish a better dwelling. The term salvation and its cognates are not limited within these texts to their presumed mythological qualities or metaphysical effects, but are intimately tied to place, such that it is only through the creation of a particular kind and quality of place that individual and communal salvation become available.¹¹⁶ While Müntzer, unlike Luther, does not provide a list of specific recommendations for reform to the nobility,¹¹⁷ like Luther he advocates the development of a particular set of attitudes as the necessary catalyst and pre-condition for establishing a desirable dwelling, a better Christendom. In both texts, the nature of society, the culturally created shared meanings associated with place and values embedded in a particular place are rhetorically positioned as primary concerns, and the construction and presence of places whether desirable or undesirable are presented as the direct product of the attitudes and actions of past, present and future authorities and ruling powers.

2.5 Conclusion

The exercise of power and the social landscape are intimately intertwined in these texts, with Luther and Müntzer advancing particular political and social

¹¹⁶ Salvation could mean many different things during the sixteenth century, as Lyndal Roper has noted. She has argued that “salvation” in relation to sixteenth-century guild relations involving women meant that the lives of women were “circumscribed by the household workshop in which they were subordinate”, with salvation involving the matter of imagining a “civic haven in which the household would be restored to its mythical, ordered past”. Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 55.

¹¹⁷ Tom Scott argues that though Müntzer provided a “skeletal” framework in his Constitutional Draft for society in the form of a theocratic republic, he argues that it was “clearly intended as provisional.” Scott concludes: “In that sense, therefore, he had no real ‘theory of society’.” Tom Scott, *Thomas Müntzer: Theology and Revolution in the German Reformation* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 171-72.

interests through the places they shape and control rhetorically, with the places that are created drawing human responses as one of their most strategic qualities and defining characteristics.¹¹⁸ Charges of illegitimate exercise of power and the unacceptable control of place presented by these texts saddle past and/or present authorities with responsibility for the destruction of a former desirable place, the disintegration of society, and the degeneration of community. Reform of place is also the responsibility of authorities and is presented as absolutely necessary, with reform capable of halting further social disintegration while initiating a process of communal regeneration. Such a program of reform is ideologically aligned with the divine will from which it derives its legitimation and power. As the primary agents of reform,¹¹⁹ the nobility are strongly encouraged to actively exercise and focus their considerable power on the creation and/or recreation of desirable communal places. The calls for engagement voiced by Luther and Müntzer revolve around the struggle for ownership and control of sacred space, defining such places not as the product, but as the pre-eminent source in their thinking, of social and political order.¹²⁰

What carried over from Müntzer and Luther to sixteenth-century Anabaptist thought and action was not necessarily a specific body of content, an intellectual system, or even a well-defined program or strategy, but rather a particular attitude, emphasis and concern regarding culturally important places, and the role these places

¹¹⁸ David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 15.

¹¹⁹ C. Scott Dixon has affirmed the importance of Luther's insistence that princes implement the Reformation by drawing attention to the persistence of this conviction in his thinking: "Luther never departed from his belief that the territorial princes had the authority to implement the Reformation." C. Scott Dixon, "The Princely Reformation in Germany," in Andrew Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 151.

¹²⁰ John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan, *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 7.

played in individual and corporate life. Sixteenth-century Anabaptists inherited a worldview characterized by social decline, and a sense of personal responsibility for staying the slide. They were radicals in the sense that they were not content to merely point out abuses or work toward improvements, but determined to actively work toward the pursuit of radical social alternatives in response to what they saw as the unacceptable living conditions and social circumstances of their time. Anabaptists displayed and developed an acute understanding of the relation of communal salvation to the integrity and quality of their dwelling. They initiated and propagated a profound redirection in which the early medieval tendency to abandon the world¹²¹ was itself abandoned in favour of an attitude toward their dwelling in which the world is preserved, shaped and maintained in the interests of human life.

¹²¹ Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 179.

3. Medieval Church Architecture: Representation and Power

3.1 The Task of Architecture

In recent decades the debate concerning what architecture can be and even to some degree what it is, the sort of power it exercises and how it does so has seen renewed scholarly interest.¹ Galilean science and Newtonian philosophy are often credited with affecting a substantial shift that rationalized and functionalized architecture, which ultimately resulted in architecture losing “its way,” according to Karsten Harries.² The long-held conviction that architecture is and must remain expressive of its purpose, true construction, the national life, a noble life, or, as Geoffrey Scott has argued, “of the craftsman’s temperament, or the owner’s or the architect’s”³ has been challenged by scholars influenced by modernism. The proposition that architecture is a medium of communication that exercises significant cultural power through its role in shaping society was rejected by rationalist modernists who insisted that architecture communicates nothing beyond itself, being an “art sufficient unto itself”; architecture communicates architecture, “nothing more or less,” in the modernist scheme.⁴ Modernist interpretations of architecture were a response to a particular problem and presumed to “free” architecture of any

¹ See for example, Alberto Pérez-Gomez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983); Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); and Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

² Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 2.

³ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste* (London: Methuen & Co., 1961), 1.

⁴ Nigel Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door: Number and Geometry in Religious Architecture of the Greek and Latin Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 1. The same sort of solipsistic structure can be applied to language. Walter Benjamin has stated: “The answer to the question “What does language communicate?” is therefore “All language communicates itself.” Walter Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” in Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, eds., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume I 1913-1926* (Boston: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 63.

association “with the symbolism, religions, and superstition so abhorrent to rational humanism”, as Nigel Hiscock has argued.⁵ At the very centre of the debate (from the modernist perspective) lies the question of the purpose of architecture beyond the satisfaction of obvious immediate and pragmatic concerns, with the answer to the question of what exactly is intended in architecture assumed to hold the interpretive key to what it is. Reflecting a modernist approach to the theory of architecture, Scott constructs architecture as an art form that has an “aesthetic experience” of “delight” as its purpose, and the theory of architecture as dependent on “an independent sense of beauty”, divorcing human responses to art from any necessary logic while accepting the proposition that the “theory of architecture” is dependent on logic.⁶ Scott claims that literature “deals preponderatingly with ‘expression’” with its application only advanced “through the indirect element”.⁷ However, he claims literature remains effective in its ability to “invest with fascination any period of history on which its art is imaginatively expended”.⁸ Architecture, on the other hand, has the benefit of “direct appeal,” Scott claims, with its emphasis and value lying primarily in “material and that abstract disposition of material we call form.”⁹ Though Scott readily accepts that architecture is invested with substantial intuitive and aesthetic qualities, like other modernists, he takes exception to the treatment of “architectural form as primarily symbolic,” describing such an approach to its interpretation as the “fallacy of Romanticism”.¹⁰ It is a misunderstanding, according

⁵ Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door*, 1.

⁶ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 8.

⁷ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 60.

⁸ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 50.

⁹ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 60.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 125.

to Scott, in which the meaning assigned to architecture and architectural form is primarily, or exclusively, restricted to a particular “aesthetic reference,”¹¹ and that reference narrowly aligned with a specific set or group of moral values.¹²

Though modernism claimed to dispel the uncertainty and unwelcome associations of the past, promising a strong new sense of direction for architecture,¹³ such confidence proved ill-founded and quickly eroded through the crisis of representation introduced by the discourses of postmodernism, post-structuralism and deconstruction, and the destabilizing challenges they brought to nineteenth-century modernist discourses of certainty, stability and progress. Rather than providing relief from uncertainty, modernism has renewed the debate concerning the nature of the task of architecture.¹⁴ Of direct importance to the discussion, and even more so to my own project, are questions concerning what exactly did medieval church architects, structural designers and craftsmen (and perhaps some craftswomen) know, how astute were the skills of the medieval laity in reading and responding to architecture, and what sorts of associations, allusions, memories, rhythms, values, power relations and movements did medieval church architecture encourage, elicit, and exhibit.¹⁵

¹¹ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 125.

¹² Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 127.

¹³ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 125.

¹⁴ Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 2.

¹⁵ This type of question is not peculiar to medieval architecture and can be asked with equal propriety of virtually any medieval liturgy. With the liturgy performed in Latin it is quite possible that an Italian may have understood part or much of it, but it is highly unlikely that a Swabian or Saxon would have understood very much at all. It was largely through the relation that images of wood and stone bore to liturgical wording that understanding the liturgy became possible. Peter Cramer, “Baptismal Practice in Germany,” in Miri Rubin, ed., *Medieval Christianity in Practice* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 11. Daniel J. Bornstein draws a direct connection between those regions “that welcomed the Protestant Reformation” and the “adoption of the spoken vernacular as the language of formal worship.” Daniel E. Bornstein, “How to Behave in Church and How to Become a Priest,” in Miri Rubin, ed., *Medieval Christianity in Practice* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 113.

To one illiterate medieval woman, who simply identified herself as someone who “knows nothing,” having “never read a word,” the cathedral, as an object of her vision, established all present and future realities, determining her actions, directing her further thoughts. She stated: “I see at the church [...] a painted paradise with harps and lutes, and a hell where the damned are boiled. The one makes me afraid, the other happy.”¹⁶ Her understanding of cathedral architecture transcribed it into her own terms.¹⁷ The cultural privileging of text is countered, in this unnamed woman’s testimony, through her stated dependence on the close association of place and text, with place in this instance functioning as text. Because places engage the eye and the mind they prove to be pre-eminently suitable for evoking mnemonic resources; they associate form with symbol, creating meaning.¹⁸ Unlike literary productions that are always already a translation requiring mediation, places can be apprehended directly, holding the possibility of immediacy and meaning intuitively. Modern architecture, like the medieval built environment, retains direct appeal; its signs and posters inform and expostulate, impacting human senses and feelings, to which the body always responds.¹⁹

As an institutional tool of enculturation, in which the Foucauldian triad of power, knowledge and right are strategically employed in the creation of a particular type of subject, a docile and conformist member of society, medieval churches

¹⁶ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977, 2001), 34.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Scott, *Architecture of Humanism*, 213.

¹⁸ Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door*, 6. Emile Durkheim has aptly noted that social life is only made possible through the effective employment of “a vast symbolism.” Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, translated by Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 233.

¹⁹ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 116. Tuan argues that the body always responds to such basic design features as “enclosure, verticality and horizontality, mass, volume, interior spaciousness, and light.” Tuan, *Space and Place*, 116.

established a specific type of reality.²⁰ The question under investigation in this chapter, then, is not centred on what the medieval church was, though such matters cannot be (and are not) ignored, but on that with which it was connected,²¹ on how power was exercised through it, and on how Anabaptist resistance to such power developed.²² The articulation of reality provided by medieval churches established these places as mechanisms of power,²³ communicating authority, establishing social difference, effectively expressing and maintaining particular institutional interests.²⁴ While it is highly unlikely that the iconographic scheme of medieval churches was always accurately understood by the uneducated and uninstructed,²⁵ the symbolism and structures of power that these churches presented and embodied would have been difficult for even the simplest or dullest to avoid or ignore.²⁶ Nigel Hiscock argues that the laity was well-schooled when it came to church symbolism. He insists that certain “elements of architecture occurring in threes and sixes were understood as signifying the Trinity and the perfection of Creation, and their geometric counterparts were also commonplace, in the form of triangles, trefoils, hexfoils, hexagons, and

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), 194-228.

²¹ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 170.

²² Maureen Miller has argued that from the twelfth century the church became “more rigid, more controlling, and in many ways more oppressive,” culminating in bishops using “religious means to achieve temporal ends: through the spiritual power cultivated in their chapels, they tried to influence life in the piazza.” Maureen Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 11, and 256 respectively. What Miller seems to find most objectionable in such a development is the bishop’s employment of “accusations of heresy, decrees of excommunication, and the interdict of religious compassion in order to achieve political ends.” Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace*, 256.

²³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 205.

²⁴ Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth Century English Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 9.

²⁵ Hiscock argues that it is also highly unlikely that “a patron would have had no programmatic requirements, symbolic or otherwise, and would have left the architect and builders to please themselves”. He asks: “Is it likely that an architect would have built a church devoid of symbolic content, divorced from his patron’s religious predilections, and confounding literary and documentary evidence to the contrary?” Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door*, 49-50.

²⁶ Wim Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral* (London: Elek Books, 1969), 37.

hexagrams. [...] [E]ven a humble Christian upbringing would have meant that masons, as well as their masters, would have understood their meaning while they were constructing them.”²⁷ All church buildings during the medieval period, from monasteries to forest chapels, to parish churches and large cathedrals were intimately bound up with the ideological systems they represented, functioning as its strategic instruments. Medieval churches were not merely a series of connected buildings under a central administration but an associative network propagating a particular cosmology and ideology. They functioned as transparent windows on reality, entering medieval perception as a highly mediated image of the divine. The fate of these church building rose and fell in direct relation to the success and failure of the ideological systems they embodied.²⁸ Moreover, the moral fibre of the larger society and the social values of the church were not only inextricably linked, both were dependent on Church buildings without which they would quickly decay and collapse.²⁹ As the earthly embodiment of the Heavenly Jerusalem, medieval churches and cathedrals were a compendium that served didactic and admonitory functions.³⁰ They were both a symbol and metaphor of paradise directing the gaze of worshippers to the contemplation of the “other-world,” which was said to have important implications for the present world. Medieval churches functioned as a spatial map of

²⁷ Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door*, 176. The figurate number 8 identified with salvation, rebirth, circumcision and resurrection would also have also been a widely-recognized symbol wherever it was employed.

²⁸ Eamon Duffy, “Bare Ruined Choirs: Remembering Catholicism in Shakespeare’s England,” in Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay, and Richard Wilson, eds., *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 43.

²⁹ Duffy, “Bare Ruined Choirs,” 49. In discussing what Duffy calls the “complaint literature” of the sixteenth-century in England, he argues that there was “far more at stake in all this than the fate of buildings or even a change in doctrine. In this complaint literature the decay of the externals of Catholicism reflected and indeed caused the collapse of the moral fibre of society”. Duffy, “Bare Ruined Choirs,” 49.

³⁰ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 40.

the cosmos, presenting themselves as the interpretation of all mysteries; they were the embodiment of the myths they propagated. Medieval churches held both an aural and an optical connection to reality, establishing a clear and unmistakable relation between the present and the finite and the phenomenally absent and infinite by obfuscating distinctions. Churches were not incidental to the exercise of power but central to it, functioning as the matrix for a stratified social order.

The way in which I understand these questions and their possible answers are of substantial importance for understanding why so many sixteenth-century Anabaptists adamantly refused to attend church even when severely punished for it. Whether one understands architecture as interpretation, as an aesthetic, or as the articulation of a common ethos, architecture always extends beyond immediate pragmatic considerations. It always embodies particular political and social interests that are obvious in some cases and far less obvious in others. Architecture is a pliable form that is and remains conducive to the exercise of power. Power is exercised from the very start of the architectural process through the selection and organization of materials, techniques, craftspersons, and location. Power is exercised through what it shows and what it hides, what it teaches and what it is reticent to teach, what it points to and what it points away from. That with which it is connected, and what it shows and hides are always historically and temporally contingent matters, reflecting the socio-political values and concerns of a given society. As places, medieval churches not only functioned as a reflection of a particular society, its values, and its desires but also acted as the medium for their articulation, with medieval church architecture intimately involved in the creation, promotion, advancement, maintenance, revision,

and re-creation of those values and desires. Architecture is effective in combining message and medium such that knowledge and its intimate associates, power and truth, were embedded and embodied in medieval churches through which they were constantly created, exercised, reinforced, and re-produced.³¹ My analysis would suggest that form (architecture) was intimately and inextricably tied to symbol (churches) during the medieval period, with architecture active in creating and conveying meaning,³² effectively evoking, storing and creating memories through its engagement of the eye and mind,³³ generating desired human responses. Though medieval sacred places were always the products of human action, they were also pre-eminent in the exercise of power through their active role in the setting of boundaries, establishing relations, imposing restrictions; they exercised substantial and pervasive influence on individuals, society, social relations and gender stratification.³⁴

Some recent theories of architecture reject nineteenth-century rationalist-modernist understandings and once again assume, encourage, or explicitly argue, as earlier architectural theory did, that places are important beyond any sort of solipsistic aesthetic reference. They once again argue that places are fundamentally important for perpetuating values, and remain instrumental in shaping culture and identity. Though modern sensibilities preclude the uncritical acceptance of Joseph Sauer's allegorical interpretation of medieval churches and cathedrals, their liturgies

³¹ C. Pamela Graves, "Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church," in Christopher G. A. Bryant and David Jary, eds., *Anthony Giddens: Critical Assessments*, vol. 4 (London: Routledge, 1997), 262.

³² Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door*, 6.

³³ Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door*, 6.

³⁴ Jane Schulenburg, "Gender, Celibacy, and Proscriptions of Sacred Space: Symbol and Practice," in Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury, eds., *Women's Spaces: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 185.

and ritual practices to the extent his monumental work advocates,³⁵ it would be equally unfortunate to limit investigations of architecture's form and function, as it applies to medieval churches, to discussions of the creator's intent, or the aesthetic qualities of the discipline. Delimiting the study of medieval churches to something less than the power they exerted over the human imagination, and therein marginalize their role in actively shaping human beings through interactions with them that affected all aspects of medieval human life, is to construct medieval churches as something substantially less than what they were, and less than what they were perceived to be, in the medieval period.

3.2 Medieval Church Architecture and Praxis

Churches were pre-eminent socio-political places during the medieval period; they were firmly established as a vital component of every facet of medieval socio-political life. They presented a comprehensive, coherent and totalizing narrative that was mapped through culturally shared symbols, values and meanings, which functioned as an integral part of the narrative's unifying structure. The narrative they presented was intimately tied to place and dependent on a particular understanding of it, with the discourse created and maintained exercising cultural hegemony. Through the ritual system with which medieval churches were identified and inextricably associated understandings of place were created, differences were established, the narrative they presented substantiated, and attachment to places developed.

Medieval cathedrals, abbeys and parish churches were not limited in their design, usage and effects to worship; they were far more than "mere settings" for

³⁵ Joseph Sauer, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes und seiner Ausstattung in der Auffassung des Mittelalters* (Freiburg: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1902).

ritual practice. They functioned as multi-use facilities: as the theatre, concert-hall, business centre, courts, town-hall, and *Biblia pauperum*.³⁶ At Chartres, for example, wine merchants erected their stalls in the nave and only moved them after an area in the crypt was made available for their exclusive use.³⁷ Medieval churches provided accommodations and other hospitality to pilgrims who frequently slept and ate in cathedrals at destinations of pilgrimage.³⁸ Operationally and organizationally, when viewed through the lens of its wealth and economic influence, the medieval Church was a corporation, functioning, as Robert B. Ekelund et al have suggested, as a “franchise monopoly that enjoyed certain economies of scale but continually faced the dual problems of enforcement and entry control.”³⁹ The great fairs of the medieval period were intimately linked to religious institutions with every economic gain contributing in some way to the wealth and prestige of local churches, cathedrals, and monasteries.⁴⁰ These markets were typically held on those feast days most likely to draw large crowds; they were instrumental in stimulating the development of the medieval city.⁴¹ As a pre-eminent social institution during the medieval period, the medieval church was a provider of both private and public goods, and as a surrogate government it supplied important cultural amenities while underwriting the political structure of medieval society.⁴²

³⁶ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 31-34.

³⁷ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 31.

³⁸ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 30.

³⁹ Robert B. Ekelund Jr., Robert F. Hébert, Robert D. Tollison, Gary M. Anderson, and Audrey B. Davidson, *Sacred Trust: The Medieval Church as an Economic Firm* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.

⁴⁰ Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 164-165.

⁴¹ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 164-65.

⁴² Ekelund, *The Medieval Church as an Economic Firm*, 8.

Though commonly conceived, designed and constructed as an image of the “Celestial City,”⁴³ with their sanctuaries held to be the threshold to heaven,⁴⁴ medieval churches functioned as sites for civic meetings, disputations, convocations, lawsuits and even day-to-day business, making the construction of a town hall superfluous in some medieval towns.⁴⁵ The extent to which medieval churches effectively satisfied a variety of personal and civic needs is evident from the practice of at least one mayor of Strasbourg who regularly conducted business from his pew, using it as his office.⁴⁶ Medieval churches also functioned as informal meeting places, with local people frequently bringing their pet dogs, falcons and parakeets into church precincts.⁴⁷ Wim Swaan has argued, somewhat provocatively, that medieval churches were even “a favourite rendezvous for lovers,” without there being any indication that such usage compromised or in any way seriously violated cultural norms and mores.⁴⁸ Though medieval churches promulgated high ideals regarding their relation to the divine, holding the keys to corporate and individual salvation,

⁴³ The medieval church dedication ritual explicitly relates the image of the Celestial city in the Book of Revelation to the newly constructed structure. Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 8. See also, Christopher Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral: The Architecture of the Great Church 1130-1530* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 8; and, Margrete Syrstad Andås, “Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone,” in Margrete Syrstad Andås, Øystein Ekroll, Andreas Haug, and Nils Holger Petersen, eds., *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim: Architectural and Ritual Construction in their European Context* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2007), 52..

⁴⁴ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, xv, 8; Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 51 and 61; Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 8, 32, and 189.

⁴⁵ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 30-31.

⁴⁶ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 31.

⁴⁷ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 30.

⁴⁸ Swaan adds that the medieval cathedral was a common meeting place with people frequently bringing their pet dogs, falcons and parakeets. During pilgrimage people frequently slept in the cathedral and daily civic affairs were regularly conducted in its precincts, with such usages “casually noted” but not drawing a “hint of criticism by so high-principled a person as Christine de Pisan” (1364-1433). Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 30-31.

modelling the right ordering of society,⁴⁹ medieval church usage was not restricted to making mythological representations or statements concerning the divine. Medieval cathedrals, for example, were also secular palaces unabashedly juxtaposing divine and worldly affairs without reducing their differences to the anachronistic binaries of sacred and profane.⁵⁰ Church practice and church usage incorporated the divine and the mundane, the religious and the political, integrating the routine with the extraordinary without positing strict dichotomies or rigid boundaries. Although medieval church architecture established clear divisions in keeping with an area's designated purpose, effectively isolating potentially conflicting activities,⁵¹ church usage, through the employment of dividers and screens, created chapels of various kinds for wealthy families and guilds, substantially softening architecturally established boundaries through the insertion of the architecturally foreign. At times these "artificial" additions and reconstructions blurred distinctions between trade guilds and religious confraternities, effacing the difference between extending care to the indigent and the aggrandizement of wealthy patrons, developing intimate and thoroughly mixed links to a complex social structure.⁵²

3.3 Medieval Church Architecture and Power

Reading medieval church architecture through the lens of its symbolic import, the relations it established, and the power it exercised concurrently renders the values

⁴⁹ Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 1. Chartres, one of France's wealthiest and largest dioceses yielded annual revenues in silver mining and grain harvests alone of approximately \$1,500,000.00 in modern currency, with the dean drawing an income of over \$700,000 annually in modern currency. Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 175.

⁵⁰ Roberta Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close: The Evolution of the English Cathedral Landscape* (Studies in the History of Medieval Religion) (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2005), 237.

⁵¹ Swaan, *The Gothic cathedral*, 31.

⁵² Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 167.

with which it was imbued, and the meanings it acquired, more accessible to the modern interpreter. It generates an understanding of how a particular building or specific type of building, that is a place, is connected to a network of social relations within a geographically and historically defined community, precipitating an understanding of how architectural design and popular use serve particular socio-political interests.⁵³ Unlike current-day scholars, the vast majority of medieval actors were not informed of liturgical practice and proper behaviour through documents that were read but by participation in ritual practice; they were educated into culturally acceptable ways of behaving and thinking through a practice that was dependent on the shaping power of place. Because medieval churches were established as sacred spaces representative of the Heavenly Jerusalem, entering a church during the medieval period involved acts of transformation and expectation, which were themes that seriously challenged medieval architects and builders.⁵⁴ What Bruce Lincoln calls the “Gnostic” dimension of ritual was instrumental in generating “the means for demonstrating that we know what ought to have been done, what ought to have taken place.”⁵⁵ The shaping potential of ritualization is evident in its provision of “an occasion for reflection on and rationalization of the fact that what ought to have been done was not, what ought to have taken place did not.”⁵⁶ With medieval churches

⁵³ Virginia Chieffo Raguin, and Sarah Stanbury, eds. *Women's Space: Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 11.

⁵⁴ Jens Fleischer, “External Pulpits and the Question of St. Michael’s Chapel at Nidaros,” in Margrete Syrstad Andås, Øystein Ekroll, Andreas Haug, and Nils Holger Petersen eds., *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim: Architectural and Ritual Constructions in Their European Context* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2007), 128.

⁵⁵ Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 109.

⁵⁶ Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 109.

purposefully designed to draw the divine into the dwelling provided,⁵⁷ they established the built environment at the very centre of human encounters with the divine, such that medieval cosmology simply did not retain the possibility that natural places and domestic environs could be eminently suitable places for such meetings, taking as axiomatic the proposition that sacred places must be built.⁵⁸

Medieval monastic churches, parish churches and especially cathedrals were designed and constructed in such a way that they cast their imposing, unavoidable presence over the landscape,⁵⁹ with steeples and Gothic bell towers pointing like all-too-visible fingers to the truth they embodied. Though church and steeple were oriented heavenward, they drew attention to themselves as foci for communal aspirations, civic unity and collective salvation, proper ordering of society, communal identity and life, conveying representations of power and permanence spatially and temporally.⁶⁰ Medieval church buildings tended to be impressive constructions, dwarfing surrounding structures. They were generally strategically positioned at the centre of the built environment, drawing the gaze of all around them, serving as the primary text for transmitting a tradition; they presented a view of reality that was immutable, unshakable and unavoidable. Particularly germane in this respect is Michel Foucault's observation that power is situated "in seeing and in being seen," establishing the eye as the gateway for the exercise of power.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 153.

⁵⁸ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 154.

⁵⁹ Simson notes: "The cathedral was the house of God, this term was understood not as a commonplace but as a fearful reality. The Middle Ages lived in the presence of the supernatural". Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, xv.

⁶⁰ Donna J. Peuquet, *Representations of Space and Time* (New York; London: The Guildford Press, 2002), 77.

⁶¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170-194.

Although all spatial dimensions participate in the exercise of power, power exercised over the human psyche increases substantially and dramatically in monumental architecture where people must exist in its shadow.⁶² The sheer enormity of medieval churches established them as obvious objects of sight, making them unavoidable. They were the most conspicuous symbols of the power, stability, and unity of western Christendom.⁶³ Large medieval churches, cathedrals, and abbeys were nothing less than a substantial material concentration of power aligned with a particular regime of truth, establishing and enforcing particular cultural norms. Through their imposing architecture and the pervasive manner in which they were built and functioned, medieval churches reflect the validity of Foucault's ocularcentric observations,⁶⁴ but these churches also exploited the substantial power residing in the intangible but powerful imaginary, with the power that medieval churches exercised multiplied exponentially through the definitive proclamations they made and embodied regarding the imagined but unseen.⁶⁵ Conceptions of power, the exercise of power and competition for power were all inherent components of the monumental medieval church landscape, with architecture articulating and providing the theatre for their expression.⁶⁶ It was the shadow of the master narrative medieval churches embodied and cast over the landscape, and the manner in which they impressed their authoritative presence into every aspect of medieval socio-political life, that drew the ire and harshest censure of sixteenth-century Anabaptists.

⁶² Tuan, *Space and Place*, 108.

⁶³ Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 189.

⁶⁴ The term "ocularcentric" was coined by Martin Jay.

⁶⁵ Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 256.

⁶⁶ Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 253.

3.4 Medieval Church Architecture and Light

The great cathedrals, abbeys and larger parish churches were not only imposing physical structures, but also displayed some of the most extravagant architecture of the medieval period.⁶⁷ Such extravagance can be measured by its substantial cost, the duration of church construction schedules,⁶⁸ church longevity and the impressive design features medieval churches typically exhibit. In many cases, their architecture continues to be remarkable. The medieval cathedral of Metz, for example, boasts vaults in excess of 42 metres high, containing the tallest clerestory of any Gothic church, with its transept frontals encasing the largest stained-glass windows in the history of architecture.⁶⁹ Even in comparatively modest Cistercian medieval churches where the creation of visual appeal is not typically said to have been given predominance, Cistercian sources indicate, according to Megan Cassidy-Welch, that the Cistercian “church was perceived as a space in which seeing,

⁶⁷ According to Kieckhefer, medieval churches were intended to be impressive structures and he laments that they no longer have quite the same effect on modern visitors, partially because they “no longer have the dazzling color they would once have had in glass, wall paintings, and richly painted furnishings. More important, it is because we are sated with extravagant architecture, and churches such as these are less exceptional for us.” Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 192.

⁶⁸ Scott argues that it was not unusual for the construction of a cathedral to take two centuries with many taking up to three. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 38-39. Tuan has argued that the construction of a cathedral generated enthusiasm for a “broad community of believers.” It was an activity that was itself an “act of worship” in which “the feelings and senses of a people were deeply engaged.” Tuan, *Space and Place*, 105-106.

⁶⁹ Nancy Y. Wu, *Ad Quadratum: The Practical Application of Geometry in Medieval Architecture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 243. Bernard of Clairvaux complained in 1125 of “the soaring heights and extravagant lengths and unnecessary widths of the churches,” as well as “their expensive decorations and their novel images”. While he allows that bishops have a “duty toward the wise and foolish” and must therefore “make use of material ornamentation to rouse devotion in a carnal people, incapable of spiritual things” no such allowances are made for monks. He argues that “common people” do not distinguish between representations and reality and that it is through such a conflation that “churches are decked out, not merely with a jewelled crown, but with a huge jewelled wheel, where circles of lamps compete in radiance with precious stones. Instead of candle-sticks we see tree-like structures, made of much metal and with exquisite workmanship, where candles and gems sparkle equally.” He concludes: “Even if the foolishness of it all occasion no shame, at least one might balk at the expense.” Bernard of Clairvaux, *Cistercians and Cluniacs: St. Bernard’s Apologia to Abbot William*, translated by Michael Casey (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1970), 65-66.

visualizing and imagining were, in fact, all highly important.”⁷⁰ Vision was intimately linked to a particular epistemic system throughout the late ancient and medieval periods. The Greek Philosopher Heraclitus claimed that “the eyes are more trustworthy witnesses than the ears” (Allegories 22B),⁷¹ and Aristotle asserted that “we prefer sight, generally speaking to all the other senses [...]. Sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions” (Metaphysics 980a 25).⁷² The Epistle of John proclaims: “God is light,”⁷³ and Augustine could exclaim “Thanks be to You, O Lord! We see *heaven and earth*,”⁷⁴ setting a higher *lumen* in relation to an inferior *lux* that enables physical sight.⁷⁵ Sight was granted an important role throughout the medieval period, with Thomas Aquinas calling it the “*senus magis cognoscitivus*” in his *Summa Theologiae*,⁷⁶ setting sight as the superior sense through which knowledge is acquired. The Cistercian church building, like other medieval churches, was dependent upon visualization for the self-representations it provided and its description of “the other world”.⁷⁷ Through its basic *ad quadratum* design and its eastward facing orientation, medieval church architecture promulgated a spatial narrative that did not rely solely on iconographic representations through such things

⁷⁰ Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings*, 74.

⁷¹ As quoted in Clarice J. Martin, “The Eyes have it: Slaves in the Communities of Christ-Believers,” in Richard A. Horsley, ed. *Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 232.

⁷² Quoted in Martin, “The Eyes have it: Slaves in the Communities of Christ-Believers,” 232-33.

⁷³ 1 John 1: 5. “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.”

⁷⁴ F. J. Sheed, trans., *Augustine: Confessions Books I-XIII* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), Book 13: XXXII, p. 285.

⁷⁵ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 37. See also, Mary T. Clark, trans., *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1984), “On Seeing God,” Chapter Seven, p. 369. Jay defines *lumen* as “perfect linear form” that is the “essence of illumination” and exists whether it is perceived by the human eye or not. Conversely, *lux* is the “actual experience of human sight” where “color, shadow, and movement” are “accounted as important for form and outline.” Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 29.

⁷⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 84, 2c, cited in Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 41.

⁷⁷ Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings*, 74.

as stained glass and images for the meanings and effects it generated.⁷⁸ Medieval actors, like modern actors, did not “see the world as it is,” but rather as they were taught to see it through the proliferation of cultural representations, which produced a culturally acceptable way of seeing.⁷⁹ Medieval Christendom was often “intoxicated by what it saw”, according to Martin Jay,⁸⁰ with vision not only presenting a particular epistemological method for engagement with the world but also serving a sacred function throughout the medieval period.

Although Romanesque and Gothic churches employed common architectural-structural elements such as cross-ribbed vaults, pointed arches, and flying buttresses,⁸¹ Gothic architecture utilized and combined these elements in a novel manner such that an altogether new and “organically unified” style emerged.⁸² The Gothic style of architecture emerged as the embodiment of community and was aimed at “state-building.”⁸³ Medieval gothic churches were the articulation and maintenance of a hierarchical medieval society, which consisted of three primary groups: nobility, clergy, and commoners.⁸⁴ The consecration ritual of the *Abbey Church of St. Denis* deliberately exalted the king’s prestige, drawing attention to the

⁷⁸ Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings*, 74. Welch argues that “seeing” with respect to medieval churches is not limited to a function of the eyes and advances an argument for intuitive recognition and responses. Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings*, 95-96.

⁷⁹ Rosmarie Garland Thompson, “Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography,” in Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 336. Thompson draws on and responds to the earlier work of Sander L. Gilman, *Seeing the Insane* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1982).

⁸⁰ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 42.

⁸¹ The use of Gothic architecture began in the early twelfth century with the Abbey church of St. Denis, and continued to be used for about the next 400 years. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 11.

⁸² Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 116.

⁸³ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 182, 76.

⁸⁴ The interrelation of the monarchy and the Church were also symbolically enacted during a foundation-laying ceremony in Cologne in August 1248. The king designate, William of Holland, attended the proceedings, and six weeks later Archbishop Conrad of Cologne crowned Aachen in his diocese. Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 152.

king's close connection to the Church while emphasizing the homage to which the king is rightly entitled as God's elect. Abbot Suger describes the procession as "beautiful by its ornaments and notable by its personages."⁸⁵ Suger's description of the foundation stone ceremony mentions bishops, abbots, and prelates but it does not disclose their identities. Only King Louis VII is mentioned by name. Though the bishops alone carried the "insignia of Our Lord's Passion" and though they were the ones who had prepared the required mortar "with their own hands," King Louis VII occupies pride of place in Suger's record as he recounts how the "Most Serene King himself stepped down [into the excavation] and with his own hands laid his [stone]."⁸⁶ Dominique Iogna-Prat has observed that the foundation stone ceremony in the construction of a cathedral was an "interplay of power" involving "powerful laypersons" and "clerics" establishing a crucial dialectic between "socially dominant forces."⁸⁷ References to Constantine physically assisting with the construction of the Lateran church in Rome are similarly a component in the "subtle set of relations between spiritual authority *auctoritas* and temporal *potestas*; the former activating the latter", as Iogna-Prat has argued.⁸⁸ The king's presence and actions at the first stone laying ceremony in Abbot Suger's description can be interpreted as the portrayal of an idealized set of relations imagined to exist between the abbey and the kingdom.⁸⁹ Sacred spaces and ritualized behaviour were pre-eminently important for "expressing this unified order and its link to heaven",⁹⁰ legitimating the powers

⁸⁵ Dominique Iogna-Prat, "The Consecration of Church Space," in Miri Rubin, ed., *Medieval Christianity in Practice* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 95.

⁸⁶ Iogna-Prat, "The Consecration of Church Space," 95.

⁸⁷ Iogna-Prat, "The Consecration of Church Space," 98.

⁸⁸ Iogna-Prat, "The Consecration of Church Space," 98.

⁸⁹ Iogna-Prat, "The Consecration of Church Space," 98.

⁹⁰ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 232.

claimed by both the Church and civil government. Gothic architecture was a form in which the various earlier elements of church architecture were used to create a larger, expansive, and soaring interior space that was brightly lit. The basilica of St. Denis, an important pilgrimage destination preserving the remains of the saint deemed responsible for converting France to Christianity,⁹¹ and the burial site of French kings for some eight centuries,⁹² heralded the beginning of the Gothic enterprise,⁹³ boasting an unprecedented and hitherto unparalleled display of light in any medieval church.⁹⁴ Earlier attempts to improve the interior lighting of medieval churches often resulted in orders being given, as they were in the construction of Cistercian churches that glass in windows should be clear and without pictures.⁹⁵

In sharp contrast to early medieval churches with their fortress-like thick walls and comparatively small apertures, Gothic churches, and especially their choirs, were brightly lit.⁹⁶ Richard Kieckhefer has noted that the conviction that churches should be chambers of light is a peculiarly medieval notion, imbued with substantial significance.⁹⁷ As early as 1140, while presiding over the construction of Saint Denis near Paris, Abbot Suger identified the greatest human work as “that which serves to illuminate the mind.” And, it was through light that minds were elevated “to the

⁹¹ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 103.

⁹² The bishop’s cathedral was not typically the “resting place” of confessors, martyrs, and royalty even if it was, on occasion, built on the tomb of a martyr-saint and despite its display of relics. Their bodies were more typically entombed in urban basilicas. Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace*, 128. However, the saintly dead were still instrumental in making the construction of a cathedral possible. They often functioned as effective marketing tools in fund-raisers. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 183.

⁹³ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 76.

⁹⁴ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 3.

⁹⁵ Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings*, 98-99.

⁹⁶ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 31.

⁹⁷ Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 107.

entrance to the True Light, to its portals – in short, to Christ.”⁹⁸ Though it is through ritualization that material objects are made sacred, it is through light, according to medieval cosmology, that stone and wood are rendered capable of serving as a vehicle for experiencing the divine.⁹⁹ The baptismal liturgy employed in the cathedral of St. Stephen of Metz as early as the thirteenth century is replete with metaphors of light, establishing God as the author of light “who threw a curtain of sharp-sighted light over a world in shadow” through which death is “snared” and the “burden of sins is put away.”¹⁰⁰ Light was the medium *par excellence*, according to medieval theologians, through which material objects were made “capable of revealing their divine properties to humans.”¹⁰¹ God as light was at the very centre of Dionysius the Areopagite’s theology, from which he determined that every physical object and every living creature with the quality of visibility is connected to uncreated and

⁹⁸ As quoted in Vito Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear: Perceptions of Nature and the City in the Middle Ages*, translated by Shayne Mitchell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 84.

⁹⁹ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 123. Anabaptists such as Balthasar Hubmaier argued that the divine could not possibly exist in “wood and stone” and therefore could not live in temples made with human hands. Hubmaier, *Schriften*, 302. Christ, sixteenth-century Anabaptists insisted, does not live in a temple made with human hands. See for example the testimony of Leonard Rumer, *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 160. That which was built through human agency and initiative was generally considered arbitrary and lacking authority. Many Anabaptists spoke of the Church as nothing more than a “cursed temple of idols” [*nicht anders dann für ain verfluchten götzntempl*] with the people who use it constituting nothing other than “an assembly of godless people” [*ain versammlung alle gotlosen menschen*]. The testimony of Hans Denck, in which he declared the human heart or human subjectivity to be the “right or proper” dwelling place of God, is representative of most if not all Anabaptists. Denck insisted: “The temple and seat of divine glory [...] is [...] in your heart and soul.” Hans Denck, in Daniel Liechty, ed., *Early Anabaptist Spirituality: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 134.

¹⁰⁰ Cramer, “Baptismal Practice in Germany,” 8-9. Medieval baptism was, as Cramer points out, a “ritual of enlightenment” that shares “conceptual matter and linguistic echoes, with the reconciliation of adult penitent into the social body.” Cramer, “Baptismal Practice in Germany,” 10.

¹⁰¹ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 123. God as light was at the very centre of Dionysius the Areopagite’s theology, from which he determined that every physical object and every living creature with the quality of visibility is connected to uncreated and divine light. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 132. Dionysius also insisted that contemplating on natural light would assist in the comprehension of Divine Light. Wim Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 48.

divine light.¹⁰² It was Gothic architecture that developed this concept most thoroughly, such that the form became identified with light in the medieval period. Medieval thinkers as disparate as Hugo of St. Victor and Thomas Aquinas ascribe all visual beauty to luminosity as its source and essence,¹⁰³ establishing the theoretical science to which the craft of medieval Gothic church construction was said to conform.¹⁰⁴ In exploiting the ribbed vaults and pointed arches of Romanesque architecture through its unique form of buttressing high vaults, Gothic architecture enabled the insertion of large clerestory windows, creating large soaring interior spaces filled with light.¹⁰⁵ With light being the principle of order and value throughout the medieval period, the value of a given thing was determined in direct correspondence to the degree in which it participates in light.¹⁰⁶ It cannot have been by accident that the choirs reserved exclusively for clergy in Gothic churches were brightly lit, identifying the clergy, who constituted the *raison d'être* of the cathedral, with luminosity.¹⁰⁷ The gothic “improvement and renewal” of an important liturgical space rendered it, and by extension clergy, preeminently sacred.¹⁰⁸ The identification of medieval clergy with luminosity and ultimate value was in sharp contrast to the anticlerical attitudes and hostilities leveled by sixteenth-century Anabaptists. Otto

¹⁰² Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 132. Dionysius also insisted that contemplating on natural light would assist in the comprehension of Divine Light. Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 48.

¹⁰³ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 50.

¹⁰⁴ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 31. The French architect Jean Mignot, active in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries purportedly stated: “*ars sine scientia nihil est*” (skill without [theoretical] knowledge is nothing) during the construction of the Milan cathedral amid his fears that the building would collapse unless certain changes were incorporated.

¹⁰⁵ Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 116.

¹⁰⁶ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 52. Scott makes a very similar argument: “Medieval theologians regarded light as the medium *par excellence* through which physical objects became capable of revealing their divine properties to humans.” Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 123.

¹⁰⁷ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 31.

¹⁰⁸ Réginald Grégoire, Léo Moulin, and Raymond Oursel, *The Monastic Realm*, translated by Donald Mills (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 143.

Georg von Simson insightfully notes that in medieval usage, light was not understood in a “pantheistic or in a purely metaphorical sense” as physical light or transcendental light that is symbolically invested, but rather analogically as manifestations, images, vestiges or shadows of the divine.¹⁰⁹ The ribbed vault and pointed arch, supported by flying buttresses in Gothic church architecture, effectively concentrate and transfer design loads within a symmetrical structural skeleton to supporting columns, creating a light-filled interior representative of the divine. If a given place such as a medieval Gothic church is taken as sacred and intimately associated with the divine, it stands to reason that the persons most closely identified with it partake of its sacrality,¹¹⁰ therein defining the community in terms of the mediatory function of clergy who become intimately related to issues of empowerment and disempowerment. The vista of columns within a medieval church nave invite movement,¹¹¹ whether such movement is limited to the eye or involves the entire body, subjecting the body to the power exercised by created space.

Although the medieval cathedral was a model of the cosmos, it was also an image of the Celestial City, simultaneously representing the order of the present world and the one to come.¹¹² The order established by medieval church architecture rendered form intelligible by making it coherent,¹¹³ reflecting Augustine’s substantial

¹⁰⁹ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 54.

¹¹⁰ Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 153.

¹¹¹ Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 227.

¹¹² Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 35-37. Simson judges from the writings of Abbot Suger that he “wished to be understood, as an architect who *built* theology.” Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 133. Simson notes that Gothic architecture is not “the “logical” sequel to Romanesque” but its rival presenting a very different theology. Simson argues that Abbot Suger wished “to align the system of an ecclesiastical building with a transcendental vision that ultimately accounted for the transformation of Romanesque into Gothic.” *The Gothic Cathedral*, 135.

¹¹³ Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 235

and lingering influence on medieval thought. In his *De Musica* Augustine established architecture and music as the noblest of the arts through their ability to embody the perfect mathematical proportions of the universe, leading the mind to “the contemplation of the divine order.”¹¹⁴ Augustine argued that pattern, symmetry, and proportion were all established at Creation, “Thou didst order all things by measure, number and weight” (Book of Wisdom 11:21), rendering medieval cosmology theologically transparent.¹¹⁵ Church dimensions and layout were of paramount importance, for harmonic proportions in the relative size of building elements were considered the key to architectural beauty, reflecting the structure of the cosmos. So thoroughly did medieval church architecture conform to geometric figures thought to originate in the unquestionable stability and perfection of the cosmos that when the builders of Milan Cathedral determined that its foundations, piers and buttressing were incapable of supporting the loads to be imposed on them, Heinrich Parler, one of the consultants and a master of medieval structural theory, proposed that the height of the vaults be increased (adding additional dead and live loads!) in order that the building cross-section conform to the square.¹¹⁶ Parler’s guiding principle appears to have been that increased loads on an inadequate foundation and support system can be effectively mitigated through an improved geometric design in harmony with the cosmos.¹¹⁷ In what we know of the medieval scheme, structural elements frequently remained subordinate to geometric considerations such that structural deficiencies could, it was thought, be offset through geometric perfection. Though Gothic builders

¹¹⁴ Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 275.

¹¹⁵ *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol. 1, 110-11.

¹¹⁶ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 52.

¹¹⁷ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 52.

left few records regarding the symbolic significance of their constructions,¹¹⁸ they were far less reticent when it came to acknowledging the importance of geometry as the foundation of their craft.¹¹⁹ Swaan has argued that in medieval geometry the equilateral triangle, isosceles triangle, and the pentagon “formed the geometrical starting point for the Divine architect of the Universe itself,” and therefore, medieval designers and builders had “every reason to use them in the construction of churches, which were veritable symbols of the Universe.”¹²⁰ Medieval designers and builders imagined their churches to be microcosms of the divinely ordered and constructed universe, presenting order, harmony, knowledge and light as their most essential characteristics.¹²¹ It was a scheme in which churches were established as the antithesis of an *Unheimliche Welt* [strange world] that was disorienting and dislocating, and was characterized by obscurity, darkness and confusion.

Abbot Suger’s fascination with light in his reconstruction of St. Denis reflected Plato’s metaphorical “association of sunlight with goodness and knowledge”, which was developed and elaborated further by Neo-Platonists who “identified light with Ultimate Reality and the generating principle of the universe”, as the “means by which the intellect perceived truth”, as Swaan aptly notes.¹²² St.

¹¹⁸ Records concerning early Byzantine church architecture present a very different picture. Hiscock argues that “the quantity and availability of evidence from contemporary sources” suggest that church symbolism was at least as “important to people as its geometry or the liturgy performed in it.” Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door*, 67. It is possible, as Wilson argues, from Abbott Suger’s silence on portal sculptures and their symbolic value, that a dearth of writing on the symbolism of church features was “because their didactic value was too obvious to need any defence.” Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 34.

¹¹⁹ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 13.

¹²⁰ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 51.

¹²¹ Hiscock has argued that Platonic thought established the universe as a living creature with human beings a microcosm of it, with the interrelation of macrocosm and microcosm “elaborated by Maximus the Confessor, one of many who attest to its Christian acceptance.” Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door*, 129.

¹²² Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 48.

Augustine adopted this Neoplatonist thinking, establishing light as the agent through which the divine intellect informs the human mind.¹²³ As one of two formative and ordering principles of creation,¹²⁴ light was carefully and thoroughly incorporated into Gothic architecture as the primary medium and preeminent principle of dissemination whereby the divine acts on and through human minds. Though sharing many elements of style, in contrast to Romanesque churches, which tended to function as “scaffolds” for the exhibition of religious art, Gothic architecture transfigured these common elements, creating an interior structure that itself became ornamentation.¹²⁵ Thoroughly illumined by light, without any space in its interior devoid of light,¹²⁶ the medieval Gothic church established a clear narrative of value, community, structure and meaning, merging divine immanence with human aspiration, fixing all social relations. It was through churches as spatially identified sites the divine was imagined to occupy, and through which access to the divine was thought possible, that social and political responsibilities were enjoined on all. They were places through which religious power was harnessed to socio-political ends, setting parameters for all social behaviour and relations, establishing obligations, many of which were contested and others rejected outright by sixteenth-century Anabaptists.

¹²³ *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol. 1, Books 1-6, 38-39.

¹²⁴ According to Simson, the other ordering principle is harmony. Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 258.

¹²⁵ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 4-5. Grégoire, Moulin, and Oursel have, on the contrary, argued that Gothic architecture added “very little,” showing a strong preference for “the Romanesque formula,” which is described as “sufficient” “in itself and seems unsurpassed.” Grégoire, Moulin, and Oursel *The Monastic Realm*, 144.

¹²⁶ Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 4.

3.5 Architecture, Symbol, Order, Meaning and Power

Yi-Fu Tuan has observed that the built environment is never restricted to its pragmatic applications, always serving in the creation and maintenance of society, especially so in partially or marginally literate societies. As important facets of the built environment throughout the medieval and early modern periods, parish churches, abbey churches, monasteries, and cathedrals embodied specific cultural values shaping the dominant discourse, serving a pedagogical function as the primary text for the transmission of a particular tradition and the view of reality on which it was founded.¹²⁷ The built environment became the primary map orienting individuals through the cosmology it presented, the structures it perpetuated, and the systems it established. Tuan writes:

[T]he built environment clarifies social roles and relations. People know better who they are and how they ought to behave when the arena is humanly designed rather than nature's raw stage. Finally, architecture "teaches." A planned city, a monument, or even a simple dwelling can be a symbol of the cosmos. In the absence of books and formal education, architecture is a key to comprehending reality.¹²⁸

Medieval churches concretized value and constructed meaning, establishing structure and order during the medieval period through their embodiment and presentation of a comprehensive and virtually unchallenged cosmology. Medieval churches were heavily invested "metaphors and symbolic systems," functioning as "fundamental statements of power, authority, and privilege,"¹²⁹ according to Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg. They embodied the most basic values and important meanings of medieval culture. Value and meaning were established through ritualization, with

¹²⁷ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 112.

¹²⁸ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 102.

¹²⁹ Schulenburg, "Gender, Celibacy, and Proscriptions of Sacred Space," 185.

ritual practice responsible for developing and maintaining medieval sacrality and integrity.¹³⁰ With place and power, whether social or political, virtually coterminous during the medieval period, medieval churches were unquestionably identitarian, and therefore, never neutral. Whatever else medieval churches may have been, they were first and foremost places advancing particular representations of the divine, society, individuals and their inter-relation, existing for communal purposes.

Because the institutional Church operated primarily through the local parish church where its power and authority were diffused,¹³¹ sixteenth-century Anabaptist resistance typically developed at the local level where the power exercised against them was most keenly felt in its “capillary form,” where it was inserted into individual actions, attitudes, discourses, learning processes, and day-to-day lives.¹³² The Anabaptist rejection of the self-descriptions, ritual program and cultural entanglements of the medieval church required the development of their own ritual program, with the manufacture of a competing cosmology and conception of community becoming paramount, which were founded on their construction of a very different understanding of place.

3.6 Power and Medieval Attachments to Place

Thomas A. Brady has observed that the socially and politically conservative policies, practices and preferences of “urban nobles, big merchants, bankers, and rentiers” during the sixteenth century were founded on their “close sentimental and symbolic ties to the sacred buildings of the old faith, which had become, through their

¹³⁰ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 166.

¹³¹ Graves, “Social Space in the English Medieval Church,” 266-67.

¹³² Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 39.

altars, glass windows, and heraldic devices, virtual showcases of aristocratic family prestige.”¹³³ Brady’s comments point to the power medieval sacred places exercised over the imaginations of wealthy individuals and their families, with such persons developing particular understandings of place and corresponding strong attachments to place, and subsequently influencing social and political policy. With daily, weekly, and annual rituals, observances, festivals and ceremonies during the medieval period primarily associated with churches, it was in the cathedrals, abbeys and parish churches that ritualization most decisively displayed, shaped, and promoted individual and community life.¹³⁴ Through gifts of fabric and fittings, the medieval parish church came to be increasingly outfitted by secular patrons with a rising number of saints and sequences adorning church walls and windows commissioned at the bequest of lay persons.¹³⁵ Tomb monuments in floor slabs and in private chapels were permanent displays of wealth, prestige and piety, and functioned as individual and/or family advertisements in perpetuity.¹³⁶ They reflected and defined, organized and reinforced community identities and divisions based on wealth and status. Private chapels, built for the benefit of the wealthy, physically separated the rich from the poor and thereby initiated private cultus, presenting a substantial philosophical “problem” for an institutional medieval church claiming both unity and singularity of faith. Though private chapels remained under the supervision of church clergy, private worship presented a disconnect with the rhetoric of a single, united

¹³³ Thomas A. Brady, Jr. “In Search of the Godly City: The Domestication of Religion in the German Reformation,” in R. Po-Chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), 25.

¹³⁴ Raguin and Stanbury, *Women’s Space*, 1-2.

¹³⁵ Graves, “Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church,” 283.

¹³⁶ Raguin and Stanbury, *Women’s Space*, 2.

community when private chapel groupings were primarily identified by their non-church relations, such as guild relations, family ties, and economic associations. Baptismal fonts increasingly came to display “town wealth and armorials of prominent families, confessional pews localized the administration of penance, and elaborate porches formed backdrops to the ceremonials of churching and marriage” throughout the medieval period, as Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury have observed.¹³⁷ The use of the church for confession and commemoration firmly established it and its programs within a strategic trajectory that included trials on earth and in the afterlife, creating a dependent relation in its interactions.

In many medieval towns the cathedral was at the very centre of civic aspirations.¹³⁸ The increased interest in church construction, during the latter part of the medieval period, was largely the result of increasing civic prosperity and pride,¹³⁹ subtly shifting the socio-political focus from the cathedral to the parish church on the lay level, linking church construction with community building in the wealthy populace. Lay gifts, from baptismal veils to wall paintings and elaborate furnishings at times outstripped practical needs and available physical space,¹⁴⁰ with privileged patrons and influential families asserting themselves in the competition for prominence. Gifts incorporated into parish churches exerted power in the shaping of spatial and aesthetic qualities to such a degree that, over time, even control of church iconography passed into secular hands, with Christ and the Virgin Mary sharing

¹³⁷ Raguin and Stanbury, *Women's Space*, 2.

¹³⁸ Swaan, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 30.

¹³⁹ Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 224.

¹⁴⁰ Kieckhefer has observed that by the sixth century some churches had more than one altar and that by the ninth some had many altars. By the later medieval period continuing endowments multiplied altars where space was available. Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 79-80.

scenes with donors, their kin, and their associates.¹⁴¹ Christopher Wilson notes that from about 1300 to 1550 private funerary chapels and tombs, towers, porches, and elaborate interior furnishings proliferated, with churches often transformed through such extensions and embellishments, all serving to advertise the status and the piety of their respective donors.¹⁴² The segmentation of later medieval church interiors developed a more private and a more personal Eucharistic sacrament, and increasingly displayed the social status of patrons.¹⁴³ Medieval church architecture, including its alterations and additions, increasingly reflected the local ethos, and cannot be interpreted independently of it.¹⁴⁴ In the case of Chartres even the buttress piers had statuary niches carved out of them, capitalizing on every possible opportunity for housing statuary,¹⁴⁵ while providing opportunity for wealthy donors to advertise their piety and social standing.¹⁴⁶ By the sixteenth-century, many parish churches had become “riots of representation,” according to Richard Kieckhefer,¹⁴⁷ with images, glass work, screens, paintings, and fabrics frequently juxtaposing biblical scenes and devout patrons and developing important relations between them.

With places being neither inert nor neutral, spatial endowments become primary expressions of power, privilege and the declaration of authority, acting as metaphors establishing symbolic systems, embodying and asserting the principal values and meanings of an individual, family and/or cultural group.¹⁴⁸ Social identities and relations were constructed and maintained within the boundaries of a

¹⁴¹ Graves, “Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church,” 283.

¹⁴² Christopher, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 190.

¹⁴³ Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 36.

¹⁴⁴ Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 194.

¹⁴⁵ Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 129.

¹⁴⁶ Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 190.

¹⁴⁷ Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 167.

¹⁴⁸ Schulenburg, “Gender, Celibacy, and Proscriptions of Sacred Space,” 185.

church building representing a “domain of secular action defined by the Christian liturgy.”¹⁴⁹ Church interests and secular power co-existed in a constant dialectic of reciprocity that was both mutually beneficial and overtly competitive in nature.¹⁵⁰ With boundaries between professional guilds and religious confraternities often blurred in parish churches, as were distinctions between gifts for the poor and the promotion of wealthy patrons, intimate, complex and varied power relations were constantly negotiated within the precincts of medieval churches.¹⁵¹

The proximity of the powerful to the sacred was carefully regulated in the medieval church and was reinforced through displays, routes of access, private chapels, burial plots, and iconic representations. Proximity of place initiated controlled movement, signifying personal transformations, changes of status, and altered roles.¹⁵² Roberta Gilchrist has observed in her investigation of Norwich Cathedral Close that proximity to the sacred was determined for both the living and the dead, reflecting the power relations of the community:

The location of the sacred could be pinpointed at the high altar of the cathedral church: proximity to this sacred epicentre determined access for both living and the dead. This spatial hierarchy extended beyond the church and cemetery to the placement of the monastic buildings, with the most holy and corporate buildings of the convent placed closest to the high altar. [...] Power relations within the community danced around the pivotal point of the high altar. The position of the bishop was reflected in the private routes of access that he developed from his palace to the cathedral church: including a first-floor gallery connecting the nave and palace, and a private door in the north transept.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Graves, *Social Space in the English Medieval Church*, 268.

¹⁵⁰ Graves, *Social Space in the English Medieval Church*, 268.

¹⁵¹ Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 167.

¹⁵² Andås, “Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone,” 51.

¹⁵³ Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 244.

Space within medieval churches and especially within cathedrals reinforced a hierarchical structure not only with respect to persons and their social standing, but also with respect to space itself, delineating a distinction between sacred space and social space in which the latter was designated for “business and legal transactions, games and sport, gossip and sexual intrigue,” according to Gilchrist.¹⁵⁴

Understanding how space and power function within a particular place, such as a church, is dependent on determining how it is used, the type of responses it elicits, and the focus it establishes.¹⁵⁵ Within the medieval church, configurations of space were clearly marked through the nuances that their locations provided relative to each other as well as through the choice of building materials used in their construction.¹⁵⁶

3.7 Conclusion

The view of reality medieval churches embodied and propagated through their architectural features socialized individuals into particular ways of thinking and acting through the social, political and anthropological claims that were made. This built environment concretized value and meaning, and exercised considerable power throughout the medieval period in a direct and mnemonic capacity. Medieval churches set identity and constantly reinforced a particular understanding of who people are as individuals and what exactly their place and role is in the created world, perpetuating a cosmology that was influential in its effects, and comprehensive in its scope.¹⁵⁷ Medieval churches became the primary target of sixteenth-century Anabaptist resistance when the order and relations they established, and the totalizing

¹⁵⁴ See, Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 237.

¹⁵⁵ Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone*, 10.

¹⁵⁶ Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 251.

¹⁵⁷ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 112.

cosmology on which they were dependent proved dissatisfactory, with Anabaptist dissatisfaction concerning the integrity of their dwelling developing in opposition to medieval churches as the primary progenitors and principal producers of medieval society.

A spatial interpretation employing an architectural analytic proves crucial for aiding our understanding of the vehement denunciation of the medieval church by sixteenth-century Anabaptists such as Menno Simons. The cosmographical claims medieval churches made, the relations they set, and the values they asserted were emphatically rejected by Anabaptists such as Simons, with all their hostility directed at the church as a socially and politically strategic place. Simons wrote: “All properly believing parents are thus minded toward their children, that they would a hundred times rather see them jailed in a deep, dark dungeon for the sake of the Lord and His testimony than sitting with the deceiving priests in their idol church.”¹⁵⁸ Such an analytic can be helpful in contextualizing the adamant refusal of sixteenth-century Anabaptists to enter church precincts even when severely punished for it, as the following chapter details.

¹⁵⁸ Simons, Menno. *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons c.1496-1561*, translated by Leonard Verduin, edited by J.C. Wenger (Scottsdale; Kitchener: Herald Press, 1956), 386-87. [“dat alle rechtgeloovige vaders ende moeders alsoo neffens hare kinderen ge sint zijn dat syse hondertmael liever souden sien sitten om dat Woord Gods ende sijn getuyghenisse in einen diepen duysteren Kerker dan by den verleydischen Papen in der Afgoden kerken”.] Menno Symons, *Opera Omnia Theologica, of alle de Godtgeleerde Wercken van Menno Symons* (Joannes van Veen, tAmsterdam. Reprinted Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1989), 110.

4. The Anabaptist Refusal to Attend Church

Susan Karant-Nunn has argued that a reformation of ritual became necessary in early modern Europe when long-established ritual practices “did not keep up with or reflect social reality,” creating a disjuncture that required redressing.¹ Although the manufacture of a new ritual site is always an intriguing process through which functional gains may be secured, such constructions often suffer an ideological loss, according to J.Z. Smith.² While I do not accept Karant-Nunn’s assessment of the inherent structural deficiency of medieval Christianity, or her argument that medieval ritual practice “failed” because it did not keep pace with changing social conditions, and therefore, came in obvious need of reformation, my own argument in this chapter employs a similar sort of logic concerning sixteenth-century sacred place. I argue that early Anabaptists emerged as a direct reaction to the medieval church, its order, and its ritual practices, when these places, the ritual practices with which they were intertwined, the relations they established, the power they exercised, and the values they embodied did not satisfy or reflect Anabaptist desires and expectations.³ The

¹ Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 43. Eamon Duffy presents a very different assessment of the late medieval period: “Medieval Catholicism exerted an enormously strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination and the loyalty of the people up to the very moment of Reformation.” Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 3.

² Jonathan Z. Smith has argued: “For, from the standpoint of ritual, novelty may result in a functional gain, but, just as often, in an ideological loss. If the former allows the freedom to innovate, the latter may result in a lack of resonance. In terminology borrowed from linguistics, novelty may give clarity to elaborate syntagmatic relations at the cost of impoverishing associative relations.” Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 75. Smith’s argument assumes that ritual sites serve an ideological purpose in the first place.

³ The interpretive perspective adopted in this project is decidedly opposed to the one adopted by Claus-Peter Clasen, who has argued that numerous Anabaptists “withdrew from the churches quietly, intent only on following the teachings of Jesus in their own way.” Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525-1618 Switzerland, Austria, Moravia, South and Central Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 77. Clasen has framed Anabaptists as “deeply religious” and has assumed that Anabaptist anticlericalism was the cause of their desire for separation: “The Anabaptist movement is

Anabaptist desire for socio-political change came in the form of resistance to those places they associated with, and held primarily responsible for, the construction, maintenance, and perpetuation of medieval society. The testimony of several Anabaptists in Brixen on 17 June 1533 indicates that the ideological program with which the Church was identified, the relations it created, the privileged position it held in medieval society, and the cultural values it represented were all rejected.

4.1 Early Anabaptist Rejection of Church

The hostile attitudes of Gerdraut Pretzin and her daughter Elsbeth toward medieval churches are somewhat typical of early sixteenth-century Anabaptists, with Gerdraut and Elsbeth testifying that medieval churches are nothing more than a heap of stones and a grave for murderers, with church ritual practice described as an abomination [*greil*] and stench [*gestanckh*] before God.⁴ Anabaptists like Gerdraut and Elsbeth frequently referred to priests as blind leaders [*plinten fuerer*] who do not preach the gospel but tell lies in the church [*sagen kain evangeli in der kirchen sonder sy liegen*], with Cristoff Schuechnecht testifying on 15 October 1533 that only whores and knaves enter the “stone heap” [*stainhauffen*] as a result.⁵ Schuechnecht insisted that if he were to enter a church he too would become a sinner, revealing an understanding of place in which places have direct and decisive effects on people.⁶

Peter Riedemann has offered the historical context and ideological justification for the Anabaptist rejection of medieval churches, arguing that building

an indubitable revelation of how deeply some laymen distrusted the learned priest.” Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History*, 79.

⁴ *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 126.

⁵ *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 126.

⁶ *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 174.

Christian churches out of stone and wood began at a time when the Christian faith was being promoted and defended through coercive force. Pagan temples were aggressively transformed into churches during the Late Ancient Period, with Riedemann concluding that “church buildings originated through the instigation of the devil and were built up through sacrifice to devils.”⁷ Just as God had commanded the destruction of all “such places” in the Hebrew Bible, so Riedemann argued does God now require that these wicked places associated with false worship be destroyed, and not renovated and used properly!⁸ According to Michaeln von Zeittern and 12 associates, the unqualified rejection, if not the wholesale destruction, of all church buildings was absolutely necessary given that they were a primary source of idolatry and evil, and therefore, an affront to God.⁹ The examples provided are early indicators that the Anabaptist rejection of the medieval church assigned negative moral qualities to it, with Anabaptists contesting medieval churches through their identification as instruments of communal identity, and mechanisms of medieval power relations. Medieval churches were held primarily responsible for generating and maintaining the systems, structures, values and social formations affecting Anabaptists most immediately, intimately, and directly; these very sites became the nexus for the development of Anabaptist resistance.¹⁰

⁷ Peter Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, edited and translated by John J. Friesen (Waterloo: Herald Press, 1999), 124.

⁸ Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 124.

⁹ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, I, 484.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault has argued that resistance to power necessarily develops to the exercise of power and always at the very site of its exercise: “there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised”. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 142.

4.2 The Verantwortung

Many of Heinrich Bullinger's statements concerning sixteenth-century Anabaptists are acutely polemical, reflecting his obvious hostility for them, their actions, and their attitudes.¹¹ They must, therefore, be treated with care and caution. Yet, there are occasions when his account appears to accurately reflect a wider assessment, especially the attitude of sixteenth-century civil authorities. Bullinger's comments regarding the Anabaptist tract, "*Verantwortung etlicher die man Toeffernent vff die fragen warumb sy nit zu kirchen gangind*" [Answer of some who are called Baptists on the question why they do not go to church],¹² is one such example. Bullinger notes that though the Anabaptist tract is written in a "temperate" authorial voice, it poorly conceals what he calls "great bitterness toward church and government."¹³ Bullinger's statement reflects the position often adopted by sixteenth-century authorities who charged that a veneer of Anabaptist piety thinly veiled subversive socio-political interests. Though the *Verantwortung* is written as a sharp

¹¹ Heinrich Bullinger was the most prominent contemporaneous interpreter of sixteenth-century Anabaptists. He established the basic interpretive framework for scholars working in the traditions of state churches that lasted well into the twentieth century. George Huntston Williams argues that Bullinger was wrong about a good many things, but he was right about "apprehending it [Anabaptist movement] as something of a unitary entity despite its diversity." George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 2000), 1292. Williams notes that the thing "at work among all the radicals" unifying them in diversity was their relation to the established church. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 1294. Anabaptist historiography rarely acknowledges that diversity within the early Anabaptist movements went beyond variation within a given dimension. To put the matter another way, Anabaptist differences were differences of kind and not simply differences of degree. C. Arnold Snyder has staged an argument for a very different point of view, contending that "the 'baptizing movement' centred [sic] around, and grew out of, a core of fundamental, shared teachings." And that it was "a commitment of this core of theological and reforming principles that first identified Anabaptism as a religious reform movement." C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995), 6. Snyder's argument is founded on the assumption that Anabaptist elite speak for, accurately represent and correctly interpret the interests, concerns, thoughts, desires, and actions of lay Anabaptists.

¹² This particular Anabaptist tract was omitted from Bullinger's 1569 Low German edition published in Emden. See, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 45:1 (1971), 5.

¹³ ["*Hat es doch so vil bitterkeit insonders wider die Oberkeiten vñ Predicanten*"]. Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Widertoeufferen ursprung* (Zurich: Christoffel Froschower, 1561), 214.

criticism of evangelical preachers, the churches with which they were associated, and the power these places exercise over human subjectivity,¹⁴ this Anabaptist tract also opens to our view some of the expectations held by sixteenth-century Anabaptists in relation to place. The *Verantwortung* demonstrates a certain level of self-awareness concerning Anabaptist action; it acknowledges that nothing appears to bother sixteenth-century reformers quite as much as the Anabaptist refusal to attend church, regardless of whether those churches are Protestant or Catholic.

Bullinger's embedded reproduction of the *Verantwortung* is the only known copy of this Anabaptist tract, and the only known sixteenth-century Anabaptist document written exclusively as an explanation and defence of the early Anabaptist refusal to attend church.¹⁵ The *Verantwortung* is written as a contribution to the sixteenth-century discourse on "true Christian worship," and is narrowly focused as a strong reaction to the power and authority evangelical preachers and churches exercise over the conduct, theology, and conscience of their members. The text forms a bold and decided criticism to the manner in which individual subjectivity and identity are decisively shaped by churches through clergy, with the personal interests, gifts and abilities of church members systematically and forcibly subsumed, negated, appropriated and repressed. Church and preacher are accused of consistently failing to either leave, or actively create, the space required for unfettered self-expression,

¹⁴ Peter Riedemann's *Confession of Faith* [*Rechenschaft unserer Religion/ Leer und Glaubens*], like a good many other Anabaptist writings, complains about the role priests and churches play in "bullying" people into listening to their priests by means of "stocks, imprisonment in dungeons, torture, banishment and death." Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 126.

¹⁵ The tract can be found in, Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Widertoeufferen Ursprung* (Zurich: Christoffel Froschower, 1561). Although other Anabaptists wrote of their negative attitudes toward the medieval church, none produced a document devoted exclusively to such a theme.

personal creativity and self-realization, forcing the sixteenth-century Anabaptist, according to the tract's author, to "bury his talent within himself".

The author of the *Verantwortung* expresses strong dissatisfaction with the way in which the liturgy and order of service preclude personal contributions, "depriving and robbing" individual and congregation of "all right of judgement concerning matters of the soul." The tract insists, as many Anabaptists did throughout the sixteenth century, that every Christian is divinely gifted and empowered, with each individual possessing a song or message through divine endowment, and that these gifts need to be allowed public expression within the context of the Christian community at worship. With only one person speaking in the assembly, as was typically the case in Catholic and Protestant churches from the sixteenth-century Anabaptist point of view, the assembled congregation cannot possibly be held to be a spiritual congregation honestly functioning as the body of Christ. The Anabaptist understanding of what constitutes a spiritual congregation was often determined by the extent to which the medieval or Protestant churches permitted or created greater opportunities for individual participation, and therefore, an increased role in the decision-making process and exercise of power where it decisively affects both the individual and the larger community.

The *Verantwortung* appears to have been written in a self-conscious manner, with the author aware that a more widely diffused interpretive community, such as the Anabaptist "churches," in which "authority over the word of God" is not vested in a single person or office, will necessarily precipitate a broader power base for the community. As a strong response to the power that the medieval and evangelical

churches exercised over human subjectivity, the *Verantwortung* focuses considerable blame for undesirable conditions during the sixteenth century on the authority invested in clergy, as the most immediate channel for the exercise of socio-religious power. Anabaptist anticlerical attitudes, as they appear in the *Verantwortung*, indicate that Anabaptists were intimately bound up with the struggle for interpretive authority over the word of God, and therefore, for power over the moral and epistemological foundation of medieval society. Their struggle for interpretive authority was founded on what they frequently argued was a return to the pure primitive church, providing Anabaptists with an ideological framework for legitimating resistance and the construction of competing spatial understandings. The Anabaptist strategy of resistance demanded their critical engagement with established sacred places such as churches, and required their commitment to transforming the myths and ritual practices with which medieval churches were intimately associated and with which they were identified.¹⁶

Bullinger's assessment of the *Verantwortung* constructs it as deeply marked by social and political interests. His interpretation stands in sharp contrast to the rhetorical posture established by the text itself. The tract puts forward a "more modest" claim than Bullinger's interpretation of the document is prepared to allow, with the *Verantwortung* asserting single-mindedness on the part of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists it claims to represent, declaring Anabaptists to have "no other desire than to believe and live according to the pure and holy gospel."¹⁷ Anabaptist rhetoric described Anabaptist intentionality as nothing more than the essentially

¹⁶ Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 22.

¹⁷ [Nit anderst begaerend zû glouben und laeben dañ nach dem reinen heiligê Evangelio].

benign amelioration of the individual. The tract assures its readers that Anabaptists are not the ones opposed to the word of God, the claims the scriptures makes, or their implications for social order, with the tract establishing an intimate and virtually exclusive association between the scriptures and Anabaptists. The text boldly charges that it is those who act against Anabaptists who are the ones that disparage the word of God. The *Verantwortung* is rhetorically structured to challenge and decisively dispel any and all accusations of Anabaptist irreligiosity.

The *Verantwortung* assumes a rhetorical posture in which the separation of political and religious interests is held to be theoretically and practically possible. It assumes that religious concerns are substantively *sui generis*, different in nature, quality and effect when compared with political concerns; and secondly, it assumes that such a separation, once established, could be maintained without significant competition or cross-fertilization developing, with religious and political interests each retaining a form of fundamental independence. Though the *Verantwortung* assumes that the profound separation of religious concerns from political and/or other social interests is possible and absolutely necessary, it does so without establishing the philosophical or epistemological grounds for such a separation. However, the tract does demonstrate a definite awareness of the implications that such a separation would precipitate should it be implemented. The text recognizes that the sort of fundamental disentanglement and separation of religious and political interests being sought could not possibly be imagined without a corresponding profound alteration of sixteenth-century socio-political places affected. That is, a substantial religion/politics, church/state separation could not possibly be adopted and

implemented during the sixteenth century without inaugurating a fundamental change in the structure, order, identity and nature of sixteenth-century churches and the power relations they foster. No longer, for example, would civil authorities such as the council of Nuremberg, who tended to act and think as though salvation came under their purview, be authorized to make rulings on matters that were of “religious” interest.¹⁸ The frequent deliberations of Augsburg’s inner council [*der Dreizehn*] of 1527 and 1528 on matters such as baptism and re-baptism, (rituals strictly identified in relation to a particular conception of the church) would be held as presumptive and inappropriate within such a structure. Any lingering attitudes that suggest “religious issues” could be decided by a “political court” would be decisively challenged and structurally prohibited if an Anabaptist scheme were established.¹⁹

The interdependent structure of sixteenth-century socio-political life depended on the “preservation of government through religion,” according to Thomas A. Brady, and “was complicated by the bifurcation of authority into *sacerdotium* and *imperium*, corresponding to a division of its elites into lay rulers and clergy”.²⁰ The separation of “religion” and “government,” as Brady uses the terms, and the manner in which their relation was subsequently structured, proved to be an important ideological tool for creating, leveraging and legitimating governments, government action and church authority during the medieval and early modern periods, with such a state of affairs not philosophically objectionable to sixteenth-century Anabaptists,

¹⁸ Günther Vogler writes: “The politics of the [Nuremberg] city council reflected the idea that salvation was not only a personal matter but came under magisterial competence as well. The common good that the council saw itself obliged to promote was linked to the question of religious allegiance.” Günther Vogler, “Imperial City Nuremberg,” in R. Po-Chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), 46.

¹⁹ *Dreizehn*, folio 120(b), 157(b), 15(b), 181(b), 210(b), 241.

²⁰ Thomas A. Brady, “In Search of the Godly City,” in R. Po-chia Hsia, ed., *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535-1618* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1984), 15.

some of their statements to the contrary notwithstanding. In fact, the argument can easily be made that sixteenth-century Anabaptists tended to trace the exercise of power and all human authority to a divine source, with their understanding of power and its operation in their lives not allowing for the possibility of the institution of secular authority outside the competency of “religion.” Though contemporary historians often follow the lead of sixteenth-century persons and speak, not only in terms of a bifurcation of authority in the sixteenth century, but also of a corresponding bifurcation of religion and politics, it is questionable whether such a binary is heuristically or pedagogically useful in Anabaptist studies when questions of blasphemy, sectarianism, and religious error were consistently understood in relation to civil power and authority. Rebaptism, for example, was legislated against and punished in the sixteenth century by civil authorities, with religious authorities often, but not always, approving and encouraging the punitive practices of civil power.²¹ The charges, trials, and convictions of sixteenth-century Anabaptists were generally “relocated” from a “religious court of appeal” to the realm of secular rule,²² with Anabaptist crimes generally described as overt resistance to civil authority and the unacceptable contravention of divinely instituted social norms. Anabaptist violations of civil law, and not their heterodox views, were cited as the principal reason for the prosecution of sixteenth-century Anabaptists, and were submitted as the justification for their prosecution and punishment in the court records. Anabaptist resistance to authority was recognized as focused on culturally established sacred

²¹ *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 226. Anabaptists were punished because of what they had done, and because of who they were. Prosecution was concerned with their actions and not their identity.

²² Vogler, “Imperial City Nuremberg,” 44.

places, church order, and church practice, all of which functioned as important mechanisms in the maintenance of medieval social order and political structure, with the power exercised against Anabaptists through churches being at the very centre of Anabaptist concerns.²³

4.3 Keßler's Sabbata, St. Gallen Anabaptists, and Place

According to Johannes Keßler, on Saturday 18 March 1525 a large number of people assembled at the St. Gallen market in the weaver's shop²⁴ for the purpose of asking Wolfgang Ulimann²⁵ to assist Zili the schoolmaster with a lesson directed at investigating the "foundation of salvation."²⁶ Ulimann purportedly strode into the assembly and declared that the heavenly father had instructed him not to preach God's word from the chancel in any church, as never yet had a truthful word or honest question been spoken there.²⁷ Ulimann openly and forcibly declared the

²³ The Hutterite Chronicle provides a slightly different explanation for the Anabaptist boycott of sixteenth-century churches. It states that all churches/ temples are of "heathen origin" and the product of human ingenuity, and must therefore be avoided. Rudolf Wolkan, *Das Große Geschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brüder* (Macleod, AB; and Vienna: 1923), 276.

²⁴ Of the craftsmen and tradesmen who became Anabaptist during the early sixteenth-century, weavers appear in the majority. Clasen argues that "textile production occupied the largest number of craftsmen in sixteenth-century Germany", resulting in a corresponding large number of Anabaptist weavers. Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History*, Appendix C, 432-36. In Augsburg, records show that there were about 61 weavers among the 403 craftsmen registered there. Although they formed the largest single group of craftsmen in the city they only comprised about 15 percent of the Anabaptist population.

²⁵ According to Johannes Keßler, Ulimann, a former monk turned burgher, was baptized by Konrad Grebel. He was not simply baptized with water from a bowl but immersed in the Rhine River while entirely naked. Johannes Keßler, *Johannes Keßler's "Sabbata."* *St. Galler Reformationschronik 1523-1539*, ed. by Traugott Schieß (Leipzig: Verein for Reformationsgeschichte), 42.

²⁶ Keßler, *Sabbata*, 43.

²⁷ Some of Ulimann's frustration may be directly attributed to the action of church authorities, who locked Ulimann and others out of the St. Mangen church when they attempted to transfer a home-based conventicle to St. Mangen after the home in which they were meeting became too small. On three separate occasions Ulimann was forced to teach his lesson to the assembled company outside St. Mangen when the doors were locked. On one particularly cold December, violent indignation [*heftiger Unwille*] was expressed by many that no room can be found for the study of God's Word when drinkers, eaters, gamblers and whores all have their own shops. Keßler, *Sabbata*, 34. In 1529, many images were removed from the church creating a larger space, according to Keßler, for listening to preaching. The liturgical shift from mass to preaching as the centre of worship required a corresponding shift in interior design. Keßler, *Sabbata*, 80.

marketplace to be the divinely appointed and preferred place for proclaiming the gospel message God had revealed to him. Ulimann's testimony and subsequent statements horrified a large number of those assembled [*entsetzen sich viele Brüder*], prompting a lively discussion and a series of pointed questions. The first question put to Ulimann, according to Keßler, contains an explanation in which Ulimann is informed, or possibly the assembly reminded, that for a period of more than a year serious lobbying efforts had been expended in St. Gallen in an effort to convince the authorities to surrender, or to otherwise give up [*Überlassung*] that area in the church traditionally set aside for the lesson.²⁸ The speaker expressed his fear that Ulimann's shunning of the church and his practice of teaching in the weaver's shop at the market, including his strong encouragement this morning for others to follow his example, would have a negative effect; it would compromise the potentially positive gains of their earlier, sustained lobbying efforts.²⁹ It was argued that a complete abandonment of the struggle for control of a pedagogically important place within the local church precincts, and a willingness to remain content with the utilization of "unusual places" [*ungewöhnliche Orte*] for their lessons and discussions, would be unacceptably wasteful; their time and efforts spent lobbying during the past year would have been entirely wasted through such a decision. Moreover, the speaker argued that all earlier appeals for space within the church would appear frivolous [*leichtfertig*] to the authorities and the larger community,³⁰ resulting in their

²⁸ Keßler, *Sabbata*, 43.

²⁹ Keßler, *Sabbata*, 43.

³⁰ Lyndal Roper has argued that honour was an essential component of any sixteenth-century guild's self-understanding. She has argued that "the language of honour" was "axiomatic" to their "sense of corporate identity", which provides a broader context for sensitivity to the importance of any decisions regarding an unorthodox meeting place, and how such an action could be perceived by others. She claims that guild honour "had to be demonstrated and displayed in public form," making secretive

immediate marginalization and the dismissal of their request, precluding the possibility of any significant future success.³¹

A second unnamed person also openly took issue with Ulimann's proposal. He charged Ulimann with the use of "strange and unclear words" that were devoid of any biblical mandate, and with failing to draw on any form of apostolic precedent or biblical principle.³² He strongly disagreed with Ulimann's suggestion that the church must be abandoned as an entirely unsuitable place, arguing that the apostles never compelled anyone to assemble at a particular place, or even a specific type of place. In this individual's reading of the bible, the apostles established an important precedent in which the apostles and their followers proved to be content with any place that afforded participants relative peace and security, irrespective of whether such a place was a temple or a synagogue. The apostles were always willingly to assemble, irrespective of whether such an assembly took place before the devil or the holy saints. The speaker claimed that it was through the power of the apostles' teaching that devils, images, and idols in these places had been driven out. It was argued that the undesirable qualities of a given place were always expunged, and more suitable places always created, through persistence and perseverance in teaching, and not by being discriminating or selective about where such teaching took place.

Johannes Keßler's account of Ulimann's lesson on the "foundation of salvation" in the weaver's shop, including Keßler's documentation of the responses it

meetings highly problematic, both morally and ideologically. Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 36-38.

³¹ Keßler, *Sabbata*, 43.

³² Keßler, *Sabbata*, 43.

drew, demonstrate that Ulimann's lesson made, or was understood to have made, certain strong associations between the possibility of salvation and particular places. The ensuing discussion and questions on that particular Saturday morning reveal that the topic was of intense interest to those gathered, and that it was not an altogether new topic for dialogue to St. Gallen, with the discussion having a history that predated this particular lesson of Ulimann's in March 1525 by at least one year. Since at least 1524, according to at least one of the participants, religious preferences and theological issues in St. Gallen, including concerns for the "true" preaching of the gospel and the foundation of salvation, were being articulated in direct relation to control over a particular place, with those preferences determining, in 1525, where one would or would not participate in worship, teaching, and discussion. Keßler's account of the lesson and discussion in the weaver's shop demonstrates that the struggle for control of sacred space, the power it exercises, the relations it generates, and the links to community it establishes were of considerable interest, and that these concerns developed prior to any re-baptisms in St. Gallen. Marketplace discussions regarding place, salvation, church use, and their interrelation predate Anabaptist baptisms in St. Gallen. It was disagreement over the best strategy to be adopted for gaining control of sacred space that dominated this particular discussion, with dialogue concerning the sort of places that could or could not be considered suitable for assembly, taking the attitudes and perceptions of both the larger community and the civil authorities into careful consideration, assuming primary focus.

Ulimann's argument was ultimately successful, according to Keßler's account, by virtue of his persistence and the persuasive appeal of the argument itself.

Both factors are attributed with responsibility for convincing the majority of those assembled on the 18 March 1525 to take further action despite the objections, questions, and concerns raised by some of those present. Many that participated declared themselves entirely prepared to have nothing further to do with churches, committing themselves to assembling exclusively in houses, hills and meadows. They insisted that these latter places were eminently suitable for nurturing the true Christian church.³³ The preference for culturally unusual places for Christian assembly was so strong on this Saturday morning that Ulimann and his followers are described as completely uninterested in hearing any other dissenting voices, or learning anything about the evangelical church in St. Gallen. According to Keßler, Ulimann and his followers closely identified the “true” Christian church with themselves, and the evangelical church, like the Catholic Church, with the heathen. Those who gathered in the weaver’s shop articulated differences in March of 1525 in terms of the places with which they as individuals were associated or disassociated; with the place where one was prepared to meet publicly set as crucially important and necessarily identitarian. Keßler notes, at the conclusion of this particular narrative, that the March 1525 meeting concerning place and its relation to “the foundation of salvation” marked the very first split of the evangelical church at St. Gallen. By Keßler’s account of the weaver’s room lesson the evangelical split in St. Gallen had everything to do with competing understandings of place and little if anything to do with theological differences or the rate at which reform was proceeding in St. Gallen.

³³ Keßler, *Sabbata*, 43. A little more than a week later, Hippolytus Polt, an accomplished Anabaptist orator, was invited to St. Gallen and was brought before the city gate to Berlisberg where a large group assembled. The choice of speaker and venue, according to Keßler, were intended to function as damage control after Ulimann’s provocative lesson a week earlier and the controversy it created.

Though places are a biological necessity for all animals including human beings, humanly constructed places such as churches transcend biological need, addressing social necessities and psychological desires.³⁴ Socially and psychologically important places can assume proportionately large values, and are always culturally distinct, effectively defining a temporal community. Though differing from one another, these places act as microcosms reflecting broader cultural patterns while establishing social order.³⁵ As demonstrated by my brief examination of selected portions of the *Verantwortung* and Keßler's *Sabbata*, culturally distinct places and the role they played were of primary concern to early Anabaptists, their chroniclers, and their detractors from the very beginning of the Anabaptist movements in these areas. Though early discussions in St. Gallen regarding control of sacred space predate Anabaptist ritual practice, participants in the weaver's room discussion recognized that sacred places are always closely tied to ritual practice and broader cultural patterns, and that it is through a change in place that difference is established and cultural patterns maintained or disrupted.³⁶

Because places such as medieval churches were decisively linked with salvation during the medieval period, their contestation logically involved discussions concerning the "foundation of salvation." Anabaptist contestations of place and their development of a peculiar ritual practice were dependent on their construction of an alternate understanding of salvation in relation to place, even if these new understandings denied a direct correlation between the innovative ritual and

³⁴ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977, 2001), 58.

³⁵ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces (1967) Heterotopias," translated by Jay Miskowicz, *Diacritics*, (1986).

³⁶ Smith, *To Take Place*, 105.

salvation. The innovative spatial understandings Anabaptist ritual practice established effected an ideological and epistemological separation through the disassociation of salvation with the established church. With places brought into existence and assigned their meaning through ritual practice, places are made particularly visible through competition or in conflict with other places.³⁷ In both the *Verantwortung* and the *Sabbata* the strict avoidance of churches was suggested as absolutely necessary for ensuring personal access to God's revelation. The avoidance of the established church secured the possibility of salvation for the Anabaptist community, identifying the "true" Christian church through its disassociation with a particular place.

The contributions that the *Verantwortung* and the *Sabbata* make to the sixteenth-century discourse of place effectively demonstrate that no place exists in isolation from other places, immune to competition and/or contestation. As the conflict these texts describe, and in which they participate shows, all places exist in relation to other places such that the socio-political structures of power with which places are intimately and inextricably associated always exist in tension with all other places, regardless of whether the place is phenomenologically "real," ideal, or imaginary.³⁸ As the weaver-shop discussion regarding the "foundation of salvation" made clear, salvation and place were related in such a way that the identity and value of a given place were intimately bound up with the needs, aspirations, and functional rhythms of individual and group life.³⁹ A letter of 16 December 1527 from the Zurich council addressed to the *Landvögte* [Bailiff] of Kyburg, Grüningen, Regensberg and Greifensee and the *Unterlandvögte* [assistant Bailiff] of Bülach, Neuamt, Regensdorf,

³⁷ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 178.

³⁸ See, Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."

³⁹ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 178.

Höngg, Rümlang and Zollikon underscores this point when it declares that various persons, male and female, young and old have demonstrated a strong preference for meeting in secret places [*heimliche ort*], street corners [*winckel*], and certain houses [*sondere hüßer*] where they are known to discuss a range of topics rather than go to their parish churches (*pfarkilchen*) to hear God's word.⁴⁰ The *winkel*, like the weaver's shop, proved to be a place clearly opposed to and functioning in competition with the parish church. These places permitted the investigation of alternative spatial understandings and the development of a corresponding range of social relations.

The broad authority and sanction of the sixteenth-century parish church were established and continually reinforced through its liturgy and ritual practice,⁴¹ making church liturgies and ritual practices prime sites for Anabaptist resistance. The diffusion of power through churches was place-dependent, with early Anabaptist resistance to that exercise of power centred on the construction and observance of competing liturgical and ritual practices. The early Anabaptist refusal to attend church (as it was laid out in the *Verantwortung*), and their contestation of the meanings and authority of the established church (as described in the *Sabbata*), were focused on resisting what Foucault has termed the "capillary form" of power. Some Anabaptists and several sixteenth-century authorities referred to Anabaptist meetings as synagogues [*synagog*],⁴² with the usage of such a term indicating that the activity pursued was being privileged over the location chosen for it. The choice of homes or

⁴⁰ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 265.

⁴¹ C. Pamela Graves, "Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church," in *Anthony Giddens: Critical Assessments*, vol. 4, Christopher G. A. Bryant and David Jary, eds. (London: Routledge, 1997), 268.

⁴² *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 150.

remote locations for meeting developed alternative social norms and displaced the medieval church, challenging its culturally privileged position through the declaration that whatever place had been designated the “synagogue” was the “true Christian Church” once Anabaptist participants were present. Anabaptists would pray, speak, read, and engage their own ritual program according to the means and knowledge available to them.⁴³ Hence, it is through an analysis of the Anabaptist contestation and rejection of all sixteenth-century churches, whether Catholic or Protestant, including their symbolic import, the values they propagated, and the power they exercised, that a better understanding of what did, or did not, constitute the sort of “meaningful” and “satisfying” places that sixteenth-century Anabaptists sought becomes possible.⁴⁴

4.4 Church Attendance and Political Obedience

On 20 August 1527, King Ferdinand issued a mandate broadly addressed to all nobles and all sixteenth-century authorities, making church attendance mandatory for all persons living within his territories and under his authority,⁴⁵ regardless of their status or station in society.⁴⁶ The mandate established a minimum standard for church attendance, requiring everyone to attend at least one mass and one confession

⁴³ David M. Giltz has made very similar comments regarding the habits and practices of Spanish Crypto-Jews during the medieval period. David M. Giltz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 328-329.

⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that when the Anabaptist Konrad Grebel appeared in the weaver’s shop eight days later he refused to entertain any questions and would not permit contrary opinions to be presented. Grebel’s refusal to dispute with anyone on the matter of baptism in the weaver’s shop resulted in more than one person present finding his conduct highly objectionable. A number of those present insisted that Grebel had a moral obligation to entertain all questions and a social responsibility to respond to every opposing or competing position. Grebel’s refusal to entertain questions was interpreted by some present as contempt for the “democratic” nature of the proceedings, ending debate on a topic before it had begun. Keßler *Sabbata*, 43.

⁴⁵ Ferdinand issued at least eleven decrees against Anabaptists between August 1527 and April 1534. Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 188.

⁴⁶ *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 3-12.

annually.⁴⁷ Subjects failing to comply with this minimum requirement for participation could face exile, imprisonment, and the confiscation or destruction of their homes and other goods.⁴⁸ The imprisonment being threatened was a punishment reserved during the early modern period for those who broke the peace, and for those who acted outside the accepted bounds of community. Imprisonment formalized the separation of the convicted from their former community, while reinforcing the obligations and responsibilities of the accused to the laws and customs of the community. Community legislation and enforcement defined acceptable conduct by its segregation of offenders. Imprisonment was a mechanism whereby the convicted remain members of the community despite their separation from it, whereas with exile the convicted ceased to be members of the community. Innsbruck authorities determined in 1536 that all persons who failed to go to confession and/or receive the sacrament at Easter had violated long-standing tradition and communal norms and would spend several days in jail, after which they would be released with a strong warning.⁴⁹ Ferdinand's mandate of 1527 calls to remembrance the Edict of Worms (1521), the Regensburg Ordnung (1524) and several earlier orders as a method of strategically and rhetorically contextualizing the present mandate. It establishes a form of continuity with the past in which the past functions as normative practice,

⁴⁷ *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 3-12.

⁴⁸ *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 8. Zurich council determined in March of 1525, prior to Ferdinand's decree, that all persons who allow themselves to be rebaptized are to be exiled. Approximately one year later town council revised its decision and determined that "imprisonment was a more effective measure than banishment", according to Clasen. *Anabaptism: A Social History*, 386. Court judgments in subsequent years reveal a broad pattern in which convicted "foreign" Anabaptists are expelled, and resident Anabaptists imprisoned. Some 50 Anabaptists were expelled from Augsburg in 1527 and similar action was taken in 1531, 1533, 1545, 1546, and 1550. J. Jeffery Tyler, "Refugees and Reform: Banishment and Exile in Early Modern Augsburg," in Robert J. Bast and Andrew C. Gow, eds., *Continuity and Change: The Harvest of Late Medieval and Reformation History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 96.

⁴⁹ *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 320. Prisoners were burdened with the cost of their own imprisonment, which generally had to be paid prior to their release.

and the context and impetus for the appearance of the 1527 mandate. The mandate follows and claims to be consistent with what it describes as an important precedent set by none other than the Emperor Charles, who, as the Christian head (*christenlichem haubt*) and protector of the holy Christian faith (*beschirmer unsers haylwertigen glaubens*) purportedly set both the pattern and theme for Ferdinand's mandate. The mandate of 1527 notes that earlier Imperial directives were designed to protect against the progress and development of sectarian traditions in Christian territories.⁵⁰ It states that severe punishments are to be levied against all subjects who contravene the provisions of the mandate, but especially harsh judgements are to be levelled against the leaders of those who set themselves against the "holy Christian faith" and the order of the established church.⁵¹ To some degree the mandate permitted punishments to be tailored to the specific nature and circumstances of the crime that was committed, but as a general principle, those convicted of failing to attend church forfeited their goods, property, and lives. Ferdinand's mandate of 1527 contained the proviso that it was to be read and promulgated from every pulpit within his jurisdiction during important events; at minimum, it was to be read during wedding festivals, at Easter, and at Christmas for a minimum period of ten consecutive years.⁵²

To the chagrin of Ferdinand, very rarely did un-recanted sixteenth-century Anabaptists attend church services or participate in its ritual program after becoming Anabaptist despite the proliferation of mandates against them. Their adamant and sustained refusal to participate in a traditionally acceptable, culturally prescribed and

⁵⁰ *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 3.

⁵¹ *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 7.

⁵² *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 12.

legally required practice was not only of intense interest to Ferdinand. It was of substantial interest to virtually all early reformers, including the reformer of Strasbourg, Martin Bucer, and to civil rulers at various levels, including the relatively tolerant Philip of Hesse. The Anabaptist refusal to attend church, and their denigration of established ritual practice, appears to have deeply offended most evangelical reformers, who were often eager to project harmony and present unity to civil authorities, rather than division, as an important defining characteristic of the evangelical reform movement. The Anabaptist refusal to participate in church services and practices, and their insistence on developing a competing ritual program, quickly became a catalyst for the implementation of a host of official policies and programs against Anabaptists in virtually all jurisdictions, whether Catholic, Protestant, German, Swiss, or Dutch, including the comparatively tolerant area under the control of Philip of Hesse.⁵³ Through the assistance of Martin Bucer, Philip adopted measures for increased church discipline, developed a formula for improved consultations, and installed the practice of confirmation as part of a concentrated campaign to lead sixteenth-century Anabaptists back into the established churches.⁵⁴ The tolerance demonstrated by Philip toward Anabaptists did not denigrate church attendance, it did not reflect an ambivalent attitude toward church ritualization, nor

⁵³ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 30-40. Imprisonment and exile were the most severe punishments meted out by Philipp of Hesse to any Anabaptist, even when they proved “stubborn” and policy statements such as the edict of Speyer and authorities such as Elector Johann Friedrich of Saxony demanded capital punishment. Philipp of Hesse noted in 1566 that the “Anabaptist sect” had been “quiet and calm” for a considerable period of time in his territories, precluding the need for taking any further action against them. *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 30.

⁵⁴ Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church: A Study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (Boston: Star King Press, 1958), 35-36. Williams argues that Anabaptist preachers were so effective in Zurich “that the town churches were drained of their attendants, divided in their counsel, and deprived of alms for the sustenance of the poor.” In an effort to curb the “drain” and reinforce their support for the churches, Zurich town council determined in May 1525 that all “preaching and disputing take place *in the churches*, and that there be no more gatherings in or around the town.” Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 224.

did it extend to the point of permitting Anabaptists to forego church attendance; it was a self-conscious, carefully researched, and calculated strategy focused on bringing Anabaptists back into the established church by addressing at least some of their immediate concerns. Anabaptists in Hesse were deliberately set as targets for reincorporation, with the policy and program designed by Philipp of Hesse carefully tailored, and consciously developed, to meet that end. There is some evidence that the efforts of Philipp, directed at drawing Anabaptists who did not immigrate to Moravia back into the church, were successful. Peter Riedemann's letter of 1539 to Hans Amon, an elder of the Anabaptist congregation in Hesse, laments that so many Anabaptists had returned to the established church, with Riedemann admonishing remaining members to stay strong and not yield as so many already had. Though sixteenth-century Anabaptists in Hesse typically enjoyed a greater measure of freedom under Philip's rule than did Anabaptists in most other territories and states, their refusal to attend church remained as serious a problem for Philip as it did for other sixteenth-century authorities. The importance of the issue is reflected in the agenda that was set for a 1538 disputation between Anabaptists and Martin Bucer, in which the very first question to which Anabaptists were asked to respond concerned their deliberate separation from the church and community.⁵⁵ Bucer's letters to the landgrave following the disputation note that Anabaptists wished to maintain a profound separation from the church even though they were severely questioned regarding it.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *QZGT, Hesse*, 214-215.

⁵⁶ *QZGT, Hesse*, 237-242.

Though often severe, the threat and very real possibility of punishment for non-attendance proved an inadequate motivator for many sixteenth-century Anabaptists who continued to refuse to go to church. In 1528 authorities in Innsbruck complained to Ferdinand that few people came to church in adverse weather and that those peasants that did come would rarely stay for very long, indicating, perhaps, that peasants complied with the expectations of authorities but only minimally in order to avoid possible punishment.⁵⁷ Persons such as Appolonia Gluet confessed during her interrogation and recantation that she had willingly and knowingly set herself against the commendable order and usage of the holy Christian church, Imperial majesty, and princely mandate by refusing to attend church services, and by getting re-baptized. She admitted during her interrogation that she was guilty of a capital offence and deserving of harsh punishment. Sixteenth-century Anabaptists such as Gluet, who were accused of violating church ordinances, quickly recognized that it was entirely impossible to offend against the established church without offending against civil rule, so closely were the two tied together. With the medieval Church widely held to be representative of medieval society, any threat directed against the Church was also a threat to society.⁵⁸ Appolonia Gluet's promise to be "bound to her parish church," recognized the parish church as the primary site for the assurance of social unity, and the principal place for the propagation and enforcement of political directives. The trial of Gluet and other Anabaptists reveal that civil power was intimately connected to, exercised through, and dependent on sacred places such as medieval churches. In

⁵⁷ *QZGT, Osterreich, II, 73-75.*

⁵⁸ Robert B. Ekelund Jr., Robert F. Hébert, Robert D. Tollison, Gary M. Anderson, and Audrey B. Davidson, *Sacred Trust: The Medieval Church as an Economic Firm* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 179.

the interests of self-preservation, medieval civil governments were required to protect the medieval church and the regime of truth it produced in which power and right were interdependent and mutually supportive. The alignment of truth and right was specific to the pre-determined needs of medieval society, acting as the foundation for the construction and maintenance of the medieval societal order, on which the further exercise of power by religious and civil authorities remained strictly dependent.

Anabaptist recantations affirmed the rightness of the power exercised against them, and reinforced the normative quality of the existing social order, with all Anabaptist recantations and (even their refusal to recant), functioning as assenting or dissenting actions, and not as the promulgation of a particular theological position. According to civil authorities, errant behaviour [*unrecht gethan zu haben*] and not heterodoxy was typically the problem with Anabaptists.⁵⁹ To be a good Christian was to go to church, and comply with all church ordinances and practices. To go to church was to be an obedient citizen, with good Christian and true citizen the two complimentary facets of a single subject.

⁵⁹ A striking parallel is found in the correspondence of Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Secundus) with the Emperor Trajan. Pliny's judgements of acquittal and condemnation against early Christians did not rest on the "theological" statements of accused Christians but on what a suspected Christian did, or would not do. If, for example, the accused "invoked the gods and did reverence with incense and wine to your [Trajan's] image" Pliny was assured that such persons were not Christians. It was the peculiar ritual behaviour ["disgraceful practices"] of early Christians and their "secret assemblies" that caught Pliny's attention and earned his disfavour. Like sixteenth-century authorities, Pliny responded to what he determined was a "perverse superstition" (he also uses the terms "madness," "fault," and "error") by placing a ban on all private associations. The issue for Pliny, as it was for sixteenth-century authorities, was a matter of political allegiance, loyalty, and social order. F.F. Bruce, *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 26. Pliny notes that the threat of prosecution for practicing Christianity resulted in a return to the "former religion. He writes: "[The] "temples, which had been wellnigh abandoned, are beginning to be frequented again; and the customary services, which had been neglected for a long time, are beginning to be resumed". Bruce, *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*, 27. At the time of Pliny's governorship, the temples were once again "neglected."

On 3 February 1535, an Imperial Placard was issued in Friesland after it had come to the Emperor's attention that many of his subjects were continuing to stay away from the church, its services and its ceremonies. Such persons are described as openly demonstrating their contempt for the church through their obstinate unwillingness to enter churches at customary times for customary purposes in contravention of long established tradition, and in complete disregard of pre-existing legislation.⁶⁰ These persons are identified as publicly disobedient (*overhoorich*) subjects belonging, according to the placard, to the "sect of re-baptizers," and are, therefore, to be fined and/ or punished commensurate with the level of their disobedience.⁶¹ A month later, on 9 March 1535, yet another imperial placard was issued out of concern that Anabaptists were continuing to stay out of the church, and were continuing to ignore the earlier placard, with Anabaptists preferring to assemble in secret places, in homes, and other "unusual" places throughout the land.⁶² Anabaptist resistance to directives legislating church attendance, and through it resistance to the message being communicated there would result in imprisonment, the forfeiture of house, and the confiscation of other goods as determined by the authorities.⁶³ To meet secretly in houses and outdoor places was "contrary to Christian order," from a civil authority viewpoint.⁶⁴ In some territories and in some cases Anabaptists were forced by beadles to attend church services.⁶⁵ Medieval churches established order, with communication in churches strictly principled,

⁶⁰ *DAN*, vol. 1, 20.

⁶¹ *DAN*, vol. 1, 21.

⁶² *DAN*, vol. 1, 25-26.

⁶³ *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 8.

⁶⁴ *QZGT, Osterreich*, II, 259.

⁶⁵ Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History*, 402.

carefully controlled, and hierarchically determined. In “unusual places” communication was not structured by these same boundaries and may permit the development of disorder through its enablement of other forms of social intercourse, including the investigation of competing understandings of community. It was in hidden places that unofficial communication circumvented social control and could escape immediate suppression. Whether acceptable or not to civil authorities, these other places and the discourse they developed represented the exercise of power and the development of knowledge, and established their own form of right.

In sharp contrast to the manner in which civil authorities at all levels of government, and in all territories, tended to speak of the church with deference as “the holy Christian church,”⁶⁶ sixteenth-century Anabaptists tended to deride the established church, rejecting exactly that which civil authorities were at pains to protect, support, and promote.⁶⁷ Despite the prominence and proliferation of imperial and royal mandates, and despite the very real threat of severe punishment they carried for any violations,⁶⁸ Anthonys Koet admitted in 1538 that he had not been to confession or mass for quite a number of years.⁶⁹ Similarly, in 1545 Symon Frericxzoon and in 1547 Wolle Tiebbezoon confessed that they had not been to church for many years in knowing contravention of the demands of the church, and

⁶⁶ See, *DAN*, I, 5, 11, and 13. Imperial and Royal mandates typically use the formulation *heiligen christenlichen kirchen* when referring to the sixteenth-century Catholic Church. See also, Ferdinand’s mandate of August 1527, *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 6.

⁶⁷ See for example, Anabaptist attitudes in Friesland, *DAN*, I, 13.

⁶⁸ The attitudes of sixteenth-century civil authorities often followed a pattern set much earlier by Pope Benedict XII. Like Benedict they seemed to think that mandates and authoritative decisions must necessarily be reinforced with the fear of penalties, and that penalties could be heaped onto penalties until compliance was secured. Benedict appeared convinced that sustained defiance or disobedience were simply not possible when an “additional multitude of penalties” could be imposed and force even the most recalcitrant to “bend.” Martin Heale, trans. *Monasticism in Late Medieval England, c. 1300-1535* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2009), 147-48.

⁶⁹ *DAN*, I, 54.

the provisions of royal mandates. Frericxzoon and Tiebbezoon declared their steadfast unwillingness to attend any church, openly rejecting by their earlier absence and their present court testimony the established social order and constitution of the established church.⁷⁰ The early Anabaptist refusal to attend church was sometimes enacted in dramatic fashion, as a 1534 letter from Michael Meixner of Steirmark to Cardinal Bernhard, bishop of Trent, testifies. The letter advises that several convicted Anabaptists in Meixner's jurisdiction have been imprisoned for the better part of three years.⁷¹ When these same Anabaptists were taken to a chapel as an educational, proactive, and not as a punitive measure, so that they might benefit from the preaching of a sermon, these Anabaptists absolutely refused to be "brought into the chapel."⁷² Meixner's report states that despite the best efforts of those responsible for their "re-education" via a sermon, these Anabaptists simply could not be forced to enter the chapel. They obstinately remained just outside the church, standing directly across the threshold, steadfastly unwilling to enter what they described as a house of idols.⁷³ Equally determined Anabaptists in St. Gallen declared in 1525 that they would rather die than attend church after authorities determined that all preaching

⁷⁰ DAN, I, 74, 80.

⁷¹ QZGT, *Osterreich*, I, 276.

⁷² [*khainer hinein bryngen lassen*].

⁷³ [*sy wollten in das gotzenhaus khaineswegs geen*]. QZGT, *Osterreich*, I, 276. Anabaptists frequently claimed that medieval churches were temples of idols. Interestingly, the charge that a recently built forest chapel was a "house of idolatry" was leveled by the catholic Bishop John Grandisson, 17 November 1351. The chapel was condemned as a "profane place" encouraging "depraved superstition" and promoting "heretical wisdom" largely because the chapel was built independently of the bishop's will and approval. Disconcerting to the bishop were the actions of deceived parishioners who were "forsaking" parish churches and were "flocking" to this chapel, proving "unafraid to engage in sacrifice to idols or rather more truly in sorcery." The bishop issued orders for the immediate destruction of the building, and gave the prior and convent one month to comply. Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 186-87.

was to be strictly confined to church precincts,⁷⁴ as was customary.⁷⁵ Zurich civil authorities became frustrated and angry with what they describe as “hard-necked” Anabaptists who obstinately refused to go to any church at any time.⁷⁶ Jakob Zander⁷⁷ and Peter Fuchs⁷⁸ confessed that they frequently went to listen to preaching in the *winkel*, and that they would far rather go to secret meetings than to a church where they would be required to listen to the priest. Hanns Murer stated after his re-baptism, and during his interrogation on 16-25 March 1525 in Zollikon,⁷⁹ that he no longer wished to attend church or listen to any priest preach, claiming that they have misled and continue to mislead people.⁸⁰ During the torturing of Jakob Hutter he was dressed with a hat and plume [*huet mit einem federbusch*] and was forcibly brought into a church [*getzenhaus*] for the purpose of inflicting maximum mental anguish, as “authorities knew how much Hutter despised the church and thereby conducted their fool’s games and monkey business with him” [*sie wußten, daß im solches ein greyel (und stracks zuwider) war und hetten auff allerlei weiß ir narren- und affenspiel mit ihm*], according to one chronicler.⁸¹

⁷⁴ When questioned about the destruction of Münster’s churches, Theodor Fabricus stated in November 1534 that Münsterites would sooner “eat their own child while still in the womb” [*wolten ehe das kind in muterleib essen*] and die rather than re-adopt catholic church structures and abusive practices [*ehe sie den babstumb und der pfaffen missbrauch wider annemen*]. *AFM*, 776, note 2.

⁷⁵ Keßler, *Sabbata*, 47. Wolf Kürschner, Hans Schmid and Schmid’s wife also declare that they would sooner die than compromise their convictions. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 46. In Appenzell, authorities forbade Anabaptist assembly after about 1200 persons came together at three homes and many allowed themselves to be re-baptized. Keßler, *Sabbata*, 53.

⁷⁶ *QZGT Schweiz*, I, 373.

⁷⁷ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 270.

⁷⁸ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 271.

⁷⁹ The village of Zollikon lies on Lake Zurich and was described by Johannes Kessler as a place in which “most were rebaptized and held that they were the true Christian Church” [*Zollica gemainlich ließ widertoufen und sich die war christenlich lirch sin vermaintend*]. *QZGT, Ostschweiz*, II, 601.

⁸⁰ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 67.

⁸¹ *ÄCHB*, 157. As quoted in *JH*, 46-47. The *Abscheidung* records a slightly different story. It claims that Hutter had a feather stuck in his hat, a knot placed in his mouth after his capture, and was transported through city and territory for the purpose of mocking him while on route to Innsbruck.

Mandates prescribing church attendance, and threatening punishments for violations, were not limited to imperial or royal sources. In March 1530, a lengthy mandate regarding established custom was issued by the small and large councils of the city of Zurich, putting strict requirements for church attendance into effect.⁸² The city's order, and the directives it contained, were far more detailed than imperial mandates, adding a prohibition against tardiness while providing detailed instructions on where an individual is to stand and where not to stand during the church service. The council of Zurich forbade standing in the cemetery or under the tower; it prohibited any assembly in places that Anabaptists were presumably inclined to gather. Even the manner in which parishioners were expected to listen during the church services was carefully legislated at the local or municipal level: all worshippers were expected to listen with enthusiasm and earnestness. Absolutely no one was permitted to leave services early, interrupt, or ridicule the preaching.⁸³ The instructions issued by Zurich council, concerning how one is to behave in church, bear some striking similarities to the explicit written guidelines found in fourteenth-century devotional handbooks, with the central issue in both cases being the matter of comportment.⁸⁴ A good Christian is described in terms of their behaviour during worship, and not with respect to the individual's beliefs. A properly respectful bearing and restrained demeanour are a primary requirement for worship in both instructions.⁸⁵ The Zurich order, like the Imperial placards reflects an understanding

Corroborating testimony is found in a short letter, which states that Hutter was paraded around the Inn Valley with a plume in order to mock him. *JH*, 73-74.

⁸² *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 337-340.

⁸³ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 337-340.

⁸⁴ Daniel Borstein, "How to Behave in Church and How to Become a Priest," in Miri Rubin, ed., *Medieval Christianity in Practice* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 112.

⁸⁵ Borstein, "How to Behave in Church and How to Become a Priest," 112.

of society in which the community and its interests, and the church and its ordinances, are essentially one. Nearly three years after issuing the 1530 ordinance detailing church participation, Zurich's mayor and council remained completely frustrated in their attempts to enforce compliance with their church order. What they describe as stiff-necked Anabaptists continue to flaunt their duly established church laws and never attend church, with Anabaptists expressing a decided preference for punishment to participation in church services.⁸⁶

The testimonies early Anabaptists provide concerning their failures and/or refusals to attend church reveal that they did not simply harbour anti-clerical attitudes the way the term is often understood today. Their concerns were not simply, or even primarily, directed at clerical rights, practices, privileges, exemptions, dereliction of duties and clergy moral conduct.⁸⁷ Rather, their hostility toward the clergy was only a single component of their overall frustration with the social order the church established, and reveals their rejection of the constitution of the church, with the

⁸⁶ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 373.

⁸⁷ Robert W. Scribner has argued that sixteenth-century anticlericalism was both a "psychological stance" and an action in which monks and clerics were translated into visual images as idle, promiscuous and lecherous persons. It involved "a perception of, and reaction to, the power wielded by the clergy as a distinctive social group, power which expressed itself in the economic, political, legal, social, sexual, and sacred spheres of daily life." Robert W. Scribner, *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400-1800)*, edited by Lyndal Roper (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 149. See also, Thomas A. Brady, "In Search of the Godly City," in R. Po-chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 19-20. R. Po-chia Hsia argues that anticlericalism did "not necessarily express doubts of the efficacy of Catholic doctrines and way of salvation, but rather the exasperation of laymen with a self-proclaimed professional elite who failed to live up to their vocation." R. Po-chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535-1618* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1984), 32. While sixteenth-century Anabaptist attitudes and actions often conformed to such a description of anticlericalism, just as frequently they did not. Clergy were not the focus of Anabaptist ire but were merely the most immediate representatives of the Church, which they rejected. Several prominent Anabaptists, including Jacob Hutter, were on occasion even sympathetic declaring that "the priests knew the truth" but were systemically and effectively prevented from speaking it. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 305. See also, Bernd Moeller for his discussion of the significant difference existing between anticlericalism and anti-Catholicism in the sixteenth century. Bernd Moeller, "Burger als Kleriker," in *Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel zum 70 Geburtstag am 19 September 1971*, II (Göttingen: Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte), 195-224.

clergy acting as its most immediate and most visible representatives. In many cases sixteenth-century Anabaptists appropriated the recognizable discourse of anticlericalism and exploited it as a precondition for their chosen course of action. Sixteenth-century authorities frequently recognized that early Anabaptist anticlericalism was a rejection of the meanings the church embodied and the values it perpetuated, and was only secondarily directed against the clergy as its most immediate agents. In Appolonia Gluet's confession of 1528, for example, she admits that by being baptized and by refusing to attend church she was acting independently of the established church and that she had set herself against the "commendable, principal order and usage of the holy Christian church, imperial mandate, princely mandate, and the community."⁸⁸ Securing Gluet's confession and recantation, like the acquisition of the confessions of other sixteenth-century Anabaptists, was crucially important to civil authorities for through these confessions the accused judged and condemned herself while reinforcing the rightness of the established social order.⁸⁹ The importance of the confession in its relation to the maintenance of the social order is underscored by the fact that every possible means was used to secure it, with the guilty required to publish their own condemnation, carrying on their body the indelible marks of their misdeeds, or in some cases, a placard advertising their sin against the community and social order.⁹⁰

Sixteenth-century authorities frequently interpreted the Anabaptist refusal to attend church as evidence of their unwillingness to be responsible members of the

⁸⁸ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 8-9.

⁸⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan, 2nd edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 38.

⁹⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 43.

community. Anabaptist actions suggested anarchistic proclivities, with early Anabaptists rejecting the established church and the society it generated and maintained. Authorities often accused Anabaptists of wanting to live without any form of authority or authority structures.⁹¹ Margrave George determined in his letter of 20 June 1531, that Anabaptists are against all God-ordained structure, order and authority, whether civil, religious, or legal, and must therefore, be confronted and punished.⁹² The relatively tolerant reformer and pastor, Jakob Otther of Neckarsteinach, cautioned against accepting Anabaptist comments regarding authority at face value, with Otther arguing that they are anarchists who do not want any type of government.⁹³ He suggested that their interest in withholding support from civic government weakened good Christian government. It set Anabaptists above the law, making them final arbiters with respect to all law and government.⁹⁴ The Anabaptist tendency to place clear limits on sixteenth-century authority and authority structures, particularly as they were linked with the exercise of power through culturally sanctified sacred places was intimately tied to, and responsible for, their withdrawal from churches. Some authorities such as Markgraf Ernst von Baden and Graf Johann Ludwig von Nassau noted in 1536 that Anabaptists presented a very

⁹¹ Though Lutherans and “other horrible sects” [*Lutherischen und ander verfuertlich secten*] are mentioned in these mandates, Anabaptists are singled out as particularly poisonous due to the radical level of their resistance to authority. See for example, Ferdinand’s decree of 1529. *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 473.

⁹² *QZGT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 271.

⁹³ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 127-129. However, the sixteenth-century Anabaptist insistence that every government, whether good or bad, ultimately enjoyed divine sanction and that secular authority was established for the purpose of punishing evil and protecting the pious would preclude labeling sixteenth-century Anabaptists anarchists even if they often suggested that government and its coercive functions were restricted to “sinful people.” The “rod” of discipline employed by secular government was an interim measure until a person became a “true” Christian, according to many sixteenth-century Anabaptists, with Anabaptists theoretically and existentially “situated” beyond the need of such discipline.

⁹⁴ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 128-129.

sophisticated response to the question of obedience to authority.⁹⁵ In limiting their civil obedience to that which did not violate individual or collective consciences, with such consciences typically conceived as God's possession,⁹⁶ Anabaptist resistance retained the possibility of civil disobedience through the subjection of all authority, not only to scriptural directives, but also to an Anabaptist interpretation of those directives, as guided by individual conscience.⁹⁷ In so doing, the interests and consciences of the individual became pre-eminent over established authority, setting the Anabaptist movements as resistance movements against "tyrannical" power exercised through culturally established sacred places.

Imperial and royal mandates, not to mention local orders, were typically read from the chancel or pulpit and placards were frequently posted within churches, making the church an important medium through which the state, at all levels of government, exercised power over its subjects.⁹⁸ Church chancels were obvious channels of power, propagating knowledge and enforcing the truth claims of the dominant power,⁹⁹ while church walls presented the power and authority of the written word against sixteenth-century Anabaptists. Anti-Anabaptist placards posted

⁹⁵ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 8.

⁹⁶ Peter Riedemann, for example wrote: "The conscience has been set free and is reserved for God alone. God, and no human being, may be its overlord and teach and direct it wherever and however he pleases." Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 131.

⁹⁷ Anabaptist appeals to conscience extended beyond their commitment to a particular set of moral scruples, functioning to legitimate a variety of "illegal" actions in the sixteenth century. In some cases ideological justification for resistance was set through the Anabaptist claim that their conscience was directly informed by the Holy Spirit with a wide variety of Anabaptist actions justified as the product of acting in keeping with divine commands and scriptural mandates. Thomas Adolffs, for example, charged with iconoclasm in 1533 when a crucifix and image were destroyed in Speyer, claimed that he was acting in obedience to the direct command of the Holy Spirit and in keeping with what he read in the scriptures, and therefore, could not justifiably be charged with any wrong doing. *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 422-423.

⁹⁸ See for example, *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 2*; *DAN*, 20; *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 4, 26, and 197; *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 99, 108, and 167; and *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 416.

⁹⁹ *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 99.

on church walls functioned to inform the literate, demanding from them uncompromising compliance with the tenets being propagated. Placards and mandates were circulated, publicly read, widely distributed, and prominently posted in churches that served as an established cultural network for the development and maintenance of a particular set of socio-political relations. The city of Innsbruck, for example, forwarded 30 imperial mandates against Anabaptists, as had been requested, to Hans Jakob von Landau, governor of Nellenburg in 1527, which were to be posted and maintained in all parish churches where imperial majesty was said to “hold the highest authority.”¹⁰⁰ The mandates were issued with the expectation that they would necessarily generate the desired political compliance and social conformity. Provisions were once again attached for dealing with those subjects who failed to order their affairs accordingly, providing the justification, means, and tools for their effective prosecution and punishment.¹⁰¹

4.5 Ritualization, Empowerment, and Church Avoidance

Like Waldensians before them,¹⁰² sixteenth-century Anabaptists rejected the Roman church, its rituals, its clergy and the power they collectively exercised,¹⁰³ marking sixteenth-century Anabaptists, like the Waldensians, not primarily for errant belief, but for their disobedience.¹⁰⁴ Unlike the Waldensians, Anabaptists recognized, to some degree at least, as other reformers also did, that a decisive turn away from

¹⁰⁰ *OZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 390.

¹⁰¹ *OZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 390.

¹⁰² Sixteenth-century Anabaptists, like Waldensians and Cathars, imagined themselves to be the very best of available representatives of the “true” Christian church. Each group spoke of itself as purer in its moral code, ritual practice, and doctrine than their contemporaries. Richard Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 13.

¹⁰³ Euan Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Cameron, *Waldenses*, 2.

medieval Catholicism was impossible unless alternative places for worship, communal celebration and the construction of community were successfully established.¹⁰⁵ The Anabaptist desire for increased autonomy, an unfettered subjectivity, and a greater share in the exercise of socio-political power were all necessarily dependent upon the successful construction of alternative communal places. The reformation maxim, “the more Christian the more community oriented,”¹⁰⁶ was a way of self-identifying for early Anabaptists and became a socio-political goal that Anabaptists interpreted in terms of their own reconstruction and reorganization of sacred places. Though extremely disparate and often resulting in conflict, Anabaptist actions quickly became directed at affecting a thoroughgoing purification, renewal, re-imagining, and reconstruction of places associated with the divine, and pre-eminently influential in shaping medieval society. The reformation of ritual Anabaptists affected enabled their reform efforts to “exceed” those of the Waldensians, with their ritual innovations functioning as the first step toward the dissociation of Christian community and a particular place, and the generation of an alternative interiorized place for imagining community and a varied network of social relations. The appropriateness and force of ritual as a response to what Anabaptists determined were “unacceptable or inappropriate” places increases dramatically where incongruency has been observed and its resolution desired.¹⁰⁷ It becomes a reasonable response when “more overt” resistance is deemed to be impossible or undesirable,¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Cameron, *Waldenses*, 303.

¹⁰⁶ Berndt Hamm, *Bürgertum und Glaube: Konturen der Städtischen Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 132.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *To Take Place*, 109.

¹⁰⁸ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 214-15.

effectively deconstructing authority through its dissociation with one place and alignment with another.

Kempo van Martena observed in 1534 that a good many people were being re-baptized in Friesland, and that these same persons then refused to attend church.¹⁰⁹ According to van Martena many of the re-baptized swore, after their ritualization, that they would never again attend any church. The testimony of van Martena presents Anabaptist ritual practice as embodying a process of empowerment in which early Anabaptists were provided with the resources necessary for successful socio-political resistance. Van Martena notes that through their ritualization Anabaptists were able to resist cultural conformity, successfully resisting compliance with the directives of the dominant ideology and power. A direct connection between Anabaptist ritual practice, their empowerment, and their attitudes toward place is also evident in a mandate issued against Anabaptists in 1527 by Landgrave Philip, in which early Anabaptists are described passively as persons who allow themselves to be re-baptized, and thereafter actively as individuals who insist on assembling in unusual places, and at unusual times.¹¹⁰ Philip's mandate and van Martena's interpretation of Anabaptist action link Anabaptist ritualization and their sense of empowerment to a particular set of spatial understandings and practices. Van Martena links Anabaptist ritualization with the avoidance of certain places, whereas in Philip's mandate Anabaptist ritual practice develops a sense of empowerment that displays a decided preference for culturally unusual places for assembly. Yet another order, issued in Hesse in 1528, unequivocally couples Anabaptist ritual practice with a host of

¹⁰⁹ *DAN*, I, 5.

¹¹⁰ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 13.

entirely unacceptable Anabaptist actions, indicating that Anabaptist ritualization was closely linked to their defiance of civil authority and their recalcitrant refusal to attend church.¹¹¹

The testimonies of accused Anabaptists, like the observations of their chroniclers, the accusations of their detractors, and the examinations of sixteenth-century authorities, postulate a close association between Anabaptist ritual practice and their sense of empowerment. During Simon Kraußhaar's interrogation in May of 1559, Kraußhaar testified that he had been re-baptized 25 years earlier at Jakob Beck's inn by a Jörg from Ingersheim and consequently had not entered a church in some 20 years, and had not been to mass in over 25 years.¹¹² Hans Jäger's letter of 1527 to his brother Peter also develops a connection between Anabaptist ritual practice and their refusal to attend church. The letter records Jäger's observation that as many as 30 of "these new baptizers," who are described as being in the habit of shunning the church, meet regularly at an inn called Hirschich in Gründlach where someone with a gold collar on his shirt was active in preaching and baptising.¹¹³ The spatial competition that Anabaptist ritualization introduced and promoted did not go unnoticed with persons such as Jakob Hölin, who testified in 1539 that Anabaptists in his area tended to meet once a month on Sunday mornings, when they are supposed to be in church.¹¹⁴ The spatial conflict that early Anabaptist ritualization initiated figured heavily in the millenarianism of the colourful furrier-turned-Anabaptist Augustin Bader, who taught that the outer, visible, and external church is to be

¹¹¹ *QZGT, Hesse, Urkundliche Quellen*, IV, 17.

¹¹² *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 178-179.

¹¹³ *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 10.

¹¹⁴ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 72.

destroyed and replaced with a Christian church after a period of persecution, with Anabaptist baptism becoming salvation in persecution.¹¹⁵

The reasons provided by Anabaptists for their re-baptism are extremely varied during the first few decades of the Anabaptist movements, with the understandings and meanings associated with the ritual often contrasting sharply from one group or one individual to the next. The methods by which, and the circumstances under which, individuals were re-baptized during the sixteenth century are equally disparate. However, virtually all early Anabaptist baptisms are described by participants in opposition to the well-established practice of paedobaptism, with Anabaptist baptism the supersession of paedobaptism through its identification with primitive church practice. In all cases the baptizand was said to be inducted into a covenantal relation with a new sort of community, with many early Anabaptists testifying after the ritual, or admitting during their recantation, as Valentin Gredig and Philipp Kym did in 1525, that they no longer attend church services.¹¹⁶ The testimony of Rüdolff Rütchman is somewhat typical of early Anabaptists when he indicated that with his re-baptism, and the new spatial understandings it fostered, a new-found self-confidence emerged, which was expressed by him as an unwavering commitment of obedience to God and his spirit, from which he would not allow any civil powers to separate him.¹¹⁷ Civil authorities came to share the frustration of the pastor, Jacob Otther, who warned his faithful readers in 1528, that Anabaptists not

¹¹⁵ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 976-977

¹¹⁶ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 68. The Nicodemian actions of Michel Gleser appear to be somewhat unusual in that his promise to attend church (whether sincere or otherwise) indicates that because Anabaptists were easily identified in the sixteenth-century by their strict non-attendance, some Anabaptists promised or determined to continue to attend services as a means of hiding their Anabaptist identity. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 69.

¹¹⁷ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 39-40.

only refuse to go to church themselves, but actively work against the established civil and religious authorities, and can justifiably be held responsible for leading people away from churches into clandestine meetings. Anabaptists are described by Otther as persons who refuse to debate issues publicly (and thereby limit exposure and elude capture), preferring to “hide in dark corners” where they maximize their effectiveness.¹¹⁸

Interrogation records make the obvious point that rebaptism is a central issue to authorities in Zurich during the early decades of the Anabaptist movements. They frequently describe early Anabaptists as those who actively preach against the authorities, and as individuals who hold their harshest criticisms for those they hold responsible for the shape and structure of medieval society.¹¹⁹ The testimony, interrogation, and actions of one of the very earliest Swiss Anabaptists, Felix Mantz, underscores a direct relation between Anabaptist ritualization and their rejection of the established church and the power exercised through it, even where such a relation is not initially or overtly acknowledged. Mantz was accused by Zurich council of being insistent on practising re-baptism in February 1525 even though he failed to provide them with good reason for doing so.¹²⁰ The record goes on to state, rather enigmatically, that there was far more to the matter of re-baptism than Anabaptists such as Mantz were divulging,¹²¹ with town and city councils during the sixteenth century frequently concerned with the manner in which it impinged on and

¹¹⁸ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 128.

¹¹⁹ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 187.

¹²⁰ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I 51.

¹²¹ In his chronicle of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, Heinrich Gresbeck demonstrates a similar form of suspicion, stating that Münsterite Anabaptists had colluded regarding the sort of meanings they would attribute to re-baptism [*wat sie mit der dope im sin hebben gehat*]. *BDA*, 23.

diminished the council's authority.¹²² Balthasar Hubmaier reportedly made comments in January 1526, linking Anabaptist ritualization with resistance to the exercise of power, asserting that nothing can bring down the authorities in their entrenched positions as effectively as popular agreement concerning the practice of re-baptism.¹²³ During his interrogation in July of 1525, Mantz purportedly clarified his position, openly declaring that paedobaptism was wrong and bound up with tyrannical authority. He claimed that the Anabaptist practice held no such negative association being entirely removed from any sort of alliance with the established church, the power it exercises, and the authority structures it perpetuates.¹²⁴ In each of the above cases the early Anabaptist practice of re-baptism was decisively and directly connected to the Anabaptist refusal to attend church, and in each case the church was identified, by Anabaptists, with the most undesirable characteristics and qualities of medieval socio-political life. Though civil authorities often cast persons who were re-baptized as poorly informed, simple, uneducated, or deceived, they reserved no such excuse for Anabaptists who refused to attend church.

4.6 Church Attendance: Prescription for the Anabaptist Ailment

Though the response of civil authorities to persons who had been rebaptized and then failed and/or refused to attend church varied significantly, a promise to once again attend church often went a long way toward satisfying their most immediate concerns. Further punishment and prolonged imprisonment were on occasion avoided through the simple promise to attend church and participate in its ritual program.¹²⁵

¹²² *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 51.

¹²³ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 159-160.

¹²⁴ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 93.

¹²⁵ See for example, *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 348.

Authorities were comparatively lenient when cases were judged to be less serious, or when the accused were determined to be followers and not leaders. Convicted followers on occasion escaped severe punishment through their promise to immediately curtail all association with other Anabaptists, and to “attach themselves to the Christian church” [*an die christliche kirche zu halten*], even though harsher penalties under the law could have been applied.¹²⁶ When Anstet Hinckfuß, for example, was convicted of falling away from the faith and order of the Catholic Church by accepting re-baptism his life and goods had become forfeit under imperial and royal mandates. Yet, he was released from prison in 1533 on his simple promise to report all future communication and interaction with Anabaptists, and on his pledge to attach himself unreservedly to the “Christian church.”¹²⁷ A comparatively light sentence was also handed down to several imprisoned Anabaptist women in 1533, according to a letter from Governor Hans von Gemminen of Heidelberg to the electoral prince. The letter relays how these women gained the governor’s favour largely through their simple promise to attend mass.¹²⁸ The promises elicited by authorities from Anabaptists during their interrogations, confessions, truces, oaths of good conduct [*urfehde*], and recantations emphasize the non-negotiable need authorities held for church attendance. During their sentencing, Anabaptists were consistently instructed to be regularly present, and to become diligent, in attending either the parish church or the cathedral, not only as an indicator of their civil

¹²⁶ See for example, *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 34.

¹²⁷ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 34.

¹²⁸ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 143.

obedience, but also as a proactive measure, to obviate the possibility of their falling into further disobedience.¹²⁹

The need for regular church attendance was keenly felt by civil authorities, such as the Mayor of Kirtof, who personally presented two of his neighbours to the governor and city council for prosecution in 1536 due to their sustained absences from church.¹³⁰ Sixteenth-century civil authorities were often surprised, dismayed,¹³¹ and frustrated¹³² when Anabaptists simply remained steadfast in their refusal to attend church, even when confronted by the court in all its austerity. Authorities were at pains to support, reinforce, and add value to places that early Anabaptists contested and whose authority they rejected, resulting in sixteenth-century authorities becoming increasingly dependent on these places for their own legitimation. Authorities consistently spoke of the established church during Anabaptist interrogations and sentencing as holy, with its value incontrovertible, and its order right, true, and just, whereas the simplest of Anabaptists would deride the medieval church as a house of idols.

The court records frequently refer to early Anabaptists as being stained [*befleckt*] with re-baptism.¹³³ The term establishes a qualitative condition and primary social relation in which the Anabaptist as subject has undergone a negative process that has devalued the property of the civil authorities. The stain that has developed

¹²⁹ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 27.

¹³⁰ *QZGT, Hesse*, 147.

¹³¹ Andreas Osiander states that it is very difficult for him to decide what to do with these “poor deceived souls.” *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 260.

¹³² *QZGWT, Schweiz*, I, 373. Zurich council is frustrated with what they describe as “hard-necked Anabaptists” who never go to church.

¹³³ See the following as examples of the use of the term *befleckt* for Anabaptists. *QZGWT, Osterreich*, 175; *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 6*; and *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 474. The frequency with which metaphors are used of Anabaptists in which they are described as infected, stained and poisoned in the court record is remarkable.

was contracted through ritualization, and has the potential, in the eyes of the authorities, to spread to all other areas of an individual's life, potentially characterizing all future acts. Therefore, civil authorities frequently sought to remove the all-too-obvious blemish on their subject through the prescription of church attendance. The prescribed remedial action was delivered on the assumption that cultural anomalies are rectified through exposure to a particularly significant cultural place. Church programs and church buildings established cultural norms, with exposure to churches considered necessarily efficacious. The decisions of sixteenth-century authorities frequently reflect the assumption that social incongruence is effectively ameliorated through participation in the right ritual program, which was always considered a place-dependent activity during the period under investigation. On some occasions Anabaptists are portrayed as weeds that one needs to pull and destroy in order to protect one's garden and crop.¹³⁴ Fear of the contagion spreading, and infecting others if unchecked, remained an ever-present concern for authorities such as Ferdinand, whose mandates consistently reveal the king's fear that the Anabaptist stain could potentially infect the entire land, destroying the current peace and unity. In some cases, his mandates stipulate a proactive measure, requiring that all Anabaptists be kept out of the land. They must be prevented from touching it, with the danger they present to the existing social structure typically coming from "outside" and not from "within" his territories.¹³⁵ Similarly, Herman of Wied,

¹³⁴ Sigrun Haude, *In the Shadow of "Savage Wolves": Anabaptist Münster and the German Reformation During the 1530s* (Boston; Leiden; Cologne: Humanities Press, 2000), 84.

¹³⁵ The attitude of Ferdinand is similar, even if the time and circumstances are very different, to that of King James II, who ordered that the borders be carefully patrolled and that all lepers be prevented from entering his lands when they were suspected of poisoning public wells. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 93-94. Like sixteenth-century Anabaptists, fourteenth-century lepers were placed into a

archbishop of Cologne, territorial prince and imperial elector advocated for a blockade around Münster in an effort to prevent what he termed the contamination of the surrounding countryside.¹³⁶ Those who re-baptize and are therefore primarily responsible for the spread of the Anabaptist stain are often described as vagabonds [*landstraißer*] in the court records, as those who walk through the land without being an essential part of it, or, without having close ties to it.¹³⁷ The cities of Cologne and Strasbourg, like the Rhenish princes, typically understood and treated sixteenth-century Anabaptists as foreigners, with authorities unwilling or unable to accept the emergence of blighted Anabaptists as indigenous.¹³⁸ Anabaptists are consistently presented, in the court records, as people who have not been nurtured by the town, cities, and lands in which they were found and through which good, natural and intimate bonds can be developed and cultivated. The cultural disassociation and limited exposure cultivated by Anabaptists have obviated the potentially redeeming social affects these places might have had. Princes and city authorities frequently sought to protect their lands from the dangerous infiltration of Anabaptists, who remained foreign elements and were saddled with responsibility for the presence of disorder in their territory. City authorities frequently expressed optimism in their rulings against Anabaptists, and repeatedly showed considerable confidence in the power that a given place can exercise on an individual through exposure. Their decisions indicate that being in the right place (church), and participating in its

category of malefactors that was “avowedly impossible to identify with certainty,” according to David Nirenberg, and often rested, in the case of sixteenth-century Anabaptists, on their own testimony. Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 97.

¹³⁶ Haude, *In the Shadow of “Savage Wolves,”* 81.

¹³⁷ See for example, *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 403-405.

¹³⁸ Haude, *In the Shadow of “Savage Wolves,”* 73.

services, would have a positive effect on stained and wayward Anabaptists, potentially undoing or reversing the effects of re-baptism. Consequently, secret assemblies [*haimliche versammlungen*],¹³⁹ outside the influence and control of civil authorities, were of grave concern to sixteenth-century authorities, with most authorities tending to understand their utilization by Anabaptists as the antithesis of church attendance, with each type of meeting place attributed with the power to secure certain desirable or undesirable ends.¹⁴⁰ Just as being in the right place (church) would have its desired effect producing obedient subjects, so being in the wrong place (unusual places/ Anabaptist meetings) carried with it the almost certain undesirable effect of re-baptism, the staining of their property.

With churches established as culturally specific places through which medieval society was articulated and produced, church attendance was non-negotiable. It was a social obligation enjoined on all Christians during the sixteenth century, with authorities treating church attendance as a clear gauge of an individual's allegiances and an unmistakable indicator of one's "citizenship." Anabaptists refusing to attend church "naturally" became suspect. Hessian authorities determined that all suspected Anabaptists must be carefully and firmly questioned regarding their desires and their willingness to go to church, with their response acting, in the thinking of Hessian authorities, as an accurate marker of whether they did or did not want to be part of the community.¹⁴¹ When some sixteenth-century Anabaptists in Hesse were questioned regarding their refusal to go to church and their

¹³⁹ The term "*haimliche*," generally translated secret or mysterious, is also a reference to that which comes from the home in contradistinction to *offentlich* (open, public), which is said to originate from an official or public office.

¹⁴⁰ See for example the case in *QZGT, Hesse*, 55.

¹⁴¹ *QZGT, Hesse*, 64.

relation to the community, they openly admitted that the current nature and structure of society held little appeal for them.¹⁴² Early Anabaptists explicitly rejected the medieval church as the primary place for the articulation, development, and maintenance of society, due to what they saw as its unacceptably corrupt and overbearing state. In 1546 Landgrave Phillip once again responded decisively to what he termed Anabaptist contempt [*Verachtung*] for God's Word and "our regulations" [*Ordnungen*], legislating that *Winkelpredigen* [corner preaching] must stop immediately due to the lack of structure it introduces and encourages. Other sixteenth-century civil authorities also complained that secret assemblies disrupt the churches, establishing a bad precedent, setting an example for civil disobedience. Phillip expressed his frustration with the casual attitude some people held toward church attendance. He noted in his directive that on the previous Sunday many people were loitering in the market place, and many others were standing around "pointlessly" in "similar unauthorized places" during the church service, demonstrating their contempt for God's word and church ordinances by their casual and disrespectful conduct.¹⁴³ Church authorities in the Palatinate issued a directive in 1556 that reveals a very similar sort of perspective. It instructs superintendents to seek out Anabaptist conventicles in houses and woods for the bad example they set of schismatics; non-participants disrupt the socio-political order through their failure to attend church.¹⁴⁴ By refusing to attend church and participate in its program early Anabaptists established themselves within a relation of civil disobedience, dislocating

¹⁴² *QZGT, Hesse*, 147.

¹⁴³ *QZGT, Hesse*, 316.

¹⁴⁴ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 149-150.

church order and political structure in the minds of sixteenth-century authorities.¹⁴⁵

The ritual program of sixteenth-century Anabaptists, whether it was deliberately intended to do so or not, necessarily threatened sixteenth-century social harmony.¹⁴⁶

The premise that authority was ordained by God for the effective governance of society received the assent of most sixteenth-century Anabaptists, forcing them to establish an authority higher than civil government for legitimating their civil disobedience, which they conveniently found in their reading of the bible. During his interrogation on 1 May 1529, Phillips Weber, for example, admitted that he no longer went to the preaching service, and justified his refusal to attend church through his insistence that it was a house of idols, which he claimed, he was forbidden to enter according to the bible.¹⁴⁷ Like many other sixteenth-century Anabaptists, Weber constructed his enthusiastic obedience to God and faithful service to his fellowman as simple compliance with the Bible, juxtaposing his actions with submission to civil authorities. His choice of strict adherence to scriptural mandates is presented as the most appropriate Christian response, and most accurately reflective of a correct faith and spirit of God. Kaspar Naiser, a literate peasant who established a conventicle in his home, where he purportedly spent a considerable amount of time reading and preaching, was reported to the authorities for his long absence from church by the priest from Wallhausen.¹⁴⁸ It was Naiser's absence from church that caught the attention of the priest, and it was his refusal to attend church that became the reason for the interest authorities took in him. When questioned by the authorities, Naiser's

¹⁴⁵ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 150.

¹⁴⁶ Brady, "In Search of the Godly City," 15.

¹⁴⁷ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 140.

¹⁴⁸ *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 351.

brother-in-law Endres Haifel, who was described as a pious but simple man, put forward the proposition that his brother-in-law could not possibly have done anything evil. Though Haifel acknowledged that Naiser did not go to church, and therefore did not receive the Eucharist, he maintained that Naiser was still saved [*selig*], and that Naiser was innocent of any wrongdoing. By divorcing the possibility of salvation and moral judgement from their close association with a particular culturally appointed place, early Anabaptists wrested substantial social controls from the church and away from city councils.¹⁴⁹

4.7 Church Avoidance, Community, and Error

When questions regarding whether or not a person had been rebaptized failed to secure the desired certainty, or when an added indictment was sought, sixteenth-century courts would often query suspected Anabaptists about their attitudes toward the church. Compliance with church order and the level of one's participation in church practice were interpreted as clear indicators of whether or not an individual held Anabaptist sympathies, and whether or not they were actively engaged in Anabaptist practices.¹⁵⁰ Many sixteenth-century Anabaptists openly admitted during their interrogations that they did not attend church, with some stating that their leaders strictly forbade such participation.¹⁵¹ Sebastian Franck noted that Anabaptist leaders in a variety of places banned their followers if they attended a Catholic or Evangelical sermon [*schriftgelerten predig*] or had anything to do with them [*mit jn zûschaffen haben*].¹⁵² Anabaptist non-attendance and their preference for clandestine

¹⁴⁹ *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 351.

¹⁵⁰ *QZGWT, Markgraftum Brandenburg*, 171.

¹⁵¹ *QZGT, Hesse*, 63.

¹⁵² Sebastian Franck, *Chronica* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 199.

meetings were typically understood by the civil authorities as clear indications of their unwillingness to be part of the larger community. The Swiss Anabaptist, Felix Mantz, was described by Zurich council as an obstinate individual because he insisted on practising re-baptism, returning to his baptizing activity only fourteen days after being released from prison for it. Council determined that his conduct was set against social and political unity, and interpreted his actions as activity designed to destroy the existing church and establish another church [*kilchen ufferweken und zûrûsten*]. Zurich council described Mantz as an individual given to preaching in a variety of places, including secretly, and especially, in private homes.¹⁵³ Secret assemblies and a competing ritual program undermined church practice and disrupted notions of a unified community, making Mantz deserving of capital punishment, according to Zurich council.¹⁵⁴ Frustrated in their efforts to reform Mantz, council determined that his obstinacy must be rewarded with expulsion from Zurich, with banishment from the community he was seeking to undermine.¹⁵⁵

Though Anabaptist separation from the established church was a spatial development initiated through their ritual program and expressive of their dissatisfaction with medieval church and society, it developed into a host of social, moral and ideological peculiarities.¹⁵⁶ In response, some city councils and other authorities determined on occasion that Anabaptists should be treated like Jews (the profoundly “other” in medieval society), and should not be permitted to own

¹⁵³ *QZGT, Schweiz, I, 225-26.*

¹⁵⁴ *QZGT, Schweiz, I, 226.*

¹⁵⁵ *QZGT, Schweiz, I, 51.*

¹⁵⁶ *QZGT, Hesse, 64.*

property.¹⁵⁷ In some instances a slightly more favourable comparison between Anabaptists and Jews emerged, with Württemberg's theologians, for example, determining that the majority of Anabaptists were simply mistaken like the Jews, pursuing God with zeal that was not based on knowledge or truth, and, therefore, in need of toleration and further education.¹⁵⁸ Frankfurt city council demonstrated a rigid approach to dealing with early Anabaptists, determining in 1539 that those who rejected the Augsburg Confession and/or the Roman church were demonstrating their refusal to associate with the larger society. Frankfurt council determined that any such persons who did not wish to be part of the community should not be provided any "room," and that they were not to be endured in any place.¹⁵⁹ Community and place were inextricably linked in Frankfurt council's thinking, with the benefits a given place afforded only made available to those who subscribed to traditional conceptions of community.

The dominant culture and the places that it creates are always complicit with regimes of political and economic power, generating a discourse of truth in which aberration and difference are explained as error. Competing discourses, and the places with which they are associated, are always understood in terms of their deviation from the constructed norm. As cultural anomalies, sixteenth-century Anabaptists

¹⁵⁷ *QZGT, Hesse*, 38. Jews are constructed as "strangers" in the court records. They are persons without a fixed place in the social environment; they intrude into more-or-less fixed and stable places and "disturb their inhabitants." See, Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, 11.

¹⁵⁸ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 53-54.

¹⁵⁹ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 10*-11*. A very similar sort of judgement was placed against Donatists when they were judged to be heretics by the Roman Emperor Theodosius I (379-395 CE). According to Possidius, Theodosius determined that "the Donatist heretics were not to be tolerated in any place and that all the laws passed against heretics were to be enforced against them everywhere." F. R. Hoare, trans. "The Life of Saint Augustine: Possidius," in Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head, eds., *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 44.

were lumped together with “vow-breaking run-away monks,” they were called “rogues,” “murdering arsonists,” “unknown people” [*unbekannte Gesellen*],¹⁶⁰ and “irresponsible wanderers,”¹⁶¹ who are by their nature and activity prove antithetical to community. Anabaptists were not to be tolerated by virtue of their rejection, and on occasion active destruction, of those places through which conformity with the dominant discourse was developed and maintained. In the language of the dominant discourse, error was the term employed for undesirable conduct that violated culturally established regimes of truth, and socially acceptable ways of acting. Town councils typically took action against Anabaptist error, not simply because Anabaptists were offenders against the established Christian faith, but because they were understood as potential disrupters of what was presented as social unity and communal peace.

Though the term heretic [*ketzer*] was used by civil authorities on some occasions for Anabaptists during the early part of the sixteenth century, the term was not employed narrowly as a descriptor of heterodox doctrine or practice, but for “perversions of Christian decency,” providing the justification for their condemnation and punishment.¹⁶² Even ecclesiastical censure for heresy was not always aimed at

¹⁶⁰ In a letter from Bishop Franz von Waldeck to the city of Münster he calls for the expulsion of all Anabaptist preachers, whom he refers to as “*Landläufer*” and “*unbekannte Gesellen*.” Richard van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster, 1534-1535* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974), 33.

¹⁶¹ See for example, *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 30-32.

¹⁶² Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany*, 68. Kieckhefer notes that the harsh treatment Waldensians received was not determined so much by their heterodox views as it was the product of their being perceived as a threat to the social order. The same can be said of early sixteenth-century Anabaptists. The condemnation and punishment of “heretics” during the medieval period was often initiated by civil authorities in an attempt to preserve the honour of the city. Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy*, 78. An excellent example is the case of the city of Münster, which charged Hermann von Kerssenbrock with writing “uncivilly and maliciously” about the city’s customs, practices, and traditions in his chronicle. City council determined to censure Kerssenbrock’s manuscripts for fear that his work could “bring the city into disrepute with outsiders.” Christopher S.

punishing heterodox belief during the sixteenth century. It was easily employed by the dominant power as a coercive mechanism for dealing with differences between rival parties.¹⁶³ By the later medieval period the term “heretic” was a well-developed stereotype for someone who was said to be opposed to all *Oberkeit und Erbarkeit* (authority and decency), with *Erbarkeit* typically identified with divinely instituted “good order.”¹⁶⁴ Decrees of excommunication and accusations of heresy were effective tools for achieving and maintaining particular political ends.¹⁶⁵ Such a state of affairs was not lost on Obbe Philips, who testified, in his confession of 1565, that all persons not in full agreement with prevailing political trends and social established traditions were labelled “heretics,” and were condemned as “godless.”¹⁶⁶ Accusations of being a “heretic” predate the Reformation period; it is described as an “ancient idiom” by Leonard Verduin. Polemical sermons often emphasized the potential for civic disruption rather than the heterodox positions of opponents.¹⁶⁷ Charges of heresy provided bishops with considerable power over lay leaders throughout much of the medieval period, setting bishops as the moral voice within the political

Mackay, *Narrative of the Anabaptist Madness: The Overthrow of Münster, the Famous Metropolis of Westphalia* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 41.

¹⁶³ Kieckhefer notes that “the older bourgeoisie may have thought of a heresy trial as a convenient way to attack their new rivals for social and economic standing in the town.” Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy*, 69. See also, Maureen Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 166.

¹⁶⁴ Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 221-222.

¹⁶⁵ Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace*, 256.

¹⁶⁶ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 42. Employment of the term “heretic” for those with whom one does not agree is evident in the example of a Dominican preaching to Benedictine sisters at Rijnsburg near Leiden who denounced Beghards and Sisters as “heretics.” John van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 27.

¹⁶⁷ Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy*, 81.

community.¹⁶⁸ Accusations of heresy, though they were infrequently employed for the Anabaptist practice of re-baptism and their refusal to attend church (compared with charges of civil disobedience), defined two pivotal Anabaptist acts that struck at the heart of medieval society and the discourse of community on which it was built as error. The alignment of power with truth and right was such during the early sixteenth century that every deviation or competing discourse was necessarily described as error, and was dealt with accordingly. The exercise of power, the competition for power, and the contestation of relations of power were all integral components of sixteenth-century Anabaptist resistance, finding their articulation in the theatre of the medieval church.¹⁶⁹

4.8 Exile: Punishment and Withdrawal of Protection

When the re-baptism of Jacob Kremer's maid came to the attention of the Landau council of 1528 she was immediately banished from the city, despite the event having occurred some three years earlier.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, when Jacob Kremer's un-named lame seamstress [*hiencken nedern*], Peter Hammer, Gerg Brauner, and *meinster* Lorentz were confirmed as Anabaptists, they too were exiled from Landau.¹⁷¹ Dietrich Milcher, who fled his home with his wife and child for over a year, fearing the Imperial mandate issued against Anabaptists, was captured and imprisoned in Marbach 28 June 1542.¹⁷² He was told during his sentencing that under

¹⁶⁸ Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 169. Emile Durkheim has effectively argued that the moral authority with which a society (and I would add here person) is invested exercises far greater influence over popular consciousness than any prerogatives its physical superiority might provide. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, translated by Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 209.

¹⁶⁹ Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 253.

¹⁷⁰ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 429.

¹⁷¹ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 429.

¹⁷² *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 1003.

no circumstances was he to remain in any one place for more than a single night, with his refusal to recant earning him permanent expulsion from the territory, and the added condition that his life would be forfeit should he ever choose to return.¹⁷³

Expulsions were not always permanent in practice as many recanting Anabaptists were permitted to return to their communities.¹⁷⁴ However, Anabaptists who returned without recanting tended to be dealt with harshly, not because of their earlier crimes, but because of their continued insubordination. In the territories of Württemberg, Hesse, Baden-Durlach and the Palatinate government authorities determined that un-recanted returning Anabaptists were demonstrating contempt for the law and disregard for the community, and must be treated harshly.¹⁷⁵ Banishment as a method of social control in which undesirable persons are excluded from the benefits and privileges of city life was practiced in early modern Germany as early as 1491. In 1491 the council of the Imperial city of Ulm determined that all strangers and “useless people” “lingering” in Ulm should be forced to live outside the city.¹⁷⁶ The city council in Augsburg subscribed to a similar practice. In 1599 a destitute woman who had not eaten in two days, Sabina Hartmännin, was permanently ordered out of the city when she was caught begging and engaging in dissolute behaviour,

¹⁷³ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 1003.

¹⁷⁴ On some occasions exile was permanent and involved forced labour. The Hutterite Chronicle states that a good many able-bodied Anabaptist men were forced into becoming galley slaves. Sick or weak men were left behind with the women and were often imprisoned, with young boys, in some cases, given to Austrian noblemen. The Chronicle holds priests responsible for the decision to use able-bodied Anabaptist men as galley slaves. Some of these men were assigned to the emperor’s admiral, Andrea Doria, for service in his fleet of naval war vessels. *ÄCHB*, 204-05.

¹⁷⁵ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 191, 1031; *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 61, 166. In Württemberg the authorities determined that returning Anabaptists would only be tried after their second unauthorized return. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 315.

¹⁷⁶ Jason P. Coy, *Strangers and Misfits: Banishment, Social control, and Authority in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 1.

with the latter presumably an effort to support herself.¹⁷⁷ Her unacceptable behaviour had been punished with temporary exile on a previous occasion.¹⁷⁸ Though capital punishment was a frequently employed, and often preferred, method of dealing with Anabaptist error, exile also functioned as an effective disciplinary measure and symbol of sixteenth-century socio-political power and right; it included the ideological justification for its practice within itself, maintaining cultural hegemony and the socio-political order through the eradication of the undesirable.¹⁷⁹ A punishment of exile effectively eradicated, (or sought to eradicate), individuals and groups who were seen to be promoting socio-political ways of behaving outside acceptable ranges. Attempts to maintain order in Christian society were generally based upon an understanding of society that constructed it as a “*Gemeinschaft*,” which Jason P. Coy has defined as “a community imagined in terms of a strict division between the enfranchised (native-born citizens and resident aliens) and the disenfranchised (marginal aliens, criminals, and deviants).”¹⁸⁰ Coy argues that the regulation of society through the exclusion of outsiders “was crucial for both the

¹⁷⁷ J. Jeffery Tyler, “Refugees and Reform: Banishment and Exile in Early Modern Augsburg,” in Robert J. Bast and Andrew Colin Gow, eds., *Continuity and Change: The Harvest of Late-Medieval and Reformation History, Essays Presented to Heiko A. Oberman on his 70th Birthday* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000), 77.

¹⁷⁸ Sabina Hartmännin had appeared before the city council in September 1598 charged with begging and suspicion of prostitution. Her disreputable sources of income and her desperate poverty resulted in her banishment. Tyler, “Refugees and Reform,” 85.

¹⁷⁹ *QZGT, Österreich*, I, 280-85. Kieckhefer argues that exile and banishment did not ultimately serve as tools for eradication and cleansing in the way that church authorities may have desired. They were “more likely to defeat these purposes, since heretics who wandered to distant places carried their doctrines with them, and might give rise to new heretical communities.” He argues that banishment and exile were however, effective in serving the “ends of urban authorities” interested in ridding their localities of those who posed a threat to the public order. Kieckhefer, *Repression of Heresy*, 76. The frequency with which the exiled reappeared in the places from which they were banished would suggest that expulsion was not particularly effective as a long-term solution intended to curtail disruptive or potential disruptive social behavior.

¹⁸⁰ Coy, *Strangers and Misfits*, 7.

expression of communal norms and the experience of cohesion.”¹⁸¹ Exile, as the expulsion of the deviant, politically undesirable, or socially anomalous was and remained an important spatial phenomenon during the early modern period.

Sentences of exile were effective only where the authority being exercised was both stable and substantial, as was proven in Münster on January 15, 1534.¹⁸² Just prior to that city coming under Anabaptist control, city council exiled 3 Anabaptist pastors it decided were responsible for introducing “dangerous innovations,” but these same pastors were led back into the city through a different gate by a large number of their supporters to the “perpetual disgrace of the council,” according to Hermann von Kerssenbrock.¹⁸³ Similarly, when the Cathedral Chapter sought the intervention of the Emperor, requesting that an order be issued to expel the pastor Bernhard Rothmann, Münster city authorities were unwilling or too weak to follow through on the order, with Rothmann enjoying the continued protection of friends and the benefit of favourable public opinion.¹⁸⁴ Though banishment and the threat of banishment were often among a city council’s principal means of imposing order within its jurisdiction during the early modern period, in April of 1525 several Anabaptists in Zollikon challenged Zurich town council’s authority to exile any of its citizens, arguing that the earth had been created for the benefit of Anabaptists every

¹⁸¹ Coy, *Strangers and Misfits*, 7.

¹⁸² Münster city council failed to banish Bernhard Rothmann and the Wassenberg preachers despite their efforts to do so on 5 November 1533.

¹⁸³ Hermann von Kerssenbrock, *Narrative of the Anabaptist Madness: The Overthrow of Münster, the Famous Metropolis of Westphalia*, translated by Christopher S. Mackay (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 474.

¹⁸⁴ E. Belfort Bax, *The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 123.

bit as much as it had been created for the lords.¹⁸⁵ Such a struggle supports the observation of Christopher R. Friedrichs, who has argued that the exercise of power in every early modern city depended on the consent of its citizens without which coercion was ineffective. He argues that no early modern “city could be governed without the involvement and cooperation of the citizens. No matter how exclusive a grip on political authority the council maintained and no matter how loftily its members might assert their noble status, no urban government commanded the means to rule by coercion alone. Effective government always required a substantial measure of consent”.¹⁸⁶ Banishment clearly set the boundaries of what a city council would or would not tolerate, but it also indelibly marked the limits of their jurisdiction.

In February of 1545 authorities in Stuttgart determined that exile, as decreed by Imperial mandates, was a just and suitable punishment for Anabaptists who ruined (*verderben*) the landscape (*Landschaft*) by setting themselves against both the land and its people.¹⁸⁷ Civil authorities such as Stuttgart’s council, directly connected the preservation of land and people, and hence place, to civil obedience, and conversely linked civil disobedience to the ruin of both. Several Anabaptists, including Jörg Scheerer from Weiler, Bastian Breling from Eßlingen, Hans Müller from Waiblingen, Konrad Bender from Stetten, Konrad Hefner from Nürnberg, Ulrich N., and Mollnis Jörg from Großsachsenheim may have been responding to such thinking when they

¹⁸⁵ Clasen states that while some Anabaptists did leave their towns or villages after being instructed to do so, many others simply stayed in neighboring villages for a time, returning to their former places of residence on occasion to engage in trade or commerce, with many returning permanently after the passage of some time. Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History*, 407.

¹⁸⁶ Christopher R. Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City, 1450-1750* (London: Longman, 1995), 268.

¹⁸⁷ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 1010.

purportedly taught that the redemption of people and land were conditional on their practising civil disobedience.¹⁸⁸

Exile was a widespread practice during the medieval period, with a history traceable to at least the Greco-Roman period,¹⁸⁹ where it could come in the form of “exile from the court, from the city of Rome, from politics, even from the boundaries of the Empire”, as Anne J. Duggan has argued.¹⁹⁰ Although the terms and circumstances of exile could vary significantly, exile was typically a punishment reserved for “political crimes” throughout the Latin West.¹⁹¹ It was reserved for those occasions when the accused had lost favour with the ruling party.¹⁹² Such was obviously the case when Ferdinand responded to events at Münster by decreeing, in April 1534, that Anabaptists everywhere were to be rooted out and severely punished. As a general principle of the mandate, Anabaptists were to be banished from the entire land, and were to be excluded from the markets as disturbers of his principality, the kingdom, and the land.¹⁹³ A sentence of exile was generally reserved for the most

¹⁸⁸ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 72.

¹⁸⁹ See, Josh Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁹⁰ Anne J. Duggan, “The English Exile of Archbishop Øystein of Nidars (1180-83),” in Laura Napran and Elisabeth M.C. van Houts, eds., *Exile in the Middle Ages: Selected Proceedings from the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 8-11 July 2002* (Turnhout: Brepols Pub., 2004), 109.

¹⁹¹ Coy argues that banishment in Ulm functioned as social discipline, eradicating the socially unacceptable and morally deviant, and does not mention its employment in Ulm as a political tool for the expulsion of the politically undesirable. However, it should be noted that Coy’s focus is on the mid to latter part of the sixteenth century when the “intensification of local magistrates’ social control efforts” emerged in direct response to an increase in the number of complaints brought to authorities by the “neighbors, co-workers, and relatives”. Such a focus works to support Coy’s subscription to “confessionalization” theory and its presumed role in “modern state-building efforts.” Coy, *Strangers and Misfits*, 88, 132.

¹⁹² Duggan, “The English Exile of Archbishop Øystein of Nidars,” 109.

¹⁹³ *QZGT, Osterreich*, I, 282.

serious of political crimes, for those occasions in which the accused was deemed irredeemable and/or the crime unemendable.¹⁹⁴

On 3 May 1534, the city council and four mayors of Groningen followed Ferdinand's lead and issued an ordinance against all foreign Anabaptists, requiring their immediate departure from the city and the marketplace. Exiled Anabaptists were instructed not to return for a period of at least twelve years.¹⁹⁵ Although often a punishment for political crimes, exile generally precluded the possibility of successful social and economic interaction; it functioned as a form of social sentencing, becoming one of the more common forms of punishment levied against Anabaptists during the early part of the sixteenth century. While the reasons for exile or the circumstances surrounding it were not always as dramatic as events in Münster proved to be, with the refusal to debate in 1546 considered adequate justification in Hesse for the expulsion of many Anabaptists,¹⁹⁶ exile was always a coerced and enforced removal. It was a process of social, economic and political displacement that radically altered the associations and prospects of the exiled. Anabaptists in Münster adopted a radical form of the social policy exercised against them, determining that all who did not become re-baptized would be driven out of the Anabaptist city.¹⁹⁷ With fines and harsh punishments, including the possibility of capital punishment, imposed for aiding, sheltering, or otherwise helping exiled or wandering Anabaptists during the sixteenth century, their plight was made particularly severe, frequently

¹⁹⁴ Laura Napran and Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, eds., *Exile in the Middle Ages: Selected Proceedings from the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 8-11 July 2002* (Turnhout: Brepols Pub., 2004), 2.

¹⁹⁵ *DAN*, 99.

¹⁹⁶ *QZGT*, Hesse, 316.

¹⁹⁷ *DAN*, 5.

leaving exiled Anabaptists without adequate resources for securing basic human needs.

On some occasions the exile of Anabaptists was voluntary and self-imposed, consisting of voluntary departure and separation, which acted as a foundational form of cultural criticism, and a means of establishing the sort of profound separation from the larger society that sixteenth-century Anabaptists came to seek when a radical reform of the larger church was deemed impossible. On 26 August 1540 Lienhard Raiffer testified before the Brixen city magistrate that many Anabaptists were entirely willing “to move out of the land” [*alle aus dem Lande zu rücken*],¹⁹⁸ indicating that a profound detachment to place had already occurred, and the possibility of an attachment to another place developing, even if the latter remained indefinite and highly idealized. In cases of voluntary departure, where men and women became Anabaptists and subsequently left their non-Anabaptist spouse and children,¹⁹⁹ many remarried an Anabaptist spouse, ending their self-imposed exile. Ferdinand’s attribution of a long history to Anabaptists (many centuries), as evidence of their

¹⁹⁸ *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 453. Similar testimony was provided by Niclas Velder 7 years earlier in St. Michelsburg. Velder claimed that all Anabaptists were willing to leave for Moravia and never return. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 151.

¹⁹⁹ Children were on occasion deserted or sent back to a former dwelling place when their Anabaptist parent(s) entered into a new relationship or left for a new “land.” Some Anabaptists travelling to Moravia left their children in care in Schöneck. On some occasions child care seems to have been a permanent arrangement and in other cases it was a temporary state of affairs. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 112-113. Rueprecht Hueber testified on 15 October 1533 that he had on more than one occasion escorted children across the Brenner River to Schwatz from where they were sent on to Moravia. Though the identity and number of children Hueber escorted is not entirely clear, testimony on 21 October 1533 indicates that Hueber escorted Ulrich Weber’s 3 children from Gufidaun where they had been left [*abgestanden*]. Hueber also escorted the children of Peter Mauers, and the Velln and Alpiganers children from Flass. The fathers of these particular children were executed earlier. Hueber notes that on some occasions fathers accompanied their children and on other occasions they did not because they had been executed. These children had “sisters” assigned to them who provided care in Moravia. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 177, 183. However, children were not always a welcome addition to an Anabaptist community. During his testimony Lienhard Raiffer claimed that a peasant by the name of Stainer wanted to send 2 women and 9 children away from the Anabaptist camp. These women were very unwilling to go back and so it was decided that the 9 children were to be sent back but the 2 women were allowed to stay in the Anabaptist cottages [*Hütte*]. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 453.

social deviance and incorrigibility, worked to justify sentences of exile and capital punishment, while simultaneously denying sixteenth-century Anabaptists temporal and spatial specificity. By casting them as contemporary manifestations of an old error that is set against all civil, religious, and legal order and authority, Ferdinand's actions obviated any potential redistribution of "popular power" that Anabaptists might otherwise have gained in their struggle over place, and the power exercised there.

Expulsion could be permanent or temporary during the sixteenth century, with the result often depending on the political proclivities of the ruling party, and/ or the exiled person's willingness and ability to reform, as judged by the appropriate authorities. On a good many occasions Anabaptist exile was decreed permanent,²⁰⁰ with the warning typically attached that the convicted Anabaptist would be subject to capital punishment should they ever return.²⁰¹ Unlike capital punishment, exile maintained life and afforded the individual the opportunity (in theory at least) to re-enter their homeland should relevant political conditions change, or improve. The exiled person was always subject to the mercy of the current ruling political party, with Anabaptists frequently applying for readmission to the city, town or territory from which they were expelled. Hans Löffler, for example, was exiled from Augsburg on 15 June 1549, for his "offensive behaviour," and was only readmitted on 23 April 1552, when Duke Moritz gained control of Augsburg. Löffler's earlier

²⁰⁰ *OZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 7, 8,

²⁰¹ *OZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 26-27.

petitions for readmission to the city, occurring on an annual basis, had consistently been rejected.²⁰²

The exile of Anabaptists retained two important components: it functioned as punishment for a serious crime against society that was of a political nature, generally for creating a public disturbance or acting against the social peace;²⁰³ and secondly, it withdrew the powers of protection available to the citizenry. Felix Liebermann spoke of exile in terms of *Abspaltung der Friedlosigkeit* [loss of peace],²⁰⁴ as a state imposed upon, or willingly taken onto oneself that became the most “fundamental Germanic punitive concept.”²⁰⁵ The loss of peace suffered by Anabaptist exile was rooted in the knowledge that once banished they would lose the protection and care of

²⁰² Michelle Zelinsky Hanson, *Religious Identity in an Early Reformation Community: Augsburg, 1517 to 1555* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 186-187.

²⁰³ Kieckhefer notes that in banishing a person as a “heretic” “it was probably a matter of indifference whether the accused actually subscribed to heterodox beliefs, and the municipal authorities were not claiming to pass judgment on this question. What mattered to the towns was that these persons held, and doubtless also preached, religious principles that might cause disturbances within the cities.” Kieckhefer, *The Repression of Heresy*, 78. The concern of town councils, during the sixteenth century, was always with sources of potential civic disruption and not with the personal belief systems of individuals. Town councils typically asked, for example, whether an individual had been rebaptized and almost never whether or not she or he was an Anabaptist or held Anabaptist views. Hans Guderian nuances the discussion by showing that the suppression and pursuit of Anabaptists meant something very different to the council than it did to the church or the people affected. For the council it had very little to do with the theological principles being argued and was focused on maintaining order and peace and eradicating any disorderly tendencies. Hans Guderian, *Die Täufer in Augsburg* (Pfaffenhofen, Germany: W. Ludwig Verlag, 1984), 82. When individuals were found to be in “error in their belief” [*grossem irrsal im glauben*], as was the case with Anton von Wolkenstein, his wife Elsbeth von Wolkenstein, and several other individuals, clergy were summoned to instruct them in the scriptures, indicating that teaching was the prescription for theological error and not capital punishment, with the latter reserved for crimes against the state. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 220-30. On a much larger scale, Christopher W. Close has effectively argued that theological differences and reform policies were not adequate for preventing confessionally disparate cities (eg. Ulm, Augsburg and Nuremberg) from “working together to achieve mutually beneficial goals.” Christopher W. Close, *The Negotiated Reformation: Imperial Cities and the Politics of Urban Reform, 1525-1550* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 61. Similarly, during the poison scare of 1321 in the Crown of Aragon, it was political identity and not religious identity that was thought to matter most, despite Jews being suspected of complicity in the poisoning of water wells. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 100.

²⁰⁴ Felix Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, vol. 2, part 2 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1884).

²⁰⁵ Napran and van Houts, *Exile in the Middle Ages*, 1-2.

kin and larger community.²⁰⁶ In medieval Germany the family unit was the primary basis of social power and the principal economic unit.²⁰⁷ In medieval society, what R. Po-chia Hsia describes as “family power” formed the “basis of class domination”. Hsia argues that “family consciousness was “fundamental to the consciousness of townspeople in the sixteenth century”.²⁰⁸ The more relatives one had, the more physical protection and social security one enjoyed.²⁰⁹ Exiled Anabaptists were forced to live outside the protection of family and kin, and were relegated to an existence devoid of the rights and privileges afforded to citizens of the state; they were even excluded from the protection traditionally extended to visitors and strangers. As disowned subjects living in a liminal zone and generally stripped of their goods and property, exiled Anabaptists were often without the means and opportunity required to transition from separation to re-incorporation, and therefore, unable to successfully re-establish themselves in another location. The exiled Anabaptist was required to live as one who lives between, in the margins: the exiled Anabaptist was neither a citizen, nor a true visitor. By most accounts, the sixteenth-century Anabaptist was intentionally heterogeneous and incongruous vis-à-vis the larger society, with exile formalizing an adopted posture of separation. Non-conforming Anabaptists, who desired to live outside the norms of sixteenth-century society, were required to live as foreigners, as persons whose “true” place is elsewhere despite their physical presence here. By definition, exiled Anabaptists had

²⁰⁶ Napran and van Houts, *Exile in the Middle Ages*, 2.

²⁰⁷ Erich Mascke, *Die Familie in der deutschen Stadt des späten Mittelalters* (Heidelberg, 1980).

²⁰⁸ R. Po-chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1984), 16. Hsia argues that conflicts between guilds and ruling families were the product of, and represent, “two forms of corporative power, the craft guild and the family.” Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster*, 27.

²⁰⁹ R. Po-chia Hsia, “Münster and the Anabaptists,” in R. Po-chia Hsia, *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 61.

no place here and must live elsewhere. The profound separation Anabaptists sought to establish makes sentences of exile ironic, if not seemingly appropriate.

Substantial disparities in sentencing convicted Anabaptists are evident: geographic and temporal circumstances appear to have made all the difference when it came to punishing convicted Anabaptists. Sentences varied from territory to territory, from person to person and even from one day to the next. The daughter of Teets Gerryts was banished from Friesland 1 July 1535 for a period of twenty days as a result of her re-baptism. The daughter of Gheertyen Jans (wife of Frans van Birdaert) was banished from Friesland for one year two days later on 3 July 1535 for her re-baptism.²¹⁰ Both women recanted their actions and plead for the court's mercy. In sharp contrast, Melchior Wüsthoff and Anna Zürndörfer were sentenced to permanent exile in Göppingen on 6 March 1531, with the warning attached that they would forfeit their goods and lives should they ever return for any reason, despite having recanted their Anabaptist activities and in spite of their pledge of unqualified obedience to the church, its councils, ordinances and statutes.²¹¹ Peeter Schoenmaker was first imprisoned and then exiled from Friesland for 3 years on 16 May 1534 following his re-baptism, whereas the schoolmaster Jacop van Bommele was only banned for a period of 20 days on 16 May 1534 for his re-baptism though he was strongly warned that he would forfeit his life should he return early.²¹² When Gert Ripperts's daughter (24 July 1537),²¹³ Anthonys Koet (30 March 1538),²¹⁴ and

²¹⁰ *DAN*, I, 48.

²¹¹ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 25-26.

²¹² *DAN*, 14.

²¹³ *DAN*, 53-54.

²¹⁴ *DAN*, 54-55.

Symon Frericxzoon (9 May 1545)²¹⁵ appeared before the court in Friesland, each was charged with failure to attend church services in clear violation of open Imperial mandates and placards. Ripperts's daughter and Koet were banished for a period of 20 days, but in the case of Frericxzoon the exile was permanent. The crimes for which an Anabaptist could be exiled were very broad, as the case of Tzalinck Sipkezoon, a shoemaker from Dockum, proves. On 19 July 1544 he was banished for a period of two years when a book written by Menno Simons, and prohibited by Imperial decree, was found in his possession.²¹⁶

The punishment meted out by town councils does not appear to have been gender specific when the sentence involved exile, but tended to reflect their assessment of the severity of the crime and consideration of mitigating circumstances, as well as the likelihood of the accused's amelioration. In Hesse, authorities determined that all non-resident [*hergelaufner*] Anabaptists who were not property holders were to be permanently banished immediately, whereas resident Anabaptists were given one month in which to sell their property before their expulsion.²¹⁷ The female spouse and children of an Anabaptist, who were not themselves Anabaptist, were permitted to stay in Hesse,²¹⁸ whereas in most other areas the innocent spouse and children of a convicted Anabaptist shared the same fate as the male Anabaptist, and were forced to suffer the same exile. Though often allowed to leave on their own,

²¹⁵ *DAN*, 74-75.

²¹⁶ *DAN*, I, 69-70.

²¹⁷ *QZGT, Hesse*, 138.

²¹⁸ *QZGT, Hesse*, 138-139.

as in Landau where a council resolution in 1528 required that all re-baptized persons leave the city,²¹⁹ those who refused to leave were generally forcibly removed.²²⁰

Conclusion

In each of the above cases the trial was conducted in a civil court, with the various charges early Anabaptists faced presented as violations of civil, imperial and royal law and disruptive of social norms and established community. Civil authorities typically determined that the crimes committed by Anabaptists, whether re-baptism or the failure to attend church, were crimes against the laws, customs and ordinances of society and Christian community. Banishment, forced social and physical displacement for a fixed term or life, was consistently presented as the more lenient punishment option available to authorities. Because Anabaptists set themselves against the Church, which was the primary mechanism for defining and maintaining Christian community, convicted Anabaptists were forced to live outside established social boundaries through their physical removal. Thomas A. Brady has argued that the medieval sacramental church and monastic communities sought to satisfy the “thirst for Christian community,” and though this quest was “reinvigorated by the urban reformation” it was not satisfied by the medieval city.²²¹ As “seekers of godly community” and dissatisfied critics of the Church, Anabaptists were forced to investigate radical alternatives for community in an effort to satisfy Anabaptist sociological and psychological needs. They were forced, as Brady has argued, to “wander about until the day when a great Christian commune, built according to South German specifications, would arise at Münster on the rain-swept Westphalian

²¹⁹ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 430.

²²⁰ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 436.

²²¹ Brady, “In Search of the Godly City,” 30.

plain.”²²² It is to an analysis of the innovative design, construction, and maintenance of this radical Anabaptist commune as our first positive case study that we now turn.

²²² Brady, “In Search of the Godly City,” 30.

5. *Building Utopia: Theatre and Myth in Anabaptist Münster*

The ritual program and socio-political actions of sixteenth-century Anabaptists were gauged by a good number of their contemporaries to be actively set against and severely detrimental to the medieval church and larger society.¹ Numerous civic and religious authorities of the sixteenth century declared, at various times and in various ways, that Anabaptist actions were singularly focused on the destruction of the existing church and time-honoured medieval society, including all their inter-related systems, traditions, programs, and authority structures.² From the perspective of these authorities, Anabaptists were indisputably socially irresponsible and unquestionably politically hostile, despite any claims they and their sympathizers might make regarding Anabaptist “moral superiority,” “pure spirituality,” or “political disinterestedness.”³ Authorities often insisted that sixteenth-century Anabaptist thought and action were directed at the creation of an authority vacuum through the displacement and dislocation of long-established authority structures,⁴

¹ Clear distinctions between Anabaptist “crimes” against the state and their heterodox “religious” practices were seldom made by sixteenth-century authorities. They were not as separate during the period in question as we may be inclined to think today. It was virtually impossible for any individual or group to claim that their interests were purely “religious,” or that their “religious actions” did not have political consequences. Rituals such as baptism and/or rebaptism were always decisive political acts. See for example, *QZGT, Bayern*, 41-42.

² Martin Luther, for example, complained in 1532 that Anabaptists wanted to “poison others,” with Anabaptists turning people away from the church as part of their effort to tear it apart and ultimately destroy it. *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, WA 30: 3, p. 510-521. King Ferdinand issued a mandate on 28 November 1539 warning all authorities to watch out for Anabaptists who were intent on tearing apart the Catholic faith and long-established church. He instructed authorities to comply with all imperial mandates and to always act decisively against Anabaptists. *QZGT, Bayern*, 80.

³ See, for example, Jakob Otther’s warning to the faithful regarding Anabaptists. *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 127-130.

⁴ As late as 14 February 1551, Imperial authorities continued to insist that Anabaptists did not acknowledge any authority, and consequently, that they did not wish to submit to any authority. Anabaptists were often described as persons who remained persistent in their errors and very difficult to persuade. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 8*. Such a characterization was also applied to peasants during the Peasants’ War, who were labelled social anarchists because they disparaged “all authority and lordship,” and religious fanatics because of the emphasis they placed on “Christian freedom.” While the Peasants’ War was primarily a movement of the agrarian class, Anabaptist

and therefore, the destruction of all that authorities deemed desirable, substantial and essential in traditional society. Many of their harshest critics concluded that sixteenth-century Anabaptists were little more than a loose collection of destructive malcontents who were semi-organized and negatively oriented.⁵ Their detractors frequently charged sixteenth-century Anabaptists with failing to investigate, suggest, develop, or otherwise provide alternatives for the socio-political places, ideological systems, and authority structures they attacked. The adoption of such an interpretive understanding was largely responsible for the near eradication of Swiss and South German Anabaptists, and prompted large emigrations to Moravia, Westphalia and the Netherlands during the sixteenth century.⁶

Much of the hostility directed at Anabaptists by sixteenth-century civic and religious authorities, as well as much of the moral, social, and political criticism levelled by later generations of historians appears to be directly related to what is judged to be the socially irresponsible, morally questionable, and politically hostile (or its twin politically naïve) nature of Anabaptist action and thought. On those rare occasions that Anabaptist actions have not been interpreted as entirely hostile to the medieval socio-political order and its related institutions, sixteenth-century Anabaptists are considered profoundly indifferent to them, with Anabaptist

Münster was the creation of the craftsmen and some representatives of the patriciate. In Ferdinand's decree of August 1527 he twice links Anabaptist disobedience and insurrection to earlier (peasants') teaching regarding Christian freedom. *QZGT, Österreich*, I, 3-12.

⁵ On 15 April 1535, Duke Ulrich instructed his magistrates to watch for Anabaptists he described as persons who tend to assemble secretly. Speaking, preaching, assembling, and covenanting together in private were generally treated with suspicion, and tended to be seen as conspiratorial. Magistrates were frequently told to treat Anabaptists as they would gang members [*rotten*]. *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 38.

⁶ James M. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 8.

aspirations for separation frequently cited as evidence of socio-political indifference.⁷ The portrayal of Anabaptists as members of a wholly negative or even destructive socio-political movement has dogged the study of early Anabaptist history since the time of Heinrich Bullinger in the sixteenth century, and continues to be reflected in some of the relatively recent secondary literature.⁸ Willem de Bakker, Michael Driedger and James M. Stayer have argued that much of the blame can be placed at the feet of “sixteenth-century anti-Anabaptist polemicists”, who have “shaped the narrative framework employed by “subsequent generations of scholars”.⁹ With respect to Anabaptist Münster, they argue that such an approach tends to “exaggerate the debauchery of the Anabaptists, distort their motives, and pay insufficient attention to the events that led to their rise in power.”¹⁰

However, sixteenth-century Anabaptists and Anabaptist action were not simply or exclusively directed toward the destruction of medieval churches, culture and society. They were not anarchists who resisted and rejected all authority while failing or refusing to take substantial steps toward the realization of alternative

⁷ James M Stayer, for example, has argued that sixteenth-century Anabaptists were “apolitical,” employing the term as a descriptor for an interpretive position in which the pursuit of “ethical goals” is considered to be a profoundly different activity from “political” pursuits. James M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1972), 3. Stayer’s theoretical position is in sharp contrast to that of Michel Foucault who has constructed a strong argument for an inseparable link between power, knowledge, and truth or “right.” “Truth,” (and we can substitute theology) according to Foucault, is not fundamentally separate from power, and formed the ideological justification for its exercise during the medieval and early modern periods. Michel Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other writings 1972-1977*, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 93.

⁸ Claus-Peter Clasen, for example, has argued that the socio-political program of sixteenth-century Anabaptists would have “threatened to destroy sixteenth-century society altogether” just as Anabaptist action would “have threatened any form of civilized life.” Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525-1618: Switzerland, Austria, Moravia, South and Central Germany* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1972), 208.

⁹ Willem de Bakker, Michael Driedger, and James M. Stayer, *Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster, 1530-35* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2009), 5.

¹⁰ De Bakker, Driedger, and Stayer, *Bernhard Rothmann*, 5.

structures and systems for church and the larger society. Though Anabaptist ritualization and their refusal to attend church were indicative of their profound rejection of the sixteenth-century church and medieval society,¹¹ their actions were also important components in a program designed to establish alternative models, structures, and principles for the exercise of power, which would necessarily generate a very different form and structure for society. Though they constituted a resistance movement, sixteenth-century Anabaptist action retains an observable and definable positive orientation. My analysis indicates that though they were very much products of their time and culture, Anabaptists sought to provide opportunities for imagining alternative socio-political models and power structures. They provided opportunities for imagining freedom from the dominant discourses of power through their development and utilization of the plenitude of “aesthetic space” that retains the ability to transcend coercion and dominance, even if such a suspension of “reality” and its transcendence are only temporary.¹²

One such “positive” attempt to imagine radical socio-political structures and investigate alternative models for the exercise of power was the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster (23 February 1534 – 24 June 1535).¹³ This short-lived, peculiar, and

¹¹ Franklin Hamlin Littell has argued that the “real issue” was not the act of “baptism,” but rather “a bitter and irreducible struggle between two mutually exclusive concepts of the church.” Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church: A Study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (Boston: Star King Press, 1958), 14.

¹² Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion, and Resistance* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 217. Such a statement does not ignore the brutal violence of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster. It does willingly concede, however, that a substantial existential gap existed between the rhetoric employed in the Anabaptist Kingdom, and the conditions its inhabitants faced.

¹³ On 23 February 1534, Münster’s Evangelical city council was replaced with an Anabaptist majority, signally the beginning of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster. All Evangelicals and Catholics remaining in the city were forced to either leave or accept rebaptism on 27 February 1534. On 24 June 1535, the siege army of Prince-Bishop Franz von Waldeck and his allied forces entered Münster,

wildly imaginative Anabaptist social construction was vehemently rejected and violently suppressed by sixteenth-century religious and civic authorities. Historians have tended to interpret this brief but colourful experiment as a “debacle,”¹⁴ or “catastrophe,”¹⁵ with its principal actors generally judged to have been “fanatical.”¹⁶ Church historians are generally scandalized by events in Anabaptist Münster, and are unable to make sense of this episode in Reformation history, and react negatively. All that the Anabaptist Kingdom sought to do is systematically ignored, and that which it sought to represent is rejected as deviant and aberrant.¹⁷ Assessments that claim the Anabaptist Kingdom was a total, ludicrous, or ridiculous effort as judged by its short duration tend to be focused on the social, political, and/or moral failings of this radical Anabaptist construction. Scholars have, as a result, demonstrated scant interest in the descriptions, declarations, and self-declared purposes of Münster Anabaptists. Admittedly, to some degree, the current state of affairs is the product of the available sources, with the vast majority of extant records being the product of the

defeated the Anabaptists, and took control of the city. The bishop’s allies included Landgrave Philip of Hesse, the prince-bishop Hermann von der Wied of Cologne, and the Catholic duke of Jülich-Cleve.

¹⁴ R. Po-chia Hsia’s otherwise careful study of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster does not avoid this type of dismissive assessment. R. Po-chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535-1618* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1984), 54. See also R. Po-chia Hsia, “Münster and the Anabaptists,” in *The German People and the Reformation*, edited by R. Po-chia Hsia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Hsia’s teleological argument assumes that the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster was destined for destruction and failure by virtue of its internal structure, while attributing a redemptive role to outside forces and conditions. Hsia writes: “Münster was saved from her fate only by the intervention of outside powers and by Bishop Franz’s predicaments.” Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster*, 18.

¹⁵ Sigrun Haude, *In the Shadow of “Savage Wolves”: Anabaptist Münster and the German Reformation during the 1530s* (Boston: Humanities Press, 2000), 5.

¹⁶ *Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, vol. 3 (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1955-1990), 778.

¹⁷ Anthony Arthur, *The Tailor King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 1. The work of de Bakker Bakker, Driedger, and Stayer has taken a slightly different approach. They develop a causal link, arguing that the shape of Anabaptist Münster was a direct product of its circumstances, with the Anabaptist Kingdom “logically” emerging from pre-Reformation Münster. De Bakker, Driedger, Stayer, *Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster*.

Kingdom's "enemies." Few documents produced by Münster Anabaptists have survived.¹⁸ Therefore, much of our knowledge regarding the inner workings, day-to-day living and events of Anabaptist Münster must be generated from third party sources, which consist primarily of the accounts of those who left Anabaptist Münster, and the testimonies and writings of those who did not actually live in the city during the period in question. Heinrich Gresbeck's chronicle, *Berichte der Augenzeugen über das Münsterische Wiedertäuferreich* [An Eyewitness Report Concerning the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster],¹⁹ is an exceptional record in that, though it is openly hostile to the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, it is an eye-witness report, providing the reader with a chronological record of events. It is the only first-hand account of how life was lived in the Anabaptist Kingdom, revealing knowledge available only to someone who lived in the city of Münster for the duration of the Anabaptist Kingdom. It is, as the title suggests, one person's eyewitness account of events as they unfolded.

5.1 Theme, Thesis and Theatre

My reading of Heinrich Gresbeck's, *Berichte der Augenzeugen*, Hermann von Kerssenbrock's *Anabaptistici Furoris Monasterium Inclitum Westphaliae Metropolitim Evertentis Historica Narratio* [Narrative History of the Ruin of the Anabaptist

¹⁸ The writings of Bernhard Rothmann (1495-1535?) are the single largest exception. See Robert Stupperich, ed., *Die Schriften der Münsterischen Täufer und ihrer Gegner*, vol. I., *Die Schriften Bernhard Rothmanns* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970). Hereafter abbreviated, *SBR*.

¹⁹ Carl Adolf Cornelius, ed., *Die Geschichtsquellen des Bistums Münster*, vol. 2, Heinrich Gresbeck, *Berichte der Augenzeugen über das Münsterische Wiedertäuferreich* (Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1853). Hereafter abbreviated *BDA*.

Madness in the Renowned Westphalian Metropolis of Münster],²⁰ and Bernhard Rothmann's *Restitution* [Restoration], *Bericht von der Wrake* [Report on Vengeance], and *Van den Rike Christi* [On Christ's Kingdom], develops a place-focused interpretation of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster by reading this unique sixteenth-century social construction through the lens of Münsterite descriptions and declarations.²¹ These texts contain evidence of what exactly it was that Münsterites claimed they were creating and promoting with their production of the Anabaptist Kingdom. They further inform us that the construction of the Anabaptist Kingdom was not ultimately being undertaken for Münsterite advantage, but was fully expected to benefit persons living outside the city. It was designed, structured and presented as something that would be of significant advantage to any perceptive individuals forming Anabaptist Münster's critical audience. In this chapter, I argue that Anabaptist Münster was a theatre designed to concretize certain biblical mandates,²² and secondly, that it functioned to parody sixteenth-century society and the literal implementation or application of certain biblical principles. It was spectacle and spectre simultaneously. The present was experienced as a reincarnation of the past through which a better future would emerge. Anabaptist Münster was a method of

²⁰ Heinrich Detmer, ed., *Hermann von Kerrsbroch Anabaptistici Furoris Monasterium Inclitam Westphaliae Metropolitim Evertentis Historica Narratio*, 2 vols. (Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1899-1900). Hereafter abbreviated, *AFM*.

²¹ The term "Münsterite" is used throughout this project as a descriptor for those persons living in the city of Münster from 23 February 1534 to 24 June 1535, irrespective of the degree to which they did or did not subscribe to and/or support the various programs, initiatives, innovations, and actions associated with the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster. At times it will be necessary to distinguish individuals and groups within this monolithic term. Generally speaking, the term is a convenient and reasonably accurate term to describe the lives, thoughts, and actions of the inhabitants of Münster during this period of its history when it is divorced from any polemical considerations or associations.

²² "Theatre" shares the same root as the word "theory" (*theoria*), and refers to the matter of looking, or beholding attentively. David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Premodern Situation* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 99f. Cited in Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 23.

exploring community and expressions of power for the purpose of developing understanding so that society might be re-formed. Anabaptist efforts to sincerely implement, and at other times parody, biblical mandates resulted in their actions running in parallel, and at other times cross-cutting each other.

Social drama is not a recent invention, or a peculiar cultural phenomenon separate from “everyday life,” but infuses all forms of social life, as Victor Turner has observed.²³ Everyday social life is inherently theatrical such that even in its “apparently quietist moments” it is “pregnant” with drama. Theatre explores and exposes a community’s weaknesses, calling a given society’s authorities, leaders and cultural systems to task.²⁴ Social theatre operates as a creative process that desacralizes a community’s most cherished values, symbols, beliefs, and practices through their exposure, while portraying and attempting to resolve a community’s most characteristic inequities and conflicts.²⁵ Theatre, like church, is a didactic medium containing strong elements of play reducing the audience’s “reality” to recognizable, comprehensible and organisable units; theatre and church do not create order, they are order.

In constructing the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as social theatre,²⁶ I argue that it held a negative function (parodying biblical mandates and certain features of

²³ Victor Turner speaks of “the “theatrical” potential of social life”, structuring his argument that social life is always “pregnant” with “social drama.” Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 9-11.

²⁴ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 11. Turner argues that theatre is a “forceful” “genre of cultural performance” and “closer to life than most performative genres,” which Clifford Geertz as termed “metacommentary,” making the employment of theatre for investigating Münsterite social and political interests and concerns particularly appropriate. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 104-105.

²⁵ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 11.

²⁶ According to Karl-Heinz Kirchhoff, the characterization of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as a religio-social, social revolutionary, class struggle, or popular movement has largely depended on whether the scholar privileges Anabaptist teaching or their institutional innovations. Karl-Heinz

sixteenth-century society) while simultaneously investigating positive alternative socio-political models and power structures.²⁷ What was constant in Anabaptist Münster, from a socio-political and even physical or material perspective, was the constant transformation of the city. As a stage Anabaptist Münster was both the same and undergoing constant change. Münsterites frequently stated that they did not engage in any violence that was not widely practiced in the dominant society.²⁸ Internal dissent and resistance in Anabaptist Münster, for example, were dealt with through executions, just as they were in the larger society. Münsterite rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding, Münsterite violence and the meanings ascribed to it cannot be accepted as attenuated just because it mimicked the violence of the dominant society. Nor can the violence to which sixteenth-century Anabaptists were systematically subjected be, as David Nirenberg cogently argues, understood in isolation, apart from “the political, economic, and cultural structures” within which it

Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster 1534/35* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1973), 78. He has also argued that events at Münster cannot be satisfactorily explained through a “purely sociological approach” [*reinsoziologische Betrachtungsweise*]. Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 88. Kirchhoff’s comments concerning methodological approaches to the study of the Anabaptist Kingdom approximate my own assessment, and prompted my investigation into an “alternative” approach. However, unlike my own study, Kirchhoff’s analysis privileges available statistical information, and he tends to use a rather narrow definition of the term “sociological,” often identifying it with an individual or group’s economic circumstances.

²⁷ Carnival, cross-dressing, imitating, and parodying religious traditions and ethnicities was a well-established pastime in Münster prior to the construction of the Anabaptist Kingdom. Kerssenbrock notes all these things enjoyed the privilege of being “ancestral custom.” Each carnival activity was tied to a particular guild and was concerned with the creation of a “public spectacle” for observation purposes. Anabaptist madness and guild carnival are frequently paralleled if not entirely synonymous in Kerssenbrock’s understanding. *AFM*, 82-91.

²⁸ The execution of Anabaptists for their peculiar ritual practice, and the killing of anyone leaving Anabaptist Münster are just two examples. Executions in Anabaptist Münster, like executions in the dominant society, were employed to maintain a particular type of social order, reflecting adopted socio-political values. De Bakker, Driedger, and Stayer have argued that “Nothing the Anabaptists did while in charge of Münster compares with the brutality and cruelty the victors directed against three of the captured Anabaptist leaders.” De Bakker, Driedger, and Stayer, *Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster*, 1. They may well be right, but it remains entirely unclear (to me) how one can quantify violence for comparative purposes.

occurred during the sixteenth century.²⁹ Münsterite Anabaptist efforts can be described as the production of a “theatre of disorder” in which their presentation of social “realities” and the exercise of power ranged from the absurd to the vanguard, demonstrating the accuracy of Wallace Stevens’ statement: “A violent order is disorder”.³⁰ Münsterite theatre was first and foremost the construction of a place for imagining social, political, moral, and religious alternatives through the “exposure” and destabilization of the existing order. In its display of disorder an important first step was taken toward the investigation and implementation of radical social change. Turning the sixteenth-century socio-political world upside down, and its ideological systems inside out, was a method for setting them aright once again. It was in dramatizing and self-consciously transgressing the parameters of the existing socio-political order, its structure, principles, and values, and the coercive power it exercised that Anabaptist Münster functioned as a place for imagining new socio-political possibilities. I conclude that the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster is not best interpreted as a tragedy, debacle, aberration, or disaster, as has frequently been suggested,³¹ but as a display of disorder through which an avenue for socio-political

²⁹ David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 11.

³⁰ William W. Demastes, *Theatre of Chaos: Beyond Absurdism, into Orderly Disorder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), v.

³¹ Stayer has argued that since “the 1960s Münster Anabaptism has been the object of new research that has made it less lurid and more intelligible by relating it more successfully to the rest of Melchiorite Anabaptism”. He further states that the approach adopted “has been analytical and it has generally avoided moralizing rhetoric and facile comparisons with the bizarre sects or totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century.” Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 123. Stayer’s comments are an attempt to reintegrate and better contextualize this phase of Münster’s history within broader sixteenth-century history. Of considerable importance to Stayer is the relation of the Anabaptist Kingdom “to the rest of Melchiorite Anabaptism.” A major problem with such an approach is that key protagonists and important shapers of the Anabaptist Kingdom, such as Jan van Leiden, claimed to possess very little knowledge of Melchior Hoffmann, and their thinking often appears diametrically opposed to that of Hoffmann.

change was made available, even if it did not establish a clear direction for further action.

In the first major section of this chapter, I provide a brief description of conditions in Münster leading up to the creation of the Anabaptist Kingdom. I include a short retelling of some of the Kingdom's major features, and a brief description of its demise and aftermath. In the following section I argue that the social model Münsterites self-consciously provided involved the investigation of what was humanly possible in the sixteenth-century socio-political world.³² Their construction held a strong didactic component as it was being presented for the purpose of developing the audience's understanding. In the third major section of this chapter, I argue that interpreting the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as theatre is made possible by establishing the priority of form over content, and by drawing on theatre's suitability as a medium for the presentation of passion and the study of power. I show that a theatre audience always participates in the deception being presented, willingly abrogating one reality so that another can be imagined and investigated. In such a construction it is the mundane world and not the imaginative world of theatre that is charged with being illusory and altogether false. The final major section of this chapter advances an argument for understanding the Münsterite destruction of church buildings as absolutely necessary for the investigation of an alternative form for society, given that these buildings were inextricably linked to traditional ideological systems and structures, and intimately associated with the dominant discourse's exercise of power.

³² Haude has argued that Anabaptist Münster "represents a cristallization point both for opinion and behavior. Haude, *In the Shadow of "Savage Wolves"*, 2.

The complex of power relations that were under investigation in Anabaptist Münster included novel familial, social, and political arrangements.³³ Primary responsibility in the moral and social order being explored was set in relation to other Münsterites, and not generally in relation to those outside this clearly-defined community, even though Münsterites claimed that their audience was the primary beneficiary of the dramatic action being presented. Although the community structures and ideological systems being articulated were presented for the audience's evaluation and acceptance, they were not necessarily presented for criticism. Münsterite structures and systems were components in their construction of a representational world by symbolic means.³⁴ Even Münsterite resistance to the power exercised against them by oppositional forces was both real and symbolic, and frequently came in the form of dramatic theatre, with Münsterites often meeting the exercise of power with farcical drama and rituals of resistance, which functioned to neutralize and subvert long-established relations of power. Although heavily symbolic, Münsterite theatre was always a type of "life event and not a copy of one,"³⁵ to use Timothy J. Wiles's terminology, presenting not "what might happen," as Aristotle has argued, but rather "what actually happens," with all Münsterite dramatic action consisting of "the fragmentary, contingent, time-bound, and unrepeatable activities which have the advantage of being real, not ideal", to use

³³ During its short duration, Anabaptist Münster transitioned to a collation government consisting of guild masters, patriciate, and a prophet, to an elders' constitution and finally to a theocratic monarchy, all of which were said to be divinely instituted at the time of their inauguration, and each of which marked a decisive break with the earlier form.

³⁴ Robert J. Landy, *Drama Therapy: Concepts and Practices* (Springfield, IL: C.C. Thomas, 1986), 67.

³⁵ Timothy J. Wiles, *The Theatre Event: Modern Theories of Performance* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 114.

Wiles' language.³⁶ As a living theatre, Anabaptist Münster presented the “actuality of contingent activity as opposed to the imitativeness of ideal action”, effectively employing theatre's didactic possibilities for the profit of the broader sixteenth-century world.³⁷

Kerssenbrock's introduction states that Münster's common guild hall [*omnium curiarum totius urbis domus est communis*] is rightly called a *spectando spectaria domus* or *Schowhus* [viewing hall],³⁸ revealing to his reader that the *Schowhus* functioned as the primary place for lay socio-political collaborations and the formulation of lay political agendas.³⁹ It was here that public opinion [*vulgi opinionones*] was “stitched together” by the labouring classes and then acted on, with the *Schowhus* serving as the guild council hall and responsible for introducing every “civil disturbance” [*civilis motus*] and “religious innovation” [*varias in religione novationes*], according to Kerssenbrock.⁴⁰ Münster's *Schowhus* operated as a theatre in which social, religious, and political novelties, including proposed changes to ritual practice, were discussed and investigated; it was the place most closely associated with the advent of Anabaptists in Münster, in Kerssenbrock's thinking.⁴¹

³⁶ Wiles, *The Theatre Event*, 115.

³⁷ Wiles, *The Theatre Event*, 116.

³⁸ *AFM*, 77.

³⁹ *AFM*, 77. Kerssenbrock states that the *Schowhus* was the primary meeting place (from a lay perspective) for dealing with matters concerning the common good of the city. A summons to the *Schowhus* was always an important matter, according to Johannes Windemoller (spokesperson for Knipperdolling and Anabaptist Münster's aldermen). It was associated with the common good of the city, and was identified with the exaltation of God's glory [*Dei glorium illustrandam*], the salvation of the city's burghers [*omnium civium salutem*], and the enhancement of personal peace and freedom [*pacem libertatemque augendam pertineat*]. *AFM*, 213-214. On 15 July 1532 guild masters summoned their membership to the *Schowhus* for deliberations on reform even as councilmen were discussing the same issues in their chamber. *AFM*, 217. The *Schowhus* functioned as a “commoners” equivalent of city hall.

⁴⁰ *AFM*, 77.

⁴¹ *AFM*, 77, and 213.

The practice of drawing theoretical parallels between theatre and ritual is not new, with their points of convergence frequently investigated and developed by interested theorists.⁴² Ritual space is by its very nature, it has been argued, analogous to dramatic space, with ritual activity always inherently and fundamentally dramatic.⁴³ Unlike “real life,” theatre as a form of ritual practice embraces disorder and resistance, embedding and exercising significant power while serving an educational function.⁴⁴ It can and does effectively channel resistance and subversion, proving instrumental in provoking socio-political change.⁴⁵ The Münsterite choice of living theatre was, therefore, the appropriation of a pre-existing mechanism (*Schowhus*), and the employment of an eminently suitable medium for the expression of sixteenth-century socio-political resistance, and the presentation of radical socio-political alternatives. In destabilizing the dominant discourse Münsterite theatre opened up a space wherein previously excluded voices could find expression, and repressed actions were provided a forum for their realization.

5.2 Dramatic Structure of the Anabaptist Kingdom

Act I Internal strife and division are prevalent in Münster. The social demographic begins to change in favour of a foreign Anabaptist population.

Act II John Matthys comes to Münster and provides charismatic leadership. The traditional city council and social structure are maintained but leadership and decision making are provided by God’s angry prophet.

⁴² See, Phil Jones, *Drama as Therapy: Theory, Practice and Research*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge: 2007), 244.

⁴³ Jones, *Drama as Therapy*, 245.

⁴⁴ Martha Ellen Stortz, “Ritual Power, Ritual Authority,” in Michael B. Aune and Valerie Marinis, eds., *Religious and Social Ritual: Interdisciplinary Explorations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 122.

⁴⁵ Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 21.

Act III Jan van Leiden supersedes Matthys after his death and is proclaimed king. Münster city council and all guilds are disbanded, and churches are destroyed. An alternative order for Münsterite society is established; 12 elders are appointed in place of a traditional council, and polygamy and a strict form of community of goods are instituted. Rising dramatic action suggests growth, development, and improvement on all fronts.

Act IV The installation of *Herzöge* (dukes) by divine ordinance is ordered: a surveillance form of government is introduced and the 12 elders are displaced. Famine intensifies, widespread disillusionment sets in, and the Anabaptist Kingdom is betrayed by two of its own. Dénouement is decisively established when the enemy enters the city and most Münsterites are too weak to fight.

Epilogue The bloody spectacle: the violent destruction of the Anabaptist Kingdom and the torture and execution of its major players are completed. Order is re-established and the perpetrators of disorder are put on permanent display as a warning to future generations.

5.3 Writing the Anabaptist Kingdom

The credibility and veracity of Hermann von Kerksenbrock's *Anabaptistici furoris Monasterium inclitam Westphaliae metropolim evertentis historica narratio* [Narrative History of the Ruin of the Anabaptist Madness in the Renowned Westphalian Metropolis of Münster],⁴⁶ rests on three types of sources, according to

⁴⁶ De Bakker, Driedger, and Stayer have argued that Kerksenbrock's narrative has "dominated" the study of "Anabaptist rule in Münster", but argue that "Kerksenbrock has been systematically discredited as a historical source" and that his "chronicle has little worth for serious historians of Anabaptist Münster". De Bakker, Driedger, and Stayer, *Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster*, 9-10. Many of the archival sources to which Kerksenbrock makes reference are no longer extant.

its author: the narrative is founded on the author's own eyewitness testimony,⁴⁷ the trustworthy eyewitness testimony of others living at the time, and on a broad range of archival documents and official records.⁴⁸ Kerssenbrock claims he wrote to explain and contextualize the events of 1534-1535 in Münster; to serve his homeland, prevent future generations from forgetting, and as an encouragement to others to write better histories.⁴⁹ Kerssenbrock was an educator, devout Catholic, member of the higher church clergy, and came from an old noble family;⁵⁰ he was also a polemicist, who was obviously and unabashedly hostile toward sixteenth-century Anabaptists and their activities in Münster.⁵¹ His account of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster directly links the guilds operating in Münster to Münster's Anabaptists,⁵² with the guilds held responsible for creating discord where peace in civic affairs and a concord

⁴⁷ Kerssenbrock testifies that he was in the city of Münster from 29 January 1534 to 27 February 1534. He was a young adolescent at the time of the Anabaptist Kingdom, and finished his chronicle approximately 30 years later. For a brief biography of Kerssenbrock see, C. A. Cornelius's introduction in, *Berichte der Augenzeugen über das Münsterische Wiedertäuferreich*, vol. 2, of *Die Geschichtsquellen des Bistums Münster* (Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1853), xxxvii-lx, and Heinrich Detmer, ed., *Hermann von Kerssenbrock Anabaptistici Furoris Monasterium Inclitam Westphaliae Metropolitim Evertentis Historica Narratio*, 2 vols. (Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1899-1900), 1*-89*.

⁴⁸ Cornelius argues that Kerssenbrock relies so heavily on archival sources that at times the book is simply "archival documents strung together like a set of beads." *BDA*, "Introduction," xlvi-xlvii.

⁴⁹ *AFM*, 1-2.

⁵⁰ Heinrich Detmer, *Hermann A. Kerssenbrock: Anabaptistici Furoris Monasterium Inclitam Westphaliae Metropolitim Evertentis Historica Narratio*, 2 vols. (Münster: Theissing Buchhandlung, 1899-1900), especially 1*. Kerssenbrock was the rector of the cathedral school in Münster, but only an adolescent during the Anabaptist Kingdom. *BDA*, xxxvii.

⁵¹ Kerssenbrock wishes to inform his reader and to warn future generations about Anabaptists so that they might reject them. His hostility toward sixteenth-century Anabaptists is openly and clearly expressed in his *Anabaptistici furoris Monasterium*. Kerssenbrock's hostility is also subtly discerned from his overt refusal to use any Anabaptist sources (aside from those occasions in which Anabaptist thinking and action are embedded in official correspondence, etc.), and his complete unwillingness to understand them except as originators and perpetrators of evil. Kerssenbrock does provide a list of what he calls "Rothmann's Articles" in his text, but he also makes it clear to his reader that he has done so to demonstrate how dramatically they deviate from Catholic [acceptable/true] doctrine, and the extent to which Rothmann's thinking changed over time. See, *AFM*, 177-189 for a record of Rothmann's "doctrines," and *AFM*, 190 for Kerssenbrock's comments on them.

⁵² Hsia has argued that it was Kerssenbrock's boldness in blaming the guilds "for the debacle" that resulted in Kerssenbrock being named in a libel suit, with "his manuscript seized by city council and its publication prohibited." Hsia, "Münster and the Anabaptists," 65.

of harmony between laity and clergy had existed.⁵³ The guilds are held responsible for generating a particular set of conditions that Anabaptists and reform-minded preachers such as Bernhard Rothmann effectively exploited, with Rothmann personally bearing a considerable portion of the blame for events as they unfolded from 1532 to 1535, in Kerssenbrock's thinking.⁵⁴

Heinrich Gresbeck's account of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster stands as a sharp contrast to Kerssenbrock's narrative. Unlike Kerssenbrock's "scholarly approach" and his dependence on official letters, documents and other archival sources, Gresbeck claims to write quite simply of events as he maintains he saw them. He admits that he deliberately chose to describe only those things that were of some importance to him,⁵⁵ with his descriptions and commentary generally consisting of relatively simple and clear statements. Gresbeck's chronicle is the only known record we have that was written by someone who lived inside the city of Münster for the duration of the Anabaptist Kingdom, and who was, therefore, both a participant

⁵³ *AFM*, 76-77, 110, 111-14. According to Kerssenbrock there were 16 guilds operating in Münster. Hsia has argued that "[s]ubstantial disparity in wealth existed among the guilds and within each trade. [...] The rivalry between guild leaders and the magistrates was not a struggle between the more democratically minded burghers and an oligarchy, but between two elites who relied on two forms of corporative power, the craft guild and the family." Hsia, *Religion and Society in Münster*, 27. The family was an economic unit and not only a biological relation.

⁵⁴ Hsia's assessment of responsibility for events in Münster from 1534-1535 follows the pattern established by Kerssenbrock. Hsia, like Kerssenbrock, holds Rothmann largely responsible for introducing the second attempt at reform to Münster (the first attempt was made in 1529 and was suppressed by the magistrates of Münster). Hsia writes: "A new attempt at introducing evangelical reforms in Münster centered on an earnest young vicar, Bernhard Rothmann, who gained popularity in 1531 by his fierce sermons attacking the abuses of higher clergy." Hsia, *Religion and Society in Münster*, 3.

⁵⁵ Aside from noting that disunity and conflict [*uneinigkeit und twispalt*] were the leading causes of what happened in Münster, and providing his reader with a brief sketch of events leading up to the election of an Anabaptist council in Münster, Gresbeck's "report" does not attempt to establish a detailed explanation or context for the emergence and development of Anabaptist Münster in quite the same manner as Kerssenbrock's account. Gresbeck explains that his report only covers a period of about one year. *BDA*, 3.

and an eye-witness to the events he describes.⁵⁶ Unlike Kerksenbrock who was a scholar, Gresbeck was a carpenter by trade, and was married to the daughter of an *Erbmann* [hereditary nobleman].⁵⁷ While there is no compelling reason to question Gresbeck's account of events in Anabaptist Münster, the same is not necessarily true of his interpretation of those events. The interpretations he willingly provides frequently betray a deep-seated cynicism and overt hostility for Anabaptists. His interpretations are directly shaped by the polemical posture he assumes as author, despite his statements to the contrary that he is writing very simply and accurately of events as they transpired in Münster.⁵⁸ His observational statements are frequently qualified: he alleges that he does not possess any privileged knowledge and is only writing of those things that were public knowledge in Anabaptist Münster. He further claims to resist any form of speculation on the inner workings of Münsterite "city councils," or the thoughts of key city leaders, because he says, he knows nothing

⁵⁶ Anabaptist control of the city of Münster resulted in the systematic destruction of nearly all city records, rental agreements, certificates of title, letters, books, rulings, and a variety of documents taken from council chambers, churches and monasteries. There are no extant tax records or property assessments available for the period from 1525-1535. In fact, Kirchhoff has stated that there are no tax records for the city of Münster prior to 1539. Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 1, 80. Kerksenbrock notes that "sealed documents," "account books and records of lawsuits," and city council's "secret documents going back many years," including all records concerning the "city's privileges, laws and decisions" were scattered in the streets, torn to pieces, and burned. *AFM*, 543-45. Though it is possible that some Münster Anabaptists kept records and/or wrote chronicles from within the Anabaptist Kingdom, they have not survived, leaving us only those narratives written by the enemies of sixteenth-century Anabaptists, and the accounts of those who lived outside the city. Hsia notes that the "story of the rise and fall of the "New Jerusalem" has been narrated only by its enemies. Historical reconstructions of the movement have had to rely mostly on hostile sources." Hsia, "Münster and the Anabaptists," 51.

⁵⁷ An *Erbmann* carried an hereditary title, possessed the right to keep a coat of arms and was generally a member of the patriciate. Income was typically derived from agriculture and pensions.

⁵⁸ An obvious tension or conflict between Gresbeck's claim of impartiality as an eyewitness, and his polemical posture as "anti-Anabaptist" author is evident from the very beginning. Though he claims to be writing simply and accurately of events as they transpired, he also admits that his purpose in writing is to inform and warn his reader of Rothmann and his rule in Münster as the originary cause of all its troubles. *BDA*, 10. As a strategist with strong ties to the existing church, he aims to convince his reader that rebaptism is wrong and that "Anabaptist articles" are directed against God, the saints, Christian faith, and the entire world [*tegen Got und alle sein hilligen und tegen der Christen geloven und der gantzen werlt*]. *BDA*, 162.

about either of them.⁵⁹ Unlike the epistemological principles Luther espoused, in which the beliefs of an individual or group were held as primary, with a person's "faith" providing access to the nature and identity of a given person or collective, Gresbeck's chronicle is founded on an ocularcentric epistemology in which the eye and not belief provides the gateway to knowledge. Gresbeck's chronicle is founded on an assertion of unmediated knowledge, with Gresbeck claiming to "know" Münster's Anabaptists by virtue of having seen them, and having witnessed their actions. For Gresbeck, Münsterites were real and not imaginary, what they did indisputable and his history entirely accurate, obviating any argument his reader might present to the contrary. He makes it clear that the line between the real and the imagined in his descriptions is clear and firmly established; he insists that the boundaries demarcated must be accepted by the reader. His claim of veracity and dependability are based almost entirely on his declaration that he is only writing of those things he personally observed. This assertion is frequently reinforced through an admission or qualification that he does not, or is otherwise unable to write of this matter or that because he did not personally witness it.⁶⁰ Such statements are clearly

⁵⁹ *BDA*, lxxvi.

⁶⁰ Gresbeck frequently states that he will write "no more of the matter," because he does not know more, cannot remember more, cannot possibly write of all the foolishness that transpired in the city, or because he is simply unwilling to say more. He establishes himself as a reliable witness, interpreter, and narrator of events at the start of his narrative through the eye-witness posture he adopts, and the "knowledgeable" interpretive position he establishes for himself. See for example, *BDA*, 13, 28-30, 120, 137, 189, 209-210, and 214. However, it appears that Gresbeck was not an eye-witness to all the events of which he writes; nor, does he abstain from hostilely commenting on, or interpreting, the events he describes. On one occasion, he tells the story of a preacher named Schlagschap who was "caught" and "arrested" while in bed with four women. *BDA*, 73. Though assigned to guard duty on the city walls it is highly unlikely that Gresbeck personally witnessed the action or subsequent arrest. Gresbeck describes the discovery and arrest of Schlagschap in the third person. It is far more likely that details of Schlagschap's arrest simply became popular knowledge/rumour within the city, given that he was put into the stocks and abused after his arrest. Some women stopped to verbally accost him, threw dung, and cast small stones. When it was rumored that some Anabaptists had resorted to cannibalizing their young due to the severe shortage of food, Gresbeck treats this rumour very

intended to establish Gresbeck's reliability as a faithful narrator of events in Anabaptist Münster; they develop rapport with his reader and instil confidence. A strict chronology of events is of considerable importance to Gresbeck as such a narrative structure provides rhetorical force through the presumption of historical accuracy, or the perception of historicity, despite his writing without the benefit of a calendar or the provision of dates. Gresbeck's account was admittedly written after the demise of the Kingdom, and relies heavily on his memory, the associations it had developed and the conclusions it had drawn, with his descriptions, interpretations, and dating of events always subject to the vagaries of human memory.

Like Kerssenbrock, Gresbeck links the problems that developed in Münster to the problem of disunity and conflict [*uneingkeit und twispalt*] that existed between burghers, between burghers and the larger community, between burghers and clergy, and between burghers and city council prior to the advent of the Anabaptist Kingdom.⁶¹ Both Kerssenbrock and Gresbeck focus much of their blame for these problems on Bernhard Rothmann, who is held primarily responsible for fuelling and exploiting disruptive tendencies and differences within the city, its citizens and its

differently, recording it only as a rumour and stating that he cannot write anything about the matter one way or the other because he did not personally witness it. *BDA*, 189.

⁶¹ *BDA*, 8-9. Heinrich Dorpius presents a slightly more nuanced picture of conflict in Münster prior to the Anabaptist Kingdom. "*Heinrich Dorpius, Warhaftige Historie wie das Evangelium zu Münster angefangen und darnach, durch die Wiedertäufer zerstört, wieder aufgehört hat,*" in Adolf Laube, Annerose Schneider, and Ulmann Weiss, eds., *Flugschriften vom Bauernkrieg zum Täuferreich (1526-1536)*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), 1662-82. Hereafter abbreviated *FBZT*. The pseudonym Heinrich Dorpius Monasteriensis is used for the author of this pamphlet although there does not appear to be any record of such a person. A contemporary sixteenth-century source suggests that the author is actually Heinrich Graes, a preacher and prophet in Anabaptist Münster, an apostle, and a defector to Franz von Waldeck the prince-bishop of Münster. Other suggestions include the Lutheran theologian and former pastor of St. Lambert's church in Münster, Theodor Fabricius (1501-1570), and the Lutheran theologian in Hesse, Anton Corvinus (1501-1553). In a letter of Johann von der Wieck to Philip of Hesse dated 18 November 1533 (and, therefore prior to the advent of the Anabaptist Kingdom), claims that the city of Münster will most certainly be destroyed through internal strife. Richard van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster, 1534-1535* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974), 38.

social structures.⁶² Gresbeck presents Rothmann as a member of the clergy, and often lumps evangelical and Catholic clergy together in his biting criticisms, placing virtually all blame for the emergence and severity of the problems in Münster on the clergy. Gresbeck credits the clergy, and not the guilds, with being the ultimate progenitors of evil in Anabaptist Münster.⁶³ Like Kerksenbrock, Gresbeck treats the clergy as a distinct social class, but unlike Kerksenbrock, he does not treat them favourably, nor does he distinguish between evangelical and catholic clergy when assigning blame. The evil precipitated by the burghers, he claims, was only initiated in response to the source of all evil, which rests squarely in the cathedral chapter and lower clergy.⁶⁴ It was the clergy who generated the problems in Münster, in Gresbeck's thinking, with burghers constructed as passive and only responding to clergy as and when they felt compelled to act. Clergy became the focus of the burghers' hostilities as a result of their actions. Given that Gresbeck was a burgher, it is not altogether surprising that primary blame for the conflict that erupted between burghers and clergy is assigned to the clergy, and given that Kerksenbrock was a member of the clergy it is understandable that primary blame was assigned to guilds by him. Like Kerksenbrock, Gresbeck subordinates his discussion of these early class conflicts to an overriding purpose centered on his desire to inform his readers about Anabaptists, their emergence and activities in Münster, Rothmann,⁶⁵ and his "rule" in

⁶² *BDA*, 10.

⁶³ *BDA*, 9.

⁶⁴ *BDA*, 9.

⁶⁵ Kerksenbrock states that he also wishes for his work to serve a mnemonic purpose: it is written to prevent future generations from forgetting entirely the actions of Franz von Waldeck, the prince-bishop of Münster. Thus, Kerksenbrock wants his reader to consider two important characters, the one is presented favorably as the hero (Franz von Waldeck) and the other is presented as the villain (Rothmann). *AFM*, 81.

Münster as the cause of all its recent troubles, which are designed to function as a strong warning to uninformed and unsuspecting future generations.⁶⁶

5.4 Staging the Anabaptist Kingdom

Rothmann began his preaching career sometime in 1529 and by 1531 a good number of people were purportedly in the practice of leaving the city of Münster for St. Maurice (approximately 2 miles from the city of Münster) for the purpose of listening to his sermons.⁶⁷ The preference of Münster's burghers for Rothmann's preaching resulted in a large company of people leaving Münster on Good Friday 1531 for St. Maurice. They spent the evening shouting, singing, dancing, and committing acts of vandalism in the church.⁶⁸ In clear violation of the instructions issued to him by his superiors, Rothmann had a wooden chancel built outdoors in the church square and preached from it on this occasion.⁶⁹ The insistence of church authorities that Rothmann only preach within the church, as was customary, was completely disregarded on more than one occasion. In July 1531, Rothmann was appointed pastor of prestigious St. Lambert's Church in Münster.⁷⁰ His preaching of reform described it as the institution and construction of a godly community and struck an obvious cord with burghers and guildsmen from Münster, whose conflicts

⁶⁶ *BDA*, 10.

⁶⁷ *BDA*, 6. See also Heinrich Dorpius's pamphlet, published in 1536, where the novelty of Rothmann's preaching is given as the reason for his sermon's drawing people away from Münster to St. Mauritz. *FBZT*, 1662.

⁶⁸ *SBR*, 53.

⁶⁹ *SBR*, 53. A similar strategy was employed in Münster, 18 February 1532, when Timannus Camenerus, the priest of St. Lamberts, would not permit Rothmann to preach in his church. *FBZT*, 1664.

⁷⁰ Jack Wallace Porter, *Bernhard Rothmann 1495-1535: Royal Orator of the Münster Anabaptist Kingdom*, dissertation, University of Wisconsin, University Microfilms Inc. (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1991), 5.

with the city council and ruling patricians were often fuelled by their aspirations for a greater share in political power and social constructions.⁷¹

In August 1532, the Lutheran movement in Münster took control of the six parish churches and installed Lutheran pastors.⁷² Both mayors and two of the councilmen [*Ratsherren*] left the city in protest.⁷³ Less than a year later, in February 1533, a Lutheran majority was brought to power and took control of Münster's city council. The newly-formed evangelical council quickly confirmed six evangelical preachers in the city's parish churches,⁷⁴ marking a dramatic shift in socio-political power and the conditions of the conflict between evangelical burghers and catholic councilors, and between evangelical laity and catholic clergy.⁷⁵ When a large group of burghers from Münster successfully captured Telgte and held a significant number of nobility hostage, with the bishop himself narrowly avoiding capture through his departure

⁷¹ Hsia, *Religion and Society in Münster*, 3; and, Hsia, "Münster and the Anabaptists," 51-53. Haude follows Kerksenbrock's lead, arguing that struggles between the guilds and patriciate were not new and date from about the middle of the fifteenth century when guild leaders first made their appearance on city council and became "the representative organ of the whole community." She argues that a conflict between the guilds and bishop also had an established history, with the guilds continually struggling against "the aspirations to power of Münster's bishop." Haude, *In the Shadow of "Savage Wolves"*, 10. Kerksenbrock argues that by the sixteenth century the guilds and common people were so "firmly stitched together with hempen ropes that the council cannot unravel them." *AFM*, 77.

⁷² The six parish churches of Münster were Überwasser, St. Mauritz, St. Lambert, St. Ludger, St. Aegida, and St. Martin.

⁷³ Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 63. When the priests were unable to overturn the decision, the bishop of Münster responded to these developments by establishing a blockade on 8 October 1532, thereby preventing anyone from bringing goods into the city. In response, on 26 December 1532, about 900 men from Münster went to the Episcopal city of Telgte and took it captive. Had the bishop not left a day or two earlier he would have been among the captives. *FBZT*, 1664.

⁷⁴ Porter, *Bernhard Rothmann, Royal Orator*, 6.

⁷⁵ One of the more significant conflicts of 1532 involved Lutherans seizing control of Münster's six parish churches. Out of protest, both mayors and 2 *Ratsherrn* (councilmen) who were presumably Catholic left the city. A supplementary vote in October 1532 only returned 1 Lutheran *Ratsherrn* to the 4 vacancies in council. In a regular vote for *Ratsherrn* in 1533, 5 elected members were Lutheran and leaders of the guilds. Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 63. The appointment of six evangelical pastors was the end result of negotiations mediated by Philip of Hesse between the city council and the recently elected prince-bishop of Münster, Franz von Waldeck. Porter, *Bernhard Rothmann, Royal Orator*, 8. This was not the first time that Philip acted as the mediator between the prince-bishop and the city of Münster in their disputes. The mediated agreement gave burghers control of the parish churches and left the cathedral to the Prince-bishop. It was signed on 14 February 1532. *FBZT*, 1665.

earlier, Philip of Hesse intervened in the dispute between Münster city fathers and the bishop,⁷⁶ resulting in a charter being drawn up 14 February 1533 that formally constituted Münster as an evangelical city.⁷⁷ The new Lutheran city council appointed Rothmann superintendent of churches, but by the summer of 1533 he had begun to openly question a number of Lutheran practices, including infant baptism and the Eucharist.⁷⁸ In August of 1533 the evangelical party in Münster split into two distinct factions, with Rothmann and several of his followers becoming Anabaptists after a August 7-8 disputation between the Wassenberg reformers who held Anabaptist sympathies,⁷⁹ and Catholic and Lutheran clergy.⁸⁰ Although Rothmann's acceptance and influence fluctuated during his early years in Münster,⁸¹ attempts to expel him from the city consistently met with significant popular opposition.⁸²

⁷⁶ Münster was not an Imperial free city despite its relative freedom and the breadth of its autonomy. The city remained within the legal jurisdiction of the prince-bishop of Münster, who could grant, revoke, renew or withhold privileges to the city. Gottfried Schulte, *Die Verfassungsgeschichte Münsters im Mittelalter: Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der Stadt Münster*, vol. 1 (Münster, 1898), 81-90.

⁷⁷ See *AFM*, 374-378 for Kerksenbrock's record of the terms of the charter.

⁷⁸ Hsia, *Religion and Society in Münster*, 3. Rothmann published his pamphlet "*Bekentnisse van beyden Sakramenten Doepe vnde Nachmaele der Predicanten tho Munster*" ["Confession on both sacraments, baptism and communion, by the preachers at Münster"] on 8 November 1533. The preface [*Voorede*] to Rothmann's tract is dated 22 October 1533, and bears the names of a number of prominent Münster Anabaptist preachers, including Johann Kloppeis, Heinric Rol, Heinrich Staprade, Godfridus Stralen, and Dionysius Vinne. Vinne, Staprade, Rol, and Kloppeis were Wassenberg reformers/preachers who came to Münster.

⁷⁹ *Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, vol. 3. (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1955-1990), 778.

⁸⁰ Kirchhoff argues that Rothmann only began with the rebaptism of adults at the beginning of 1534 and not late in 1533. Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 66. He argues further, that there is no evidence at this early stage that Anabaptists in Münster intended or otherwise planned any form of violent revolution. Kirchhoff insists that Rothmann "preached restoration and not revolution," which assumes that the former is possible without violence. Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 83.

⁸¹ On 17 September 1533, for example, Rothmann and several other pastors in Münster wrote a letter of protest in response to their dismissal and expulsion from the city. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 31.

⁸² The only strategy for removing Rothmann that met with some measure of success only worked at an early time, and involved a voluntary "exile" organized by catholic clergy. Priests offered Rothmann 70 gold Gulden to go and study elsewhere, thinking that once he left the city he was unlikely to return. However, Rothmann's study trip only lasted a few months from April to June 1531. He visited Marburg, Wittenburg, and Strasbourg. *FBZT*, 1662.

Rothmann claims Catholics plotted to forcibly remove all of Münster's evangelical preachers on 5 November 1533, and that they desired to "cut their ears and noses off and hang them between two dogs".⁸³ On 9 February 1534 Catholics in Münster purportedly carried weapons under their cloaks, marked their own houses with straw crosses so that they would not be plundered, and in agreement with the bishop and priests opened the city gates to the bishop's forces.⁸⁴ Neither action proved "successful," with Rothman claiming that it was the attempt to plunder Anabaptists and forcibly remove them from the city that began the "feud."⁸⁵ By later February 1534, Anabaptists in the city of Münster had grown to sufficient number and influence, through conversions and mass immigration,⁸⁶ to bring an Anabaptist council to power on 23 February 1534.⁸⁷ The Anabaptist assumption of political

⁸³ *SBR*, 207.

⁸⁴ *SBR*, 207.

⁸⁵ *SBR*, 207.

⁸⁶ On 12 February 1534 two city gates were purportedly held open for an entire day and an entire night in order to permit large numbers of Anabaptists to enter the city. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 54. For Gresbeck, Anabaptists in Münster are always the introduction of a foreign element. According to Gresbeck, "true" Anabaptists [*rechte wiederdoepers*] are not converts but strangers, and come from Friesland and Holland. *BDA*, 3, 6, 12, 35, 60, 75, 131, 144, 164, and 166-167. Cologne city council tended to also think of Anabaptists as strangers who "had not been nurtured by the city." Haude, *In the Shadow of Wolves*, 46-47. Gresbeck states that it was possible to see who the "true" Anabaptists were by simply searching their faces. He distinguishes between 4 types of Anabaptists, with the Frisians and the Hollanders being the worst possible kind. They were not like the local Anabaptists who were rebaptized against their better judgement, they were not simple, blind, or duped, and they did not join the movement out of fear or any other form of coercion like the local people. *BDA*, 3. To some degree Gresbeck's perception was accurate. The Wassenberg preachers, who came from the Low Countries and entered Münster in the summer of 1532, like the Dutch Anabaptists, became prominent in the city of Münster, and were strong supporters of Rothmann, even though they were not native to the city. Richard van Dülmen, *Reformation als Revolution: Soziale Bewegung und Radikalismus in der deutschen Reformation* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977), 278-79.

⁸⁷ Bernd Knipperdolling and Gerhard Kippenbroick were elected co-mayors. Throughout the siege of Münster, the legitimacy and legality of the Anabaptist city government was a contested issue. Münster Anabaptists maintained that they had come to power legally, and that it was Franz von Waldeck prince-bishop of Münster and his allies who were acting illegally. The bishop and other forces opposing the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster argued that being an Anabaptist and engaging in Anabaptist activities were by definition illegal and prohibited by both royal and imperial decrees, making the Anabaptist government of Münster illegal by extension. In Kerksenbrock's opinion, Münster Anabaptists and their ascendancy to power effectively voided earlier treaties, alliances and

power in the city created widespread enthusiasm among Anabaptists as the city was proclaimed a divinely appointed city of refuge for Anabaptists.

Some of the very first orders of business for the newly-elected Anabaptist council involved the burning of St. Maurice on 25 February 1534.⁸⁸ In addition to the obvious violence and vandalism of such an action, burning the village and church may have been part of a quickly developing military strategy, obviating its use as a military base by the bishop of Münster's besieging army.⁸⁹ On 27 February 1534 all who remained in the city of Münster were subject to re-baptism or expulsion,⁹⁰ with the majority of Münster's remaining inhabitants preferring coerced baptism to leaving the city.⁹¹ These forced baptisms took place in the marketplace,⁹² and not in any of the city's churches.⁹³ A pamphlet of Heinrich Dorpius's,⁹⁴ states that the coerced

privileges operating between the city and the prince-bishop, restoring the power of the prince-bishop over the city. *AFM*, 379.

⁸⁸ St. Mauritz served as a Catholic school and seminary [*collegium* and *canonickessei*]. *BDA*, 18.

⁸⁹ *FBZT*, 1672.

⁹⁰ Rothmann asserts that on 9 February 1534 Catholics planned to forcibly retake the city of Münster, but their plan was discovered and foiled. Soon thereafter many Catholics voluntarily left the city, emptying the city of much of its wealth, and many of its prominent inhabitants. *SBR*, 207-208.

⁹¹ Gresbeck claims that at the time of these expulsions and forced baptisms neither those who were expelled nor those (non Anabaptists) who stayed in the city expected the current political conditions to endure for more than 3-4 days. *BDA*, 19-20. Many women stayed in Münster to watch over and protect family holdings under the assumption that females would not become the victims of politically motivated retaliatory action. On the day of the great expulsion, which coincided with the beginning of coerced baptisms, (27 February 1534), weather conditions were not conducive to travel with rain, snow, and strong winds present throughout the day. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 72. Gresbeck states that the weather was so contrary on this particular Friday that "one should not have hunted a dog from the city" [*man sol up denselben fridagh nit einen hunt uth der stat geiagt hebben*], far less another human being. *BDA*, 19.

⁹² The city of Münster had four marketplaces during the sixteenth century. Gresbeck does not stipulate which of these marketplaces he is referring to in his chronicle but it can be assumed that he is referring to the "general" or "common" marketplace, and not the more commodity-specific fish or grain markets.

⁹³ *BDA*, 19. Gresbeck divides Münster Anabaptists into four basic types: 1) The dominant majority, who are strangers and come from Holland and Friesland. 2) Those who become Anabaptists against their better judgement. 3) The simple and the blind who simply did not know better. 4) Those who were afraid and submitted to the Anabaptists out of fear.

⁹⁴ Theodor Fabricus (1501-1570), and the Lutheran theologian in Hesse, Anton Corvinus (1501-1553), had the distinct privilege of interviewing Jan van Leiden after the fall of Anabaptist Münster. See. *FBZT*, 1698ff for a "transcript" of those interviews. The term "transcript" is employed cautiously

removal of non-Anabaptists was accomplished when Münster's Anabaptists donned full military gear and used various weapons, including guns, spears, axes and rods to "chase the poor people out of the city."⁹⁵ All who refused to become Anabaptists were culled from the city. Some pregnant women allegedly gave birth and others miscarried during the expulsion.⁹⁶ Gresbeck notes that all who opposed these rebaptisms were labeled "godless,"⁹⁷ and unlike those who voluntarily left prior to the general expulsion, these individuals were forced to leave without being permitted to take any of their goods with them.⁹⁸ All who chose to remain in the city were subjected to Anabaptist baptism,⁹⁹ which took about 3 days to complete given the large number of non-Anabaptists.¹⁰⁰

despite the testimony of Anton Corvinus and Johannis Kymeis that they carefully reported Jan van Leiden's own words without leaving out, or substantially altering what he said. However, they also admit to "translating" and in some cases altering their choice of words, making his language "more suitable" [*geschlickler*]. *FBZT*, 1721.

⁹⁵ *FBZT*, 1672.

⁹⁶ *FBZT*, 1672. Dorpius states that many who fled Anabaptist Münster came into the bishop's hands and were imprisoned, with most subsequently executed. He claims that when those remaining in Münster saw how the innocent like the guilty were being killed and imprisoned they determined to remain in the city even though they were not "true" Anabaptists. Such Münsterites decided that it was better to be at war than in prison [*besser inn reiseren, denn inn eiseren*].

⁹⁷ According to Kerssenbrock, Jan Matthys advised the execution of all who refused to be rebaptized once Anabaptists gained control of Münster, but Bernd Knipperdolling purportedly disagreed and convinced other councillors that the "godless" should only be expelled. *AFM*, 533. The decision to expel non-Anabaptists, on 27 February 1534, was presented as the refusal of the Anabaptist city council to "rule over the ungodly." Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 68-69.

⁹⁸ *BDA*, 19.

⁹⁹ Kirchhoff has estimated that about two-thirds of the residents of Münster stayed in the city. Kirchhoff, *Täufer in Münster*, 24.

¹⁰⁰ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 72. Those who submitted to rebaptism were baptized with 3 handfuls of water from a pail while kneeling before Anabaptist preachers, who told baptizands to forsake evil and do good. After their baptism, individuals went to either of the two mayors' homes and had their names recorded. *BDA*, 20. Rothmann attributes the mass expulsion of Catholics and Lutherans to their initiating a feud with the Anabaptists, and their plotting to open the city gates to the enemies of the Anabaptists. Those who were forced to leave under compulsion were not permitted to take any goods with them because the city was now under siege, with Anabaptists reasoning that they would have need of them. Some persons leaving Münster were subjected to body searches. *SBR*, 208.

In March 1534 a strict and comprehensive community of goods was established,¹⁰¹ with 7 or possibly more deacons put in charge of the collection and distribution of goods,¹⁰² including food.¹⁰³ All money was declared communal property and was to be surrendered to Anabaptist authorities as the city transitioned to a currency-less state.¹⁰⁴ All houses in Münster were extensively searched, with their goods carefully inventoried. The search and inventory process was repeated on at least two or three occasions, with those goods not previously registered or voluntarily surrendered earlier, forcibly seized and removed during a subsequent search.¹⁰⁵ The system of government instituted in Anabaptist Münster in early 1534 and responsible for the implementation of community of goods was founded on a

¹⁰¹ Arguments that suggest the implementation of such an action was the product of a disproportionate number of Anabaptists in Münster being poor are largely unfounded. Kirchhoff's analysis of property records shows that Anabaptists enjoyed a pre-community of goods distribution of wealth similar to that of non-Anabaptists. Moreover, many Münster Anabaptist leaders (such as Knipperdolling) were individuals who held substantial wealth prior to the "new economic order" being established. The term *povel* [rabble] did not simply refer to the proletariat. It was used as a pejorative moral term rather than as an indicator of one's economic circumstances or social status. Since the fourteenth century the term *povel* was increasingly used in a value laden manner for the rebellious, and was generally used as a descriptor for those who were assigned moral weakness and not necessarily material deficiencies. The group it signalled carried two important moral attributes during the sixteenth century; they were "rotten" and they were "rebellious" [*verdorben* and *auführerisch*]. The rotten and the rebellious do not constitute a distinct social group, but are individuals who demonstrate a particular state of mind, and preparedness to act in a certain manner from the perspective of the authorities. In 1533 the Confession Book associates the term "poor" with Guildsmen, and Johann van der Wieck, the Münster syndic, wrote that the poor and those burdened with debt are in Münster's council, referring to the Melchiorites. Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 80-83.

¹⁰² Kerssenbrock claims that 7 deacons were appointed in Anabaptist Münster as trustees over all communal goods, but Gresbeck presents a contradictory account claiming that 3 deacons were appointed in each parish for a total of 18. *BDA*, 34. Given Gresbeck's proximity to events, and the magnitude of the task involved, 18 deacons becomes a more likely number.

¹⁰³ Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 69. Gresbeck notes that Münsterites were inclined to say: "*Ein Got, ein pot, ein ei, ein koicke*" [*One God, one pot, one egg, one kitchen*]. *BDA*, 164-165.

¹⁰⁴ Gresbeck states that gold coins were minted in Anabaptist Münster for the purpose of enticing mercenaries into Anabaptist Münster, but reveals that not even mercenaries were paid in money for their services. *BDA*, 48; *BDA, Actenstücke*, 267. Money was only used by Münsterites in their interactions with persons outside city walls, and not for trade within Anabaptist Münster.

¹⁰⁵ *BDA*, 33-35. Those who withheld money were declared less than "true Christians," and were systematically "rooted out." Some were severely punished while others were beheaded. Community of goods and communal meals established a form of equality, with the deacons responsible for searching houses also responsible for searching out the poor, and providing them with basic necessities.

relatively broad power base consisting of a traditional city council,¹⁰⁶ the organization of guilds,¹⁰⁷ charismatic prophetic authority, and the rule of law. Following a failed prophecy, which predicted that Anabaptist Münster would be delivered from its enemies by Easter,¹⁰⁸ Jan Matthys, the former baker who had become Anabaptist Münster's charismatic prophet and key leader,¹⁰⁹ the guilds, and city council were all superseded. Matthys, who grabbed a double-edged axe and led a charge into the besieging army camp with only a handful of close associates on the strength of a revelation he had received in which the godless did not have the power to kill the godly,¹¹⁰ was killed and quartered in March 1534.¹¹¹

In May 1534 Jan van Leiden,¹¹² a charismatic prophet in Münster and formerly second in command to Jan Matthys,¹¹³ established a new system of order for the city that consisted of an administration of 12 elders selected through divine

¹⁰⁶ The institution of community of goods effectively challenged and worked toward the dissolution of the civic-religious power structure operative in Münster and throughout the German speaking lands. Hsia, "Anabaptist Münster," 55.

¹⁰⁷ De Bakker, Driedger, and Stayer argue that the "common guild council" "assumed the right to act as representative of the community." De Bakker, Driedger, and Stayer, *Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster*, 31. The "common guild" [*Gesamtgilde*] was a central organization representing the common interests of the various guilds and functioned as a lay counterpart to the "official" city council consisting of the ruling patriciate. See, Karl-Heinz Kirchhoff, "Gesamtgilde und Gemeinschaft in Münster (Wesf.) 1410 bis 1661: Zur Entwicklung einer bürgerschaftlichen Vertretung," in Frans Petri, Peter Schöller, Heinz Stob, and Peter Johaneck, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Stadt und Stift Münster: Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Schriftenverzeichnis* (Warendorf: Fahlbusch, 1988), 235-79.

¹⁰⁸ *BDA*, 38-40.

¹⁰⁹ Jan Matthys did not come from a particularly influential or prestigious craft, and even when bakers formed a guild it was not "powerful politically" with wealth generally concentrated in the hands of a few. David Nicholas has argued that "bakers were generally the least influential food guild. In some places they were in the same organisation as the millers, and there was considerable mobility between the two crafts virtually everywhere." David Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City 1300-1500* (London; New York: Longman, 1997), 218.

¹¹⁰ *AFM*, 568-69.

¹¹¹ *BDA*, 39. One source claims Matthys was cut into 100 pieces. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 109.

¹¹² Jan Beukelszoon van Leiden was his full name but it has been abbreviated throughout to Jan van Leiden.

¹¹³ *BDA*, 23.

ordinance and aided by 148 assistants.¹¹⁴ Jan van Leiden provided a form of charismatic leadership to the “godly” Anabaptist community that was authorized by his ecstatic visions,¹¹⁵ revelations, and special knowledges.¹¹⁶ Johannes Dusentschur, a goldsmith from Warendorf and a prophet in Anabaptist Münster, followed the lead of Jan van Leiden and declared that God has revealed to him that Jan van Leiden was to be made king of Münster.¹¹⁷ With Jan van Leiden’s installation as king and the prophetic proclamation accompanying his coronation that he was to become king of the entire world, the former tailor, poet, orator,¹¹⁸ actor, and director was awarded his most challenging and most prestigious acting role while in his mid-twenties.¹¹⁹ With Jan van Leiden’s coronation Münster was decisively confirmed as the New Jerusalem. No longer was the holy city of Münster to be understood merely, or only, as a place of refuge for disenfranchised Anabaptists. Through its divine election and

¹¹⁴ Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 69-72. See, *AFM* for a list of their names, 576.

¹¹⁵ According to Heinrich Bullinger, ecstatic visions, divine revelations, and “wonders” were most common during the early stages of the Anabaptist movements. Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Widertoeufferen Ursprung*, (Zurich: Christoffel Froschower, 1561), 17-55.

¹¹⁶ Most socio-political innovations, judgments, and directives in the Anabaptist Kingdom were issued as the direct result of some divine revelation or vision regardless of how unseemly or absurd the innovation might have appeared. Gresbeck notes that on one occasion Jan van Leiden received a vision in which he was instructed to execute a prisoner. Consequently, one of the imprisoned mercenaries was brought to Jan van Leiden at the marketplace and was simply beheaded. *BDA*, 113.

¹¹⁷ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 147.

¹¹⁸ Leonard Verduin has argued that Jan Beukelszoon van Leiden “was an active Rhetorician [*Rederijker*] in his earlier days.” Leonard Verduin, “The Chambers of Rhetoric and Anabaptist Origins in the Low Countries,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 34 (1960), 196. *Rederijkers*, who formed the Chambers of Rhetoric, could perform important civic functions such as presenting plays during festivals and were, therefore, often “useful tools in the promotion of both religious harmony and civic pride”, according to Gary K. Waite. Gary K. Waite, “Celebrating the Victory over the Anabaptists: The Ceremonial Aftermath of Jan van Geelen’s Attempt on Amsterdam,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 64 (1990), 299. However, Waite notes that “on at least two occasions in Amsterdam the authorities had had to crack down on groups of Rhetoricians for performing scandalous plays”, which were presumably considered disruptive to civic goals. Waite, “Celebrating the Victory over the Anabaptists,” 299. Though Frans Frederycxz admitted to obtaining the keys to the Rhetoricians chambers (*rethorijckescamere*) from Wouter Deelen under false pretences on 15 May 1535, the use of “Rhetorician props in an Anabaptist revolt” could “not have been missed” by Amsterdam city authorities. Waite, “Celebrating the Victory over the Anabaptists,” 300. See also, A. F. Mellink, ed., *Amsterdam (1531-1536), Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica*, V (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), 144-145.

¹¹⁹ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 150-153.

subsequent redefinition Anabaptist Münster was firmly established as the primary place for growth and development. Through Jan van Leiden's election, coronation, and subsequent rule Anabaptist Münster became the divinely ordained place for becoming and nurturing a holy people. The self-understandings of Münsterites, and their attitudes toward the city were henceforth determined by the special relation they and their holy city bore to the permanent and active presence of the divine, which functioned in the role of "Father" [*Vader*] to Münsterite Anabaptists. This dramatic geo-political shift sacralized the entire city imbuing it with a spiritual function, establishing Münster at the very centre of the Anabaptist world and God's redemptive strategies. As the "City of God" its role, responsibility, and privileged status in relation to all other places was firmly and indisputably set for Münsterites.¹²⁰

One of the young king's first official acts was to introduce a radical shift in social structure through the implementation of polygamy,¹²¹ with the king setting a high personal standard of practice by taking 15 wives,¹²² by far the largest number for any Münsterite male, according to Gresbeck.¹²³ Divara, the young and beautiful

¹²⁰ *BDA*, 36.

¹²¹ Hsia has argued that it was this act above all others that presented the greatest challenge to the existing social order, revealing "the most revolutionary aspects of their blueprint for salvation", which threatened "family bonds." Hsia, *Religion and Society in Münster*, 16.

¹²² When Jan van Leiden was asked, after his capture and during an interview, if he had taken "so many wives," he replied, "no." He said that he had taken many girls and had made them into wives. *FBZT*, 1681.

¹²³ *BDA*, 59-60. Van Dülmen notes that Jan van Leiden had 16 wives, two of whom were beheaded by him for their disobedience. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 20. The discrepancy in the number of wives attributed to Jan van Leiden appears to depend largely on who is, or is not, included in the total given. Jan van Leiden's first wife, for example, who remained in Leiden and did not travel to Münster with him, may be included in van Dülmen's total but not in Gresbeck's accounting. On at least one occasion Gresbeck refers to Divara as Jan van Leiden's first wife even though his wife in Leiden was chronologically the first. *BDA*, 83. In his confession, Jan van Leiden stated that Divara was the second wife, with Jan van Leiden likely counting the daughter of Bernd Knipperdolling as his first wife.

widow of Münster's angry and recently deceased prophet Jan Matthys,¹²⁴ became Jan van Leiden's third wife through divine ordinance,¹²⁵ and was installed as queen of Anabaptist Münster.¹²⁶ Any male Münsterite was afforded freedom to follow the polygamous example set by their king and could take as many Anabaptist wives as he desired,¹²⁷ providing the marriage was "voluntary," (that is, consensual), and marriage partners agreed to live together in harmony.¹²⁸ Marriage was to be voluntary and uncoerced, but celibacy for any woman, including very young adolescent and pre-pubescent girls, was deemed unacceptable.¹²⁹ The practice of celibacy was

¹²⁴ Divara was Jan Matthys's second wife. Matthys married Divara in spite of the objections and reluctance of his "old wife," and insisted that his marriage to the young and beautiful Divara was a spiritual marriage, with Matthys referring to Divara as his spiritual sister. Klaus Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffmann: Soziale Unruhen und Apokalyptische Visionen im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), 290.

¹²⁵ Jan van Leiden stated, in his confession of 25 July 1535, that he married the widow Divara as instructed in a vision, even though he was already married to Bernd Knipperdolling's daughter. Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 266. Jan van Leiden also admitted in his confession that he was married to the widow of a sailor in Leiden. She did not want him to go to Münster and refused to accompany him. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 264. Jan van Leiden's first wife has been portrayed as exceptionally intelligent, if somewhat bellicose. She was beheaded in Leiden just prior to the end of the siege of Anabaptist Münster. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 150-153.

¹²⁶ The remaining wives were clearly subordinated to Divara, according to Gresbeck. They are referred to variously as Jan van Leiden's concubines, whores, and play-wives [*spilfrouwen*]. *BDA*, 83. Hsia has argued that Jan van Leiden's marriage to Divara was politically strategic securing his own position by solidifying his power base. Hsia bases his argument on what he discerns to be the intentions of Jan van Leiden, which he purports to know. Hsia writes: "After the death of Matthys, Leiden wanted to marry the prophet's beautiful young widow in order to bolster his own claim to prophetic leadership." Hsia, "Münster and the Anabaptists," 55.

¹²⁷ While polygamy was encouraged in Anabaptist Münster, polyandry was strictly forbidden and severely punished. In the one recorded case of polyandry, the accused woman, Catharina Kokenbecker, was beheaded on 26 September 1534. Kokenbecker formally married Bernhard Eming on the one day and married Francis Wast from Zeeland the following day. Kerssenbrock notes that polygamy was acceptable for men but not for women. *AFM*, 688.

¹²⁸ *BDA*, 62, and 72-73. Gresbeck notes that though 11, 12 and 13 year old girls were still children, and too young to "have men," they were required to have husbands, with many girls becoming ill, hurt and dying as a result of what Gresbeck refers to as the abuse to which they were subjected. The young age at which girls were required to marry in Anabaptist Münster is also mentioned in a 1535 publication, "*Neue Zeitung Die Wiederteuffer zu Münster belangende*," in *FBZT*, 1631. According to the confession of Cort van den Werde and Johann Kettel, 6 December 1534, there were no longer any marriageable women in Münster at this time, aside from the widows of the recently executed Münsterite apostles. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 191.

¹²⁹ Gresbeck does not mention the possibility of men remaining celibate. Presumably, such a state of affairs would have been unacceptable given the male role in generating a godly people within Anabaptist Münster.

thought to impede rather than enhance corporate salvation, and polygamy was ideologically justified through its identification with the creation of a truly holy people.¹³⁰ Ideological justification for polygamy was gained through a literalist reading and adoption of the Hebrew Bible's command to be "fruitful and multiply," actions through which a godly people would be created. Polygamy was thought to maximize the efficiency with which and the rate at which such a goal could be accomplished. Intercourse with pregnant, infertile or difficult [*swangeren vnd vnfruchtbaren, vnbequeme*] women was strictly forbidden,¹³¹ given that holy Münsterite men were called to be fruitful and multiply, and had a responsibility to do so.¹³² When an Anabaptist woman become pregnant her husband was free to take another wife; he was permitted and even encouraged to marry as many women as he liked for the purpose of creating a godly tribe.¹³³ Few Münsterite men purportedly

¹³⁰ The issue at stake was not one of succession but rather the matter of creating something altogether new. Nor, was the introduction of polygamy simply accommodation to conditions created by the siege and the comparatively large number of women present within the city. For a contrary assessment see Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 129. Stayer assigns his interpretive principle, "The deacons' administration of community of goods, like everything else in the sixteen months of Anabaptist Münster, was determined by the siege" comprehensive pre-eminence to the extent that he severely limits and/or minimizes Münsterite agency. Stayer, *German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 138.

¹³¹ Kerksenbrock adds old women rendered infertile through their age to the list provided by Gresbeck. Kerksenbrock confirms Gresbeck's assessment that Münsterites developed a strict economy regarding semen such that it was not to be wasted, and it was considered wasted when the possibility of generating progeny was impossible or highly unlikely. *AFM*, 619-20. Münsterites were not entirely innovative in their sexual economy. Medieval monastic culture held that a homunculus, a minute human being, was present in semen and was not to be "wasted" through masturbation. William E. Phipps, *Clerical Celibacy: The Heritage* (New York; London: Continuum, 2004), 125. Likewise Aquinas, following Aristotle, stated that everything required for human reproduction was contained within semen, with women relegated to a passive role, making the emission of semen without the possibility of generation a heinous sin surpassed only by such things as homicide. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles, Book 3: Chapter 122*, ed. Vernon J. Bourke, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975). Aquinas considered rape and incest lesser crimes than masturbation because progeny are a possible outcome of the former sins. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2:154.

¹³² *SBR*, 265.

¹³³ Not only were men generally seen as the progenitors of a holy people in Anabaptist Münster, men were established as mediators between God and women. *SBR*, 263. Rothmann notes that Münsterite men were permitted to or encouraged to choose "fruitful women" in marriage. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 202. The godly tribe of Anabaptist Münster was unlike the "traditional"

slept with more than one woman at a time,¹³⁴ though the assumed impregnation of a woman was frequently given as good cause for taking another wife.¹³⁵ Depending on the predispositions and circumstances of individual Münsterites, some persons (both male and female) were pleased with such a development and others clearly were not, according to Gresbeck. Refusing to marry made a woman “worthy of death,”¹³⁶ and refusing her husband his conjugal rights was a capital crime in Anabaptist Münster.¹³⁷ Münsterites attempted to follow the dictates of Hebrew scripture without the benefit of learned exegesis or guidance of commentators. Ironically, Münsterite social practices resulted in a net decrease and not an increase in their population, according to Gresbeck. He sardonically notes: though Münsterites spoke of being fruitful and multiplying many had to die because of this matter [*up dat leste mannich mensch umb moiste sterven*].¹³⁸

family unit in that it was a more inclusive unit that redefined all social relations. It was an attempt to create a “fictive kinship community and to create an ideal nation from diverse social elements”. *Hsia*, “Münster and the Anabaptists,” 63-64.

¹³⁴ The practice of the Anabaptist preacher Schlachtschap forms a notable exception. He was purportedly arrested while in bed with 4 women. He was arrested and subsequently placed in stocks [*kach*]. Some women pelted him with muck and stones while asking if one woman was still not enough for him. For half a day people assembled in the marketplace and discussed possible resistance to the Anabaptist regime. The failed insurrection staged by Mollenhecke was in direct response to the practice of polygamy. *BDA*, 73-77.

¹³⁵ *BDA*, 61. It is rather ironic, if Gresbeck and Jan van Leiden’s detractors are correct, that Jan van Leiden did not personally father any children in his holy kingdom. It was generally rumoured that when he married the charming and beautiful Divara she was pregnant with John Matthys’s child, and when he married Knipperdolling’s maid, Margaretha Moderson, she was pregnant with her soldier lover’s child. *BDA*, 157.

¹³⁶ Gresbeck notes that if the women who stayed in the city for the purpose of managing their family property after their husbands left had known what would “happen to them,” they too would have gone, and in no wise would have stayed in the city. *BDA*, 62.

¹³⁷ Elizabeth Holscher was beheaded for refusing her husband his conjugal rights. *AFM*, 687-88.

Gresbeck notes that older wives were forced to accept and remain silent about their husbands marrying another (usually younger) woman, or else they would be beheaded. *BDA*, 59-67.

¹³⁸ *BDA*, 59. Many women were executed in Anabaptist Münster for their failure to live peacefully with their husband and/or his other wives. In Anabaptist Münster’s patriarchal structure, responsibility for living in harmony within the family unit rested with the wife/wives. Barbara Butendiecks was found deserving of capital punishment for causing dissension in the household and disputing with her husband. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 163. Husbands were required to register all complaints against disobedient wives with authorities. *BDA*, 66-67.

The system of justice and penal code established by Jan van Leiden in Anabaptist Münster were generally unencumbered by such things as trials, with damning testimony against the accused typically deemed adequate for judgment, especially it would seem, when the defendant was female.¹³⁹ Although the “court system” was pared down considerably in Anabaptist Münster, the range of offenses for which capital punishment was prescribed was broadened significantly,¹⁴⁰ with cursing a ruler or one’s parents, lying, stealing, speaking obscenities, slandering, spitting at one’s husband, muttering against one’s husband,¹⁴¹ and insubordination to one’s husband all becoming capital crimes.¹⁴² Wearing old or ragged clothing, like fishing, baking and brewing were all punishable offences.¹⁴³ The King, Jan van Leiden, and the Governor [*stathelder*] of Münster, Bernd Knipperdolling, shared the office of executioner.¹⁴⁴ Both took their judicial positions very seriously, purportedly dispatching a significant number of Münsterites for a wide variety of “crimes.” They maintained communal unity through the execution of the socially anomalous, instilling a strong sense of fear into all who remained in the city.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ See for example, *BDA*, 85.

¹⁴⁰ Gresbeck notes sardonically, that when an Anabaptist kills another person, as happened from time in their mock fighting and military exercises, the offender is not punished any more than if he had killed a dog. *BDA*, 122.

¹⁴¹ Margaret of Osnabrück was executed for spitting at her husband and Barbara Butendick for muttering against hers. *AFM*, 687-88.

¹⁴² See *AFM*, 582-86, for a complete list. The generation of any form of dissension was treated as a capital crime, with beheading and firing squads being the most common forms of execution. *BDA*, 42.

¹⁴³ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 116. *BDA, Actenstücke*, 293.

¹⁴⁴ Jan van Leiden confessed to personally dispatching 48 persons. *BDA Actenstücke*, 373.

Knipperdolling only admitted to beheading 12-13 persons. *BDA, Actenstücke*, 378. Jan van Leiden was divinely instructed to make the mayor (Knipperdolling) the executioner because the “highest person” was to be placed in the “lowest office.” Rudolf Wolkan, ed., *Das Große Geschichtsbuch des Hutterischen Brüder* (Vienna; Macleod, AB: Carl Fromme GmbH, 1923), reprinted by Twilight Hutterian Brethren and Fairville Hutterian Brethren 2001, 107. The *Große Geschichtsbuch* refers to this episode as a play that was directed and produced by the devil.

¹⁴⁵ Following the suppression of Mollenhecke’s attempted coup, insurrectionists were executed over a period of 3 or 4 days, with the opportunity to execute an insurrectionist made available to all

After some 16 months of siege, extensive propaganda wars, multiple executions, severe famine and starvation, skirmishes, treasons, failed deliverances, and unsuccessful coup attempts, the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster was betrayed into the hands of Franz von Waldeck, prince-bishop of Münster,¹⁴⁶ and his allied forces on 24 June 1535. The carpenter and chronicler Heinrich Gresbeck, and the mercenary Hänschen von der langer Straten or simply Little Hans [Hensken],¹⁴⁷ who was also Anabaptist Münster's supervisor of fortifications [*schantzmeister*] and the King's bodyguard [*Trabant*],¹⁴⁸ betrayed the city they had fortified and the inhabitants they had protected. During the storming of Anabaptist Münster and the week of occupation that followed, the prince-bishop's army killed virtually every post-pubescent Münsterite male,¹⁴⁹ but permitted most Münsterite women and

Münsterites by Jan van Leiden. Gresbeck reports that 10-12 persons were executed per day until all who were considered leaders in the rebellion were dispatched. *BDA*, 77.

¹⁴⁶ Franz von Waldeck became the bishop of Münster in June of 1532. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 116.

¹⁴⁷ In Gresbeck's account, he and Little Hans simultaneously betray the city without either knowing the plans, intentions, or actions of the other. *BDA*, 200. Gresbeck presents himself as instrumental in corroborating the testimony of Little Hans and functioning in a consulting role to the allied siege forces, whereas Little Hans is portrayed as more physically involved, working with the bishop's forces in the execution of the plans to overthrow Anabaptist Münster. In Justinian von Holtzhausen's letter of 1 July 1535 to Frankfurt city council, he states that a captured carpenter (Gresbeck) from the city of Münster reported to, informed and instructed siege forces regarding the best strategy for taking control of the city of Münster through drawings and clay models. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 259. According to Gresbeck, he and Little Hans presented very similar plans for the overthrow of the city. At the final stages, prior to the storming of the city, Gresbeck and Little Hans are no longer kept separated but work closely together, according to Gresbeck. *BDA*, 199-205. Kerssenbrock does not mention Gresbeck or his contribution to the overthrow of Anabaptist Münster. Nor does Kerssenbrock mention the bumbling of the besieging army and the farcical details of their assaults on the city described by Gresbeck and other sixteenth-century sources. For example, Kerssenbrock does not mention that the bridge built to facilitate a moat crossing collapsed under the weight of advancing soldiers and mercenaries, and that the scaling-ladders built by the besieging army were too short. *FBZT*, 1651.

¹⁴⁸ *BDA*, *Actenstücke*, 393. See also, *FBZT*, 1649.

¹⁴⁹ A 7 July 1534 letter of Sigmund von Beineburgk (bailiff) to the Landgraves declares that 1550 Münsterites and 200 mercenaries were killed by soldiers when the besieging forces overthrew the city. His letter notes that soldiers are daily seeking out persons hidden in basements and concealed under the roofs of houses, killing all that they find. The executed were buried in a mass grave in the cathedral square. *BDA*, *Actenstücke*, 368. The 300 men who held entrenched positions in the cathedral square, and only surrendered to the besieging army on the condition that they are given a promise of safe

children to leave the city.¹⁵⁰ Divara, the wife of Knipperdolling, and Knipperdolling's mother-in-law, as well as a Mrs. Wolters and her daughter were notable exceptions to the general rule. These were beheaded on 7 July 1535 for their alleged stubborn adherence to re-baptism.¹⁵¹ Münster's key male leaders, (excluding Rothmann), Bernd Krechting, Jan van Leiden, and Bernd Knipperdolling were publicly tortured and executed on 22 January 1536 in Münster's market square.¹⁵² The choice of location is both ironic, given that the marketplace was the scene of many Anabaptist executions, and strategic; it was the reclamation of this important socio-political place and the reassertion of "legitimate" power.

The bankrupt nature of Anabaptist Münster provided considerable disappointment and little plunder to the besieging forces of Franz von Waldeck.¹⁵³ To

conduct and be allowed to leave the city unharmed, remain obvious exceptions. Whether or not all 300 men successfully left the city is uncertain. They were purportedly sent overseas, possibly to England. Heinrich Krechting escaped from Münster, and Bernhard Rothmann was not found in the aftermath. All other male Münsterites were killed and their bodies burned. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 261. Kerksenbrock claims that the "bloody theatre" [*blutigen Schauspiele*] lasted for 8 days after which hunger drove those in hiding out. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 262. Women and children were brought to the cathedral square following 4 days of killing, and were instructed to leave the city. *FBZT*, 1653. Permission to stay in the city, when granted, was extended with the proviso that Münsterite women recant their rebaptism. *BDA, Actenstücke*, 369.

¹⁵⁰ One source states that women and children were allowed to leave because they were defenceless. *BDA Actenstücke*, 366. Presumably, young adolescent boys, and weak and malnourished elderly men were not considered defenceless. A large portion of the female population had already left the city by the end of the siege.

¹⁵¹ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 262. Gresbeck states that he does not know where Divara and "the concubines" went, and therefore cannot say or write anything about them. *BDA*, 214. Jan van Leiden noted immediately prior to his execution that it was his hope that Divara would repent of her crimes even as he had. If Kerksenbrock's dating is accurate Divara would have long been dead at this time.

¹⁵² The Hessian preacher, Anton Corvinus writing to Georg Spalatin, testified that Jan van Leiden was the first to be tortured with glowing tongs and was first to be executed, with Knipperdolling following next, and finally Krechting. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 281.

¹⁵³ Much of the city's wealth had been moved out of the city before the siege and what remained was largely spent by Münsterites on propaganda, on defence, and on their attempts to convince others to join to their cause. For example, in December 1534, 1000 copies of Rothmann's "*Bericht von der Wrake*" [Report on Vengeance] were published in Münster, and transported to the Netherlands for the purpose of soliciting support. The books never reached their intended readers. *SBR*, 284. Goods remaining in the city at the end of the siege were divided between the mercenaries and the bishop with each party receiving half of the proceeds. Kirchhoff has determined that goods remaining in the city

some degree the mutilated bodies of Jan van Leiden, Bernd Krechting and Bernd Knipperdolling served as the spoils of the victors in this “feud,”¹⁵⁴ with the three bodies publicly displayed after being placed into iron cages and hung from St. Lambert’s Church tower. Jan van Leiden’s tortured body was placed into the middle cage and was hung the “height of two men” higher than the cages on either side.¹⁵⁵ In their death, as in their life, the bodies of Leiden, Krechting and Knipperdolling were on display before an audience, inviting the audience’s evaluation and judgement, while serving an important mnemonic purpose.¹⁵⁶

The public presentation of their mutilated bodies was designed to function as a perpetual example of what happens to those who choose to act in a rebellious or disorderly manner. Their publicly exposed bodies were hoisted devoid of theatrical masks, revealing what these men were, what they did, and what they represented; testifying to all that had been done in Anabaptist Münster. The display that was erected functioned as a warning, according to Anton Corvinus (1501-1553),

prior to the siege were worth 80-100 thousand Gulden, but were sold after the siege for about 13,000 Gulden, providing insufficient funds for paying property debts valued at 235,000 Gulden. Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Münster*, 7-8.

¹⁵⁴ Though the term was frequently used by Münsterites as descriptive of the action they had taken and the actions of the prince-bishop of Münster, the term was generally reserved as a descriptor for non-political disputes between individuals and families during the medieval period. Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City*, 310.

¹⁵⁵ Wolkan, *Das Große Geschichtbuch des Hutterischen Brüder*, 107.

¹⁵⁶ An anonymous pamphlet, printed in Cologne in 1535, emphasises Jan van Leiden’s interest in maintaining public attention, and therefore, in perpetuating the Anabaptist theatre he produced. (Such action would also delay his inevitable execution!) Leiden apparently told the bishop that he could make him rich again. Had the bishop of Münster asked how, Jan van Leiden would purportedly have advised that he and Knipperdolling be placed in a cage and be put on display throughout the land. All who desired to see them would be charged a white penny. The pamphlet maintains that all financial losses from the siege could have been recaptured. *FBZT*, 1654. Jan van Leiden, Knipperdolling and Krechting were allegedly transported throughout the countryside, however, rather than charging the common people admission to see them, they were simply displayed as a theatrical event [*Schauspiel*] for the benefit of the nobility [*Fürsten*]. Wolkan, *Das Große Geschichtbuch des Hutterischen Brüder*, 107. Kerksenbrock confirms that the “theatrical king” [*rex ille scenicus*] was presented before certain princes as a “spectacle” [*spectandus fuisse exhibitus*] prior to his execution. *AFM*.

cautioning all unruly “spirits” to never attempt something similar.¹⁵⁷ Through the imaginative work of Münsterites and the artful design of the Anabaptist Kingdom, inhabitants of Münster and many outside the city were provided with an opportunity to “observe” and vicariously participate in the unfolding action. It was through the externality of sight that the beholder is able to avoid direct engagement with the object of their gaze while being positioned to gain “theoretical truth.”¹⁵⁸ The medium of theatre afforded Anabaptist Münster’s audience an occasion to consider and participate at various levels in the sociological, political, moral, and religious innovations that Anabaptist Münster dramatized. The allure of the Anabaptist Kingdom was such that few successfully resisted some form of engagement. During its early months, many Dutch Anabaptists sought to immigrate to the city,¹⁵⁹ during the siege a significant number of mercenaries from the besieging army defected to it,¹⁶⁰ throughout its existence many tracked developments and were eager for news,

¹⁵⁷ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 283.

¹⁵⁸ Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 25. Jay is building on the earlier work of Hans Jonas, “The Nobility of Sight: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses,” in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1982).

¹⁵⁹ Many Dutch Anabaptists boarded ships and left the Netherlands for Münster. Georg Shenk, governor of Friesland and Overijssel, discovered one such ship full of Anabaptists and had it sunk, drowning all on board. Five other ships were known to have left Holland with Anabaptists and all were captured and subsequently sunk. It was estimated that as many as 21 ships may have left the Netherlands for Münster with a cargo of Anabaptists “eager to flee persecution and establish a place of their own.” Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 102. Haude places the number much higher and argues that 36 boats with some 3600 Anabaptist passengers were “confiscated” by the “Habsburg-Netherlandish authorities.” Haude, *In the Shadow of Wolves*, 12. In their letter to the Koblenzer Tag [an assembly of Westphalian and Upper Hessian nobility], Münsterites complain that they are wretched and will remain poor for as long as they are without a place [*Stätte*] to call their own, and without a place from which they can defend themselves against their enemies. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 220.

¹⁶⁰ By 7 June 1534 at least 200 mercenaries had deserted the besieging army and gone over to the Münsterites. Many apparently wished to return to the besieging army shortly after deserting when they found that they were not trusted, and Anabaptist Münster only provided them with the barest necessities. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 135. The confessions of two such mercenaries are particularly interesting. Cort van den Werde and Johann Kettel van Til stated under torture that they only deserted and went to Münster because they were drunk. Upon coming to the city the two were interviewed by King Jan van Leiden at which time they expressed their desire to swear allegiance

and at its demise most appeared willing to share their thoughts, opinions, criticisms and evaluations of the Anabaptist Kingdom. Acting out of curiosity, or hope for a better life, like strong criticism and open hostility were all common forms of engagement with Anabaptist Münster during the sixteenth century in the German-speaking lands.

5.5 Theatre of Violence, Disorder and Change

Corvinus has referred to Anabaptist Münster as an “evil tragedy” that only ended with the installation of the cages on St. Lambert’s tower a good many months after the city had been retaken by the prince-bishop’s forces, and long after most Münsterite males and all of Anabaptist Münster’s principal players had been executed.¹⁶¹ Martin Luther described Anabaptist Münster as a “Devil’s Play” [*Teufelspiel*] that effectively displayed to any and all observers exactly how it is that “the Devil keeps house.”¹⁶² In Caspar Schwenckfeld’s assessment of the Anabaptist Kingdom, he determined that the action being presented by Münsterites decisively proved that biblical references to the “right and true” Temple could not possibly be held in reference to the phenomenally real or material world; Schwenckfeld concludes that all such biblical references must be referring to a figurative temple.¹⁶³ More recently, Friedrich Dürrenmatt has argued that typologically only two interpretive possibilities for Anabaptist Münster exist: either Jan van Leiden was a tragic hero or a classic villain. The archetypal range of Dürrenmatt’s interpretive options is spectacular, and encourages an interpretation of Anabaptist Münster in

to him. The king read a great deal to them out of a book, most of which they did not understand, and they were baptized. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 189-90.

¹⁶¹ *FBZT*, 1698-1725.

¹⁶² Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 286.

¹⁶³ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 286.

which Jan van Leiden becomes a dramatic representation of everyone who exercises power.¹⁶⁴ Each of these interpretive options and investigative perspectives, despite their substantial temporal separation, is in keeping with the Anabaptist Kingdom's design and central purpose as a dramatic stage: they are direct and unequivocal responses to Anabaptist Münster's invitation to observe, consider, and evaluate all that was presented for the audience's benefit. As a theatre, Anabaptist Münster was not defined by the physical perimeter that Münster's city walls established, but by the less definable, heterogeneous "others" to which it made its appeals, and who, through their responses, made places into stages.¹⁶⁵

Gresbeck frequently mentions Jan van Leiden's desire to have or make everything "new" in Anabaptist Münster, with the Anabaptist King paying special attention to the city's administration, its legal system, and its social structure.¹⁶⁶ According to the confession of Obbe Philips, the creation of a new church and the adoption of a new social order had become absolutely necessary given that the old church, which played such a prominent role in shaping and maintaining medieval society, had become redundant and its demise imminent.¹⁶⁷ The testimony of Bernd Krechting on 25 July 1535 was similar. Krechting admitted his complete dissatisfaction with the established church and his desire for a truly magnificent

¹⁶⁴ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 294.

¹⁶⁵ Samuel Weber, "'Streets, Squares, Theatres': A City on the Move: Walter Benjamin's Paris," *Boundary 2* 30:1 (2003), 26.

¹⁶⁶ Gresbeck emphasizes the irony in Jan van Leiden's desire to want everything to be new and his development of a royal court, moral code, and legal system that resembled a very primitive social system. *BDA*, 153. Even Jan van Leiden's promised gifting of land to his foremost leaders maintains traditional boundaries. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 249.

¹⁶⁷ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 40-41. In his confession, Bernd Krechting, (the bailiff of Anabaptist Münster and one of the three men hung in cages from St. Lambert's tower), stated that his dissatisfaction with the established church caused him to leave it and come to Münster. *BDA, Actenstücke*, 366.

church, which were provided as the reasons for his leaving the church and coming to Münster.¹⁶⁸ Anabaptist Münster was designed as a microcosm, example, pattern, and model of all that was wrong with medieval society, and emerged as an offering effective in initiating a wholesale restructuring of the socio-political world.¹⁶⁹ It functioned as a symbol of what was humanly possible, and was continuously shaped and reshaped by its didactic purpose. The Anabaptist Kingdom was designed to develop understanding through its dramatic reconstructions even though Jan van Leiden openly admitted during his confession that his vision remained far from clear and his own understanding far from full.¹⁷⁰ As its principal architect, Jan van Leiden's reign in Anabaptist Münster successfully and substantially re-formed, transformed, and re-formed that city yet again,¹⁷¹ with the city in turn profoundly reshaping its inhabitants, and deeply imprinting popular imagination throughout the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁷² The Anabaptist Kingdom appeared quickly and disappeared almost as quickly, but it affected socio-political policy for more than a generation throughout much of Europe. Its symbolic import and representational power,

¹⁶⁸ *BDA, Actenstücke*, 379. Knipperdolling testified that [Münsterite] prophets declared David's temple good, Solomon's temple better, but the temple that God wanted to erect through them [Münsterites] was to be the best of all. The new temple was to be greater and more costly. Knipperdolling's failure to understand or believe the prophecy, given that no mention of it is made in the scriptures, he claimed, resulted in his imprisonment. When the prophets clarified their prophecy and explained that they were speaking of the inner temple of Christian hearts [*innerlichen tempel der christlicher hertzen*] Knipperdolling was released. *BDA, Actenstücke*, 409.

¹⁶⁹ *BDA*, 84. Arthur has seemingly accepted such a proposition, arguing that Anabaptist Münster was an "archetype, not an exception or an anomaly, despite the apparent remoteness of the time and place." Arthur, *The Tailor-King*, 3.

¹⁷⁰ *FBZT*, 1700. It was only after his capture and while in prison that Jan van Leiden's "sight and understanding" improved dramatically.

¹⁷¹ Münster was transformed into a "godly" city in a way that no other German city was during the early part of the sixteenth century. Reformation in the 1520s simply did not transform urban centres into godly cities as expected or as was being propagated. Thomas Brady writes: "In the end, South Germany saw no godly cities". Thomas Brady, "In Search of the Godly City," in R. Po-chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 31.

¹⁷² R. Po-chia Hsia has described the Anabaptist Kingdom as "the most dramatic event in the Reformation". R. Po-chia Hsia, "Münster and the Reformation," in R. Po-chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 51.

including the myths it propagated and with which it became associated, were not only effectively embedded in the popular imaginations of subsequent generations, its more colourful aspects continue to be of interest to modern directors, writers, and artists.¹⁷³

Through the directorship of Jan van Leiden the city of Münster was effectively transformed from a Westphalian city into the New Jerusalem, with Münster becoming a dramatic stage that proved to be instrumental in shaping history for a particular group of people, at a specific time and place.¹⁷⁴ The theatre that was fashioned functioned as a text; it was produced for the benefit of Münsterites and a wider audience, with all observer-participants expected to watch, listen, learn, interpret, and ultimately reshape the sixteenth-century socio-political world through their new-found knowledge. Münsterite theatre was a place intimately associated with memory and anticipation, repeating that which already has been (violence) while anticipating and being changed into that which is to come (redemption.)¹⁷⁵ A 10 May 1534 letter from Duke Ernst of Braunschweig to Johann Friedrich, a Saxon duke, expresses fear that if the “error” of Anabaptist Münster is not suppressed it will become a fortress and haven for a large company of people, with the city functioning

¹⁷³ *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* states: “No other topic of the Reformation and particularly the Anabaptists has received as much attention throughout the centuries as the Anabaptists of Münster. Opponents of the movement in the Catholic and Protestant churches, scholars and journalists in all groups, fiction writers and artists, have through more than four centuries found this subject a fertile field. Even today novels and dramas dealing with some phase of the Münsterite movement appear almost annually.” *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, 778. In 1922-23, when inflation in Germany was extremely high, some of the *Notgeld* (emergency bank notes) circulating in the city of Münster displayed Jan van Leiden, depicting certain aspects of Münsterite history.

¹⁷⁴ According to Kerksenbrock, Jan van Leiden was enthusiastic [*eifrig*] about performing on stage from his youth. He produced poetry in his mother tongue, was considered a poet [*Versemacher*] and orator [*Redekünstler*], opened a school for training others in these arts, and directed various plays for profit. Kerksenbrock argues that it was through his years spent in the theatre that he developed his ability to effectively manipulate people. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 150-153.

¹⁷⁵ Weber, “Streets, Squares, Theatres,” 26.

as a centre for the further dissemination of “error.”¹⁷⁶ Through the agency available in the eye and the ear, and through the didactic power inherent in theatre, Anabaptist Münster as social theatre made certain socio-political representations and abstractions possible, with the imaginations of Münsterites decisively shaped by the moral, social, legal, and political alternatives it presented. Gresbeck notes that it is not possible to write of all the “foolishness” [*geckerei / bofrige*] that transpired in Anabaptist Münster,¹⁷⁷ and declares that it was primarily through the drama presented in which things were not as they seemed to be that the simple people became blinded and others who “knew better” continued to offer their assistance to the regime.¹⁷⁸ Anabaptist Münster was experimental theatre in the sense that it came into being without a “pre-written” script and without a pre-determined, definite end in sight. However, Anabaptist Münster was not, and did not, simply produce a fictional world.¹⁷⁹ It was a very real world capable of effecting the construction of fictive worlds in the imaginations of spectators and participants. The dramatic action presented by Münsterites was frequently described by them as the presentation of an example or pattern for community, and a model of the exercise of power;¹⁸⁰ it was offered for examination, evaluation, and some indefinite form of acceptance and adherence.¹⁸¹ Uncertainties were offset by Münsterite leaders through promises of future understanding, with Münsterites claiming in one of their propaganda

¹⁷⁶ *BDA, Actenstücke*, 229-230.

¹⁷⁷ *BDA*, 137.

¹⁷⁸ *BDA*, 92.

¹⁷⁹ Rothmann insisted that no one should think of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, which was the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth, as a fantasy. *SBR*, 276.

¹⁸⁰ *BDA*, 92.

¹⁸¹ Susan Bennett traces two possibilities offered in theatre (criticism and adherence) to the work of Roland Barthes on Brecht and Eisenstein. Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 27.

pamphlets to besieging forces that in the future people will point to Anabaptist Münster and say: “See, there is the true Christian community; that is godly authority” [*Seht, dat ist die recht christlich gemeinde, das ist ein gotliche obrigkeit*].¹⁸²

In his *Restitution*,¹⁸³ Rothmann argues that a comprehensive restoration of the world to an earlier and more desirable pre-lapsarian state is to be accomplished shortly. The restoration to come is divine action being initiated by and for the common man, and not the learned,¹⁸⁴ with the prophet John Matthys and King Jan van Leiden given as primary examples of the former.¹⁸⁵ The learned constitute one of Rothmann’s primary targets; they are the foremost representatives of the godless,¹⁸⁶ whom the godly will literally trample under their feet.¹⁸⁷ Rothmann’s anti-intellectual bent is obvious throughout his *Restitution*, as it is in his *Bericht von der Wrake* [Report on Vengeance], with the learned held primarily responsible for what is described as the moral, social, and political degeneration of the sixteenth-century world. Rothmann argues that the most recent Fall, with all Falls being a primary form of evil, was initiated through human writing and advanced through human teaching,

¹⁸² *SBR*, 434.

¹⁸³ This booklet of Rothmann’s was shot into the besieging army’s camp in November 1534. *SBR*, 209.

¹⁸⁴ *SBR*, 208-283, especially, 221.

¹⁸⁵ Rothmann divides human history into a pattern of falls and subsequent restorations, with the relation they bear to each other of primary importance. He argues a fall was generated during the New Covenant by scholars and princes (the learned), with the restoration now being initiated by and for the common man. *SBR*, 213. Just as Adam’s fall in the Old Covenant was restored by Christ, so the fall initiated by scholars and princes in the New Covenant is being restored by Luther, Erasmus, Zwingli, Melchior Hoffmann, John Matthys, and Jan van Leiden. Luther, Erasmus and Zwingli are credited with beginning the process of restoration but Hoffmann, Matthys and van Leiden are credited with bringing it to completion. *SBR*, 219, and 291.

¹⁸⁶ Johannes Keßler demonstrates a very similar attitude toward the “learned.” He argues that though they are “doctors of the holy scriptures” most have “never in their entire life read the scriptures”, with Keßler claiming further, that “one can simply “buy the title.” He insists that not only are the learned to blame for the current crisis, but that the institutions with which they are most closely associated are at fault for contributing to the “construction of the papacy” [*Bau des Papsttums*] through their harmonization [*Einklang bringen*] of the scriptures with “heathen philosophy” [*heidnische Philosophie*]. Traugott Schieß, ed., *Johannes Keßler’s Sabbata: St. Galler Reformationschronik 1523-1539* (Leipzig: Rudolf Haupt, 1911), 18.

¹⁸⁷ *SBR*, 339.

both of which are identified with “the learned” who “darkened and obscured the Holy Scriptures” through their nefarious actions.¹⁸⁸ It was in identifying the source of socio-political degeneration with a particular human enterprise, writing and teaching, that the ideological justification and motivational force for the destruction of all books and official records in Anabaptist Münster was developed.¹⁸⁹ The Babylonian Captivity announced by Jeremiah can be usefully compared with the Christian Captivity announced by Paul, according to Rothmann in his *Bericht von der Wrake*;¹⁹⁰ with both examples [*vorbelde*] of degenerative evil.¹⁹¹ Rothmann argues that pictures [*belde*] and examples in the bible are persons, things, stories, or matters that are generally something other than what they appear to be; or alternatively, that their meaning is located elsewhere. In his thinking, the Hebrew scriptures and commandments are replete with examples, abundantly exemplifying and encouraging just such an interpretive possibility.¹⁹² Persons such as David and Solomon, and places such as the temple and Jerusalem, are all held, in both their name and history,

¹⁸⁸ *SBR*, 221.

¹⁸⁹ According to Gresbeck, books, personal letters, court rulings, records of title, account books, court judgments, official correspondence and other documents were removed from homes, libraries, council chambers, churches and monasteries. Confiscated materials were placed on 5 or 6 piles in front of the city administration building and burnt. The entire process took about 8 days though many persons purportedly hid and otherwise withheld their books and letters from the fire. *BDA*, 46-47. According to Heinrich Dorpius, it was John Matthys who determined that no books aside from the bible and the testaments were to remain in Anabaptist Münster. He estimates that books with a market value of 20,000 Gulden were burnt by Münsterites. *FBZT*, 1673.

¹⁹⁰ *SBR*, 291.

¹⁹¹ *SBR*, 292. The parallels between Rothmann’s insistence that the godly are to exact vengeance on the godless for the evil they have caused, and Thomas Müntzer’s argument that godless rulers, priests, and scribes should be killed for bringing divine wrath upon the community are both obvious and significant. Such action is described as the divine prescription for establishing righteousness. See Thomas Müntzer’s, “Sermon to the Princes,” in Michael G. Baylor, ed., *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 29-31.

¹⁹² *SBR*, 335.

as figures, examples, and pictures of something else.¹⁹³ Access to their “true” meaning is not direct, but always mediated.

Rothmann takes issue with the learned who encourage, or otherwise insist on, a spiritual interpretation of the bible and through it claim: “things are all interior and not outward.” He dismisses the hermeneutical approach of all who would argue that the things of which the bible speaks “take place in heaven and not on earth.”¹⁹⁴ The restoration of the world, of which Anabaptist Münster was the first fruit, was understood by Rothmann and other Münsterites as a material reality involving the physical re-formation and re-construction of the world in all of its socio-political and moral aspects,¹⁹⁵ with Münsterites typically rejecting outright any suggestion that the restoration to come was to be a spiritual event, or that it was to be “experienced” internally. Rothmann repeatedly insisted on the very physical, essentially corporeal nature of the kingdom that was being established, at times speaking of it as a third world that was a complete renewal of the old world;¹⁹⁶ it was to be a world in which all things without exception were made “new.”¹⁹⁷ Rothmann’s view of divine presence makes it spatially specific, but he argues against all spiritualized interpretations as obstacles to the clear apprehension of truth. His own understanding of the Anabaptist Kingdom as an apocalyptic event and the realization of scriptural truth rejects the possibility that the bible and Anabaptist Münster be understood

¹⁹³ *SBR*, 336.

¹⁹⁴ *SBR*, 338.

¹⁹⁵ It was a reconstruction of the world that called into question the intrinsic worth of established moral values, and the conditions under which they developed and were maintained.

¹⁹⁶ *BDA*, 365.

¹⁹⁷ *SBR*, 364. Rothmann blamed “the learned and the common evangelicals” for propagating a view in which the kingdom of God was presented as a spiritual kingdom existing in the consciences of the believing, with the current powers and material “kingdom” to remain intact for as long as the world exists. *SBR*, 393.

rhetorically or allegorically.¹⁹⁸ Rothmann insists that scriptural truth is materially apprehended and that divine presence is intimately associated with a particular physical place. He argues that Anabaptist Münster presents the problem of the dual nature of human existence, with the time of human captivity and the time of redemption reflecting the two worlds in which Münsterites live. These two worlds operate as opposite sides of a single coin that must be handled simultaneously until their separation is permanent and complete.¹⁹⁹

Münsterites such as Rothmann tended to speak about Anabaptist Münster as the provision of an example,²⁰⁰ with Münsterites generally arguing that its design did not follow the pattern of yet another Fall as their critics might have suggested, but that it functioned as an example of divine restoration, and was purposefully constructed to act as a representative model with didactic possibilities for the entire world.²⁰¹ Münsterites drew on biblical language, concepts, and themes when describing their efforts to reconstruct the world, recognizing at times the very real limitations of their knowledge and ideological resources.²⁰² Rothmann acknowledges the problem and argues that examples are all that humans have available to them until the “Restoration” is complete. With the “Restoration” understanding will become

¹⁹⁸ *SBR*, 338.

¹⁹⁹ *SBR*, 281.

²⁰⁰ See for example, *BDA*, 23, 25, 82, and 92.

²⁰¹ *BDA*, 92. It was not only Münsterites who saw the possibility of the Anabaptist Kingdom having far-reaching effects. A letter of Duke Ernst at Braunschweig is a somewhat typical response of sixteenth-century authorities to Anabaptist Münster, with authorities frequently fearing that Anabaptist Münster would precipitate significant changes to the political landscape. Duke Ernst states that unless the Anabaptist Kingdom is suppressed it will become a centre for the dissemination of “error.” *BDA*, *Actenstücke*, 229.

²⁰² The Hebrew bible provided Anabaptists with the historical precedent they sought and the New Testament provided them with their theological argument, but it was largely in guild political ideology that they found the required “language” for the text of their “millenarian drama.” The notion of a godly tribe reflected Hebrew bible history and the adoption of sixteenth-century guild social practice provided rhetorical resonance. *Hsia*, “Münster and the Anabaptists,” 64, and 69.

full, but until then, he insists that humans have no option but to deal with “dark riddles” [*raitzelen*], and that all are forced to look for truth in the reflections offered by a mirror.²⁰³ The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster operated as a mirror dramatizing the dark riddle surrounding the exercise of what was traditionally described as “divinely” sanctioned power within the community, bringing into the audience’s view the casualties such authorization generates. Many persons were executed in Anabaptist Münster for violating what were described as scriptural norms. And many others, such as an unnamed mercenary, were simply executed through random selection or in accordance with a revelation received by Münsterite leaders.²⁰⁴ The rule of King Jan van Leiden in Anabaptist Münster effectively modelled, not what might happen, but what exactly does happen socially, morally, economically, and politically when humans exercise “divinely authorized” power over others.²⁰⁵

Whether Anabaptist Münster was a negative example presenting all that was to be avoided in the exercise of power, or a positive socio-political model that was to be imitated and broadly emulated, tended to depend largely on the sixteenth-century viewer and their relation to the Anabaptist Kingdom as determined by their own ideological, social, and political commitments. The theatre of Anabaptist Münster and the performances of its principal actors were adequately ambiguous to allow for a wide range of interpretive possibilities, with all responses to the dramatic action

²⁰³ *SBR*, 335-36. As an interesting parallel, Kaspar Braitmichel, et al, assert in their preface that their compilation of Hutterite history will be a wonderful mirror [*schöner Spiegel*] for the godly, reflecting their image while acting as a warning of division, error, and everything that does not honour God. Wolkan, *Das Große Geschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brüder*, xl.

²⁰⁴ A mercenary was randomly selected and executed because God did not want anything impure to remain in the city. *BDA*, 24.

²⁰⁵ King Jan van Leiden carried two large swords when he walked in public, symbolically uniting civil and religious power in a single person and office. As God’s anointed king he acted in God’s place, representing the rule of righteousness within the city, and the will and ability to punish evil in the entire world. *BDA*, 89-92.

revealing the values and proclivities of a given audience or audience member every bit as much as those of Münsterite actors. While the “meaning” attached to the Anabaptist Kingdom and the action it presented was left open to individual interpretation, the need to interpret the dramatic action was not optional. The action was presented as “truth” and required a response. Gresbeck freely offers his own cynical assessment, stating that the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, the dramatic action it presented, and the deception with which it was identified and inextricably bound up were simply a way of whiling away the time [*die tiet verdriven*], when the promised deliverance failed to materialize.²⁰⁶

Heinrich Dorpius appears to have recognized the dramaturgical nature of Anabaptist Münster. Although he acknowledged the didactic qualities the Anabaptist Kingdom was thought to possess, he also noted that things did not develop in Anabaptist Münster the way Münsterites had imagined [*getreumet*] they would.²⁰⁷ Dorpius assumed a somewhat deterministic attitude in his assessment, arguing that things in Münster developed as they always must in such cases.²⁰⁸ He implied that a certain type of logic governs socio-political affairs, dooming the Anabaptist Kingdom from the very start, with Dorpius encouraging his reader to “see” the Münsterites and their kingdom not as an example to follow, as Münsterites propagated, but as an example to be avoided.²⁰⁹ Anabaptist Münster, in Dorpius’s thinking, effectively proved, whether Münsterites intended it that way or not, and regardless of whether or not they acknowledge it, that certain moral values (or their absence), as well as some

²⁰⁶ BDA, 139.

²⁰⁷ FBZT, 1681.

²⁰⁸ FBZT, 1681.

²⁰⁹ FBZT, 1681.

socio-political structures and policies are simply not to be implemented or universalized. Nor are they to be explored, transmitted, transplanted, or reconstructed in some form elsewhere. The replication of Anabaptist Münster in any form, facet, or manner was to be avoided at all costs,²¹⁰ according to Dorpius, with Anabaptist Münster's primary didactic value resting in its ability to function as a clear warning to others. It was to act as a strong encouragement for all individuals to diligently protect themselves from false teaching by abiding alone "with the pure word of God,"²¹¹ from which Anabaptist Münster was an obvious and serious deviation, in his thinking.

Münsterite rhetoric and descriptions suggest that the primary value of Anabaptist Münster and Münsterite action rested in the Kingdom's ability to function as a microcosm of the world as it is, and of the world as it is to become concurrently; Münsterites declared Anabaptist Münster the seed from which a better and more desirable world would eventually emerge.²¹² Münsterites considered the world to come already present in Münster in embryonic form, with Münsterite action complementing that ontological state through its focus on making "all things new in the city."²¹³ Such a process of renewal unavoidably involved dismantling a good many things and creating altogether new things. Established spatial understandings were necessarily challenged and traditional spatial practices substantially altered.

²¹⁰ *FBZT*, 1681.

²¹¹ *FBZT*, 1681-1682.

²¹² A vision confirmed that Münster, together with Strasbourg and Deventer, was one of three divinely chosen cities in which a holy people were to be established as the first segment of universal restoration. *BDA*, 23. A pamphlet of Heinrich Dorpius nuances this theme. It states that John Matthys determined that Strasbourg lost its privileged position as the primary site for the New Jerusalem to Münster when it was disqualified from being the holy city because of its "depravity." It was after sending out several apostles to Strasbourg and hearing their reports that Matthys determined that Münster would become the new site for the New Jerusalem. *FBZT*, 1692.

²¹³ *BDA*, 84. The city gates and streets were renamed to reflect their new identity, and a policy was established whereby the king named all newborn children. *BDA*, 154-156.

Fences demarcating private property and establishing boundaries were torn down, and all entrance doors to residences in Anabaptist Münster were to remain unlocked regardless of whether it was day or night.²¹⁴ The introduction of new spatial practices required that all city gates and most streets were renamed,²¹⁵ 5-6 new schools with fresh curricula were established,²¹⁶ living spaces were traded,²¹⁷ monasteries were remade into prisons and barracks,²¹⁸ churches, chapels, the cathedral and the cathedral square were all renamed,²¹⁹ clerical quarters were “renovated” into residences for “immigrants,”²²⁰ and the marketplace and cathedral square (not the church) were established as the primary place for preaching and the dissemination of information. The cathedral square and marketplace were established as primary sites for the working of righteousness, the implementation of order, and the dispensing of justice in the form of executions,²²¹ with the city wholly transformed from a place of

²¹⁴ *BDA*, 47.

²¹⁵ Small boards with new street names were hung in streets, and letters containing a simple rhyme were attached to city gates indicating what each gate was to now be called. *BDA*, 154.

²¹⁶ *BDA*, 47.

²¹⁷ Those living in the city were to be relocated to the outside of the city, and strangers were to be given homes inside city walls. *BDA*, 97.

²¹⁸ *BDA*, 65, and 165. It is somewhat ironic that the Rosenthal convent became a prison for “quarrelsome” women who refused to be married. Kerssenbrock confirms Gresbeck’s comments stating that the convent was employed as a prison for women who refused to obey their husbands. *AFM*, 542. Gresbeck also states on one occasion that the convent served as a prison for a broader range of crimes with the “prophets, preachers and 12 elders” of the Anabaptist Kingdom confining all who were “not yet believers” or had not yet allowed themselves to be baptized in the Rosenthal convent [*Dair plagen die propheten predicanten und die twelf eldesten in laten brengen alle die noch ungeloevich weren von den wiederdoepers und wolden nicht von der dope holden, und die iene, die in der stat weren gebleven und hidden sick nicht laten doepen*]. *BDA*, 43

²¹⁹ Each of the churches was given a name employing some variant of stone pit [*steinkule*]. For example, the cathedral was renamed the *steinkule*, the former cathedral was renamed the *alde steinkule*, and the small chapel by the cathedral square became the *kleine steinkule*. Punishment was meted out to any Münsterite who was caught using the former name of a gate, street, or church. The punishment typically consisted of being forced to drink a pot of water. *BDA*, 158. It is interesting to note that the cathedral square was the only church property that was given a new name with positive connotations. It was renamed Mount Zion [*bergh Sion*] and was an important assembly point throughout the reign of Jan van Leiden in Münster.

²²⁰ *AFM*, 541-42.

²²¹ *BDA*, 121.

fine houses, trees, gardens, fences, large monasteries and elegant churches into a strong fortress.²²²

It was through the initiative of Anabaptist Münster's "preachers and prophets," according to Gresbeck, that the city of Münster came to be spoken of as a new creation, and a model for the rest of the world,²²³ and it was through Münsterite activity that the city of Münster became a very different sort of place. As the New Jerusalem, Anabaptist Münster linked a particular quality of life to a specific place that required building. Gresbeck states that Anabaptist Münster's "preachers and prophets" defined "true religion" as an "innovation" that was closely tied to moral, economic, psychological and social improvements, with Gresbeck cautiously accepting the argument that "true religion" always has the effect of providing a better or a good life [*das Leben gebessert*].²²⁴ It was just such a socially, politically, and morally superior life that Münsterites sought and claimed to be enacting in their reconstruction of the city, even if critics such as Gresbeck and Kerksenbrock saw little beyond disorder, foolishness and destruction, and openly rejected all Münsterite

²²² BDA, 177. Kerksenbrock states in the title of his work, *Anabaptistici furoris Monasterium inclitum Westphaliae metropolim evertentis historica narratio* [Narrative History of the Ruin of the Anabaptist Madness in the Renowned Westphalian Metropolis of Münster], that Münster was a "renowned metropolis" in Westphalia, and frequently reminds his reader of its privileged status prior to the Anabaptist Kingdom. The city was a bishop's see from the 8th century, and it became a member of the Hanseatic League sometime during the 13th. Its buildings and city centre were a testimony to Münster's wealth and prestige. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, 777. Gresbeck notes that work on improving the city's defenses, which compromised the city's earlier appearance and condition continued wherever possible and for as long as Münsterites had the resources and provisions necessary to work. When Franz von Waldeck accused Jan van Leiden of being a villain who had ruined him and his poor subjects [*Ey du boefwicht, wie hastu mich unnd meine armen leuth verderbt*], Jan van Leiden responded that he had not spoilt one of his young girls, but that he had handed over a secure city capable of resisting any power [*Pfaff, ich hab dych nit ein meit verderbt, ich hab dyr ein veste stadt gelibert, die fuer allenn gewalt ist*]. FBZT, 1654.

²²³ BDA, 92.

²²⁴ BDA, 162. A similar definition of "religion" is assumed by Brady. He argues that "religion" "ought to have promoted peace, justice, and unity in the service of God's honor and the common good". Brady, "In Search of the Godly City," 19.

claims. At times, they argued Münsterites were effectively producing the exact opposite of what they claimed to be creating.²²⁵

Gresbeck was quick to dismiss the existential claims of Münsterites, but he acknowledged that the “preachers and prophets” of Anabaptist Münster were adept at keeping Münsterites bound up in the folly they presented, implying that they were very good actors.²²⁶ Kerssenbrock, on the other hand, complained that leading Münsterites were not playing “real parts,” and were only participating in a production that lacked seriousness, presenting nothing beyond deception and the crudest forms of foolishness. Kerssenbrock states that it was not enough for the “foolish and stupid” Münsterites to have a “theatre-king” [*scenicum regem*] and “whore-guardian” [*scortorum praesidem*] in Jan van Leiden; they also wanted a good many “theatre-courtesans” [*scenicas meretrices*].²²⁷ It was with good reason, according to Gresbeck and Kerssenbrock that these persuasive Münsterite preachers were chosen as the Anabaptist Kingdom’s apostles and ambassadors by Jan van Leiden. They had proven themselves influential and effective in co-manipulating Münsterites, making it reasonable to assume that they would also be successful in soliciting help from other Anabaptists against the bishop’s forces, and thereby bring peace to the city after being sent in four directions to various towns, territories, and cities.²²⁸

²²⁵ Gresbeck often implies and on occasion states that Münster Anabaptists did not live or display godly lives. He suggests that they lived as though they were possessed by the Devil, with Jan van Leiden living as though he was possessed by 1000 devils. *BDA*, 94. Gresbeck charges that their Father [*Vader*] was not God but the Devil. *BDA*, 164.

²²⁶ *BDA*, 136.

²²⁷ *AFM*, 656-57. Van Dülmen uses the terms *Theaterkönig* [theatre-king], *Hürenoberst* [whore-lord], and *Theaterhuren* [theatre-whores], Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 159.

²²⁸ *BDA*, 111-112. The *Newe Zeytung Die Wiederteuffer zu Münster belangende*, (printed in Augsburg in 1535), states that 6 apostles were sent north to Osnabrück, 5 west to Warendorff, 8 east to Larsselt (Gresbeck and Kerssenbrock list Coesfeld and not Larsselt as the eastern destination), and 8 south to Soest for a total of 27 apostles. *FBZT*, 1630. Heinrich Dorpius claims that 28 not 27 apostles were sent

Münsterites held their city to be one of three divinely designated places [hedde Got uth verkoren] for the assembly of all “true Israelites and Christ’s covenant people” [waren Israheliten vnde bundtgenoten Christi].²²⁹ The selection of Münster, their own election, and the redemption Münsterites associated with both were defined by the socio-political world they claimed to be constructing. In proclaiming Münster as the New Jerusalem,²³⁰ and then identifying it with God’s presence and redemption,²³¹ a direct association between a particular place and a specific social body was created. The entire city, and just not a particular place or type of place within it, was proclaimed holy by virtue of its divine election and divine presence.²³²

out from Anabaptist Münster, with the king and queen eating a final farewell meal with the apostles prior to their departure. *FBZT*, 1678. These 4 urban destinations were also among the cities to which Knipperdolling and Rothmann wrote a letter inviting all Anabaptists living there to come to Münster, promising their correspondents that they would receive 10 times more in Münster than what they are leaving behind. *FBZT*, 1671. Kerssenbrock provides the names of all 27 apostles and includes a transcription of their farewell instructions from John Dusentschur, who stated that if the apostles and their message were rejected by the places to which they were sent, they were to leave a gold coin on the ground and shake the dust of that city from their feet. *AFM*, 696-97. Gresbeck states that the instructions provided by the “lame prophet” (Dusentschur) included the communication of a revelation in which those places that refused the apostles or their message would be utterly destroyed, sinking into Hell’s fires at the hour of their refusal. *BDA*, 112. Sending these highly influential men out of the city of Münster was a carefully calculated, strategic move on the part of Jan van Leiden. It entrusted this important mission to some of the best informed, most committed and most capable men available in Anabaptist Münster, while simultaneously eliminating them as potential competitors for power. Two potential threats to the King’s authority, Rothmann and Knipperdolling, remained in the city. With the exception of Heinrich Graes, who became an agent for Franz von Waldeck, prince-bishop of Münster, all apostles were captured and summarily executed. *BDA*, 114-116.

²²⁹ *BDA*, 22-23; and, *SBR*, 293.

²³⁰ *BDA*, 23, 25, 36, 103, and 105.

²³¹ *BDA*, 25.

²³² Gresbeck stated that the “preachers and prophets” in Anabaptist Münster claimed that God walked with them on earth, and that divine presence provided them with complete immunity, giving Münsterites the freedom to mock and abuse [*schimp und spot*] their besiegers with impunity. *BDA*, 49. The understanding that God wished to create a holy people, and that the entire city of Münster should be declared holy, was the reason most frequently given by Münsterites for the expulsion of the “godless.” *BDA*, 23. Though Rothmann verifies the privileged position of Münster, he justified the action taken against the “godless” as a necessary defensive strategy. Lutherans and Catholics, he claimed, had taken up weapons and offensive positions against Münster’s Anabaptists; they were planning to take action against the peaceful Anabaptists. *SBR*, 207. Visions, prophecies, and various miracles were frequently given as evidence of God’s abiding presence in the city. Popular imagination often identified “miracle” with God’s presence, such that when people came to Münster to see a miracle they were coming to see God. The letter of Jacob Smonsloe of Harlem, 14 October 1534, reflects such a popular conception. The letter records the desire of his “simple” niece to see God,

As the New Israel, Münsterites were declared a holy people though changes to their identity, their way of living, and the city itself continued to be necessary for its complete realization. Through Rothmann's *Restitution* [Restoration], his *Van den Rike Christi* [On Christ's Kingdom], and his *Bericht von der Wrake* [Report on Vengeance], a focus was set for Anabaptist Münster in which the question of how one is to live, and how power is to be exercised, given the new identity of Münsterites as a holy people living in a holy city, assumed pre-eminence. Declaring the entire city holy made it possible to abandon the cathedral and parish churches in favour of the marketplace and Cathedral Square for public assembly and the preaching of sermons,²³³ initiating a significant first step toward developing a new understanding of how Münsterites were to live, who they were as individuals, and how power was to be exercised by whom.

The discourse of truth that was produced, propagated and put on display in Anabaptist Münster was decisively shaped and substantially mediated by Münsterite understandings of social, political, and economic exigencies as a besieged city; it was organized through their development of a controlling ideology of place.²³⁴ At various times opportunities were extended for individuals to leave Anabaptist Münster. Those

prompting her undertaking a trip to Münster. *BDA, Actenstücke*, 271. These widely acclaimed miracles and wonders not only functioned as a popular attractant, they also authorized Anabaptist Münster's charismatic leadership, legitimating and empowering their program for the city and its inhabitants. *BDA*, 13, 15-17, 21, 23, 24, 82, 101, 104, 111-112, 113, 115, 130, and 131.

²³³ See for example, *BDA*, 19, 23, 25, 28-30, 33, 73, 90, 91, 93, 103, 106, 121, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132-133, 178, and 185.

²³⁴ Michel Foucault writes: "Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true." Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131.

who accepted such offers were generally derided, abused, and then dismissed from the city as godless, or in some cases, “deserters,” with some summarily executed.²³⁵ The women and children who wished to leave Münster were permitted to do so on occasion after they were stripped of their clothes and redressed in older ones.²³⁶ The understanding of place Anabaptist Münster developed, including its value, its meaning for the individual, and its relation to the divine separated humanity into two distinct groups, the godly and the godless. The Münsterite understanding of place involved a re-description of the world in which natural forces and the existing socio-political world were simply regarded as surreal. The world Münsterite action produced was not fictional, nor was it simply an imaginary place brought into existence as the product of deviant imagination. Anabaptist Münster was a “theatre event”²³⁷ developed and designed to generate an environment effective in exploring radical social change. Münsterites produced a text consisting of what Eli Rozik has termed “iconic descriptions imprinted on their own bodies, capable of conjuring up

²³⁵ Following the general expulsion on 27 February 1534, Münsterites were formally given at least 3 opportunities to leave the city, though individuals left the Anabaptist Kingdom throughout its duration of the Anabaptist Kingdom. Failure to obtain proper permission to leave the city was a capital offence. Those who left were not permitted to pass through the besieging army’s camp, with some killed and many others starved to death. *BDA, Actenstücke*, 334-335. The closing of the “door of grace” is consistently presented as imminent, and often forms the motivational basis for enforcing compliance with Jan van Leiden’s directives, and functions to restrict emigration. *BDA*, 24, 28-30, 33, 125-127, 172, and 189.

²³⁶ *FBZT*, 1648. The *Rule of Macarius* and the *Third Rule of the Fathers* prescribe a similar consequence for any monk desiring to leave the monastery. They state that such a person is to be sent out as a faithless one into the community of the unbelieving [*et extra communionem infidelis discedat*] wearing nothing but the most ragged clothes [*nihil penitus nisi nugacissimo induatur vestitu*]. Carmela Vircillo Franklin, Ivan Havener, and J. Alcuin Francis, *Early Monastic Rules: The Rules of the Fathers and the Regula Orientalis* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 50 and 56 respectively. Upon leaving the city of Münster, Jan van Leiden would often say to the departing: “Go now to the heretics” [*Nun zeuch hin zu denn ketzern*]. Clothes collected from those leaving the Anabaptist Kingdom were given to Frisians, Hollanders, and soldiers who came to the city. *BDA*, 97.

²³⁷ This phrase is borrowed from Wiles, *The Theatre Event: Modern Theories of Performance*.

fictional worlds” in the imaginations of spectators and participants.²³⁸ In Rothmann’s words, Münster was established as a place for the refreshment [*erwickinge*] and deliverance [*erloezynge*] of “true” Israelites, with emphasis placed on the separation and escape of Münsterites from the oppressive and tyrannical controlling forces of “Babylon.”²³⁹ It was a world in and through which a good many impossibilities become possible.

5.6 Münsterite Theatre: Myth, Deception and Play

Roland Barthes has argued: “What the public wants is the image of passion, not passion itself.”²⁴⁰ While a variety of options exist for interpreting Barthes’s statement, it would seem, from a public perspective, passion is something more properly observed than it is possessed or expressed. A preference for the image or form of passion over its reality or content is conditional on a process Barthes calls the “emptying out of interiority to the benefit of its exterior signs,” resulting in the “exhaustion of the content by the form.”²⁴¹ Theatre is one place in which form can and generally does take priority over content. It is a medium in which the “image,” and not the reality of “passion,” is presented, enabling the investigation of passion while shielding the audience from its consequences and/or effects. By virtue of the spatial and existential separation established between the stage and its audience, theatre is an eminently suitable form for the presentation of passion. Moreover, it is through the safety that such a separation establishes that the expectations of

²³⁸ Eli Rozik, *Generating Theatre Meaning: A Theory and Methodology of Performance Analysis* (Brighton; Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 85. Rozik describes “iconicity” as a medium that is “employed for describing worlds,” with the audience or reader “expected to rely on elements of similarity to real or mental words.”

²³⁹ *SBR*, 340.

²⁴⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, translated by Annette Lavers (London: Paladin, 1972), 18.

²⁴¹ Barthes, *Mythologies*, 18.

spectators can become focused on what Barthes has called the “intelligible representation of moral situations”.²⁴² This is not to say that the action or image theatre presents can be reduced to, or simply identified with, the deliberation of a spectacle’s moral value. Although it is a medium of representation and effective in the presentation of “moral situations,” theatre is by its very nature intimately bound up with deception and not with truth.²⁴³ It is the intricate deceptions of theatre, and the possibilities such an epistemological position presents that provide it with substantial power, and the ability to attract and hold an audience’s attention. Moreover, the power of theatre and the deception by which it works are not conditional on the gullibility, ignorance, or passivity of a given group of spectators; the relation between stage and audience is not such that spectators are involuntarily deceived. Rather, the deception to which theatre is inextricably bound and the power it exercises involves the audience’s wilful abrogation or suspension of “reality” in order to permit some critical form of engagement with another “reality,” and it is this condition to which spectators always provide their consent in the dramatic representation of “moral situations.”

During the inaugural period of confrontation, when the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster was still young and the siege in the early stages of its development, Gresbeck recalls how Jan van Leiden, the co-mayors Knipperdolling and

²⁴² Barthes, *Mythologies*, 18.

²⁴³ Theatre’s relation to deception was an important theme during the Elizabethan period with many of Shakespeare’s plays centered on its exploration. His comedies often worked subtly but forcibly to show that deception is not always evil, nor does it necessarily harm others psychologically, emotionally, or physically. Perhaps most importantly given our purposes, in “The Tempest,” Prospero proves himself a master at employing deception as a virtuous art for redressing and rectifying injustice. In “Twelfth Night,” Viola disguises herself as a man, with her disguise offering protection from almost certain exploitation, and in “As You Like It,” virtuous characters are praised at its conclusion for their effective employment of deception.

Kippenbroick, city officials and administrators, and a large company of Münsterites set out to walk the perimeter of the city for the purpose of inspecting its defences.²⁴⁴ While on route some in their party claimed to see a large fire [*groit fuer*] burning high into the night air before the city of Münster, with the fire flanked by two immense battle swords [*schlagh schwerde*]. Jan van Leiden and the mayors immediately interpreted the fire and swords as a sign from heaven, with the vision indicating that God himself would be providing the necessary protection for the holy city and its inhabitants.²⁴⁵ Knipperdolling pointed to the great fire and swords with his finger in an attempt to assist those city officials and administrators still unable to see this great miracle, but some were simply unable to see anything spectacular in the night sky. As a result, these men were labelled unholy and unbelieving by the rest.²⁴⁶ The presentation of this miracle effectively secured positions of leadership and authority for certain persons, separating those who could not see the miracle from those who could and endowing the latter with power.²⁴⁷ Those present who did see the miracle before the city informed many others, not only of this particular miracle, but also of a

²⁴⁴ BDA, 22.

²⁴⁵ BDA, 22. The vision of fire probably has its basis in Exodus 13:21-22 where “The Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, to guide them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, that they might travel day and night.” See also, Deuteronomy 1:33, Nehemiah 9:12, and Psalms 78: 14 where the pillar by day and night is consistently interpreted as indicative of divine presence and guidance. In Anabaptist Münster, the nighttime revelation is primarily associated with the provision of protection, and not with guidance through a foreign country. It remains as an interpretive possibility that the Münster vision of fire also functioned as an emblem of conquest.

²⁴⁶ BDA, 22.

²⁴⁷ Jakob Hutter’s retelling of the vision he saw in which 3 suns and 2 rainbows occupied the sky, appearing just prior to his leadership dispute with Philip Plener and Gabriel Ascherham, functioned in a similar manner. In Hutter’s vision two suns and the two rainbows soon disappeared leaving only the one sun. Hutter notes that from the beginning two of the suns were not as bright as the one though they were clearly visible. Hutter describes the vision as a wonder and as a definite sign from God even though he claims to not know its meaning. What was clear to Hutter from his vision was the conviction that God wished to protect them from all evil [*der Herr wolle uns behüten vor allem Übel*]. Within a short period of time, Hutter superseded Ascherham and Plener and many Philipites and Gabrielites joined the Hutterites. For Hutter’s account of this vision see his letter to his fellow Anabaptists in Etschland, Pustertal and Inntal. *JH*, III, 7.

subsequent vision in which three cities were displayed. The interpretation of this second miracle in which the cities of Deventer,²⁴⁸ Strasbourg, and Münster appeared claimed that all three cities were divinely chosen and designated as the places from which a holy people would ultimately emerge,²⁴⁹ and the long-concealed [*lange verdunckelt gewest*] word of God would spread into the rest of the world. For a period of more than six months, Gresbeck notes, this vision of the great fire functioned didactically as a primary topic for sermons.²⁵⁰ The meaning commonly attributed to these miracles was centered on the proposition that God was personally present and walking with Münsterites,²⁵¹ such that no harm could possibly come to them or their holy city.

On yet another occasion, Knipperdolling summoned individuals to the marketplace where he sat them on benches and blew “the spirit” into many of them [*bleiss innen ouck den geist in*], just as he had done for a mercenary earlier.²⁵² Yet, Knipperdolling was unsuccessful in his attempts to blow the spirit into 4 or 5 of the persons assembled, who Gresbeck describes as “poor and sick people” [*arme und krancke leut*].²⁵³ Gresbeck claims that the latter were simply unable to act their part

²⁴⁸ Each city was likely chosen for specific reasons with Deventer possibly included because its mayor [*Bürghermeister*] had become Anabaptist.

²⁴⁹ Klaus Deppermann has argued that the apocalyptic Anabaptist prophecies regarding Strasbourg have their origin in Barbara and Jost Rebstock. The Rebstocks insisted that the old world was disappearing and a brand new world taking its place. Klaus Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffmann: Soziale Unruhen und Apokalyptische Visionen im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), 288-289.

²⁵⁰ *BDA*, 23.

²⁵¹ *BDA*, 49.

²⁵² *BDA*, 147. Gresbeck records that King Jan van Leiden blew the spirit into this same mercenary despite Knipperdolling having done so earlier. The soldier received a ring with a precious stone as a gift from the king. The mercenary began to jump and dance until he was physically exhausted, just as Jan van Leiden and Knipperdolling had done before him. Gresbeck notes that the mercenary’s facial appearance was just like Knipperdolling and Jan van Leiden’s.

²⁵³ *BDA*, 148. On one occasion, Knipperdolling was desirous of making some people holy and extended his hand to them while kissing them on the mouth. He passed over an old woman he was not

effectively. They were incapable of perpetuating the folly that was afoot as thoroughly [*sie wisten nicht die boferei so wol tho driven*] as the king, Knipperdolling, and the Münsterite preachers.²⁵⁴ On yet another occasion, Jan van Leiden was gripped by the “spirit of the Anabaptists” [*an khomen des doepers geist*], fell off of his chair and became immobile, looking as though he had died.²⁵⁵ While Jan van Leiden was in such a state of “unconsciousness” a number of women were also seized by the Anabaptist spirit and behaved in such a manner that all who witnessed their behaviour became frightened, according to Gresbeck. When Jan van Leiden regained “consciousness” he relayed yet another vision in which angels entirely surrounded the city of Münster, with each successive angel standing fairer and clearer [*schooner und clarer*] than the former.²⁵⁶ Gresbeck notes that it was through these visions of the city’s divine election and protection, and through revelations of divine presence that Münsterites developed a sense of personal security and corporate invulnerability, which empowered them to mock and harass besieging troops. Any Münsterite who developed a successful way of spoiling, reversing, or otherwise deriding the besieging army’s efforts tended to earn a great deal of praise from fellow Münsterites.²⁵⁷ On at least one occasion Münsterites took a large vat of human excrement and urine from a public latrine [*profate*],²⁵⁸ and dumped it into the

ready to declare holy. He told those gathered that until he was ready to declare her holy, he would sooner hit her with his fist. *BDA*, 147-148.

²⁵⁴ *BDA*, 147-148.

²⁵⁵ *BDA*, 145.

²⁵⁶ *BDA*, 146.

²⁵⁷ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 93.

²⁵⁸ Public latrines were generally few in number and tended to be concentrated in a few select areas in early modern cities such as marketplaces, and the ring road inside city walls. Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City*, 218.

trench mercenaries and peasants were digging around the city.²⁵⁹ The high water table present at the time would have carried the excrement a long way around the trench and would have made the already difficult task of excavation even worse. In yet another attempt to mock and scorn besieging soldiers, Münsterites worked at backfilling newly-excavated trenches when they were left unattended.²⁶⁰

When the first two assaults on Anabaptist Münster by the besieging army were successfully rebuffed, Münsterites interpreted the events in terms of their personal invulnerability,²⁶¹ and the invincibility of their holy city.²⁶² They spoke confidently and forcibly of Anabaptist Münster and its inhabitants as holy and strong by virtue of God's unmistakable presence and their own divine election.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ BDA, 49. The digging of this trench employed some 3000 peasants working 24 hours a day. They managed to lower the trench by about 12" over a 24 hour period. BDA, *Actenstücke*, 264.

²⁶⁰ BDA, 49, and 56. On yet another occasion, Münsterites fashioned a straw effigy of a bishop and tied it onto a horse. They attached papal bulls to the horse and sent it charging into the enemy camp. A good many soldiers from the besieging army were drawn into the affair, and attempted to capture the horse and thereby rescue its rider, to the delight of watching Münsterites. When these now-angry soldiers tried to exact revenge for the drama [*Schauspiel*] into which they had been unwittingly drawn and began running toward the city gates they were subjected to gunfire, with all participating soldiers becoming wounded, and most killed.. Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich*, 123-124. See also, BDA, 49.

²⁶¹ Hille Feickens demonstrated the depths to which some Münsterites felt themselves to be immune to any form of enemy power. In imitation of the beautiful Hebrew heroine Judith (Judith 13) Feickens left Münster intending to seduce and then kill Franz von Waldeck, prince bishop of Münster, (just as Judith killed Holofermus). Feickens was caught, the plot uncovered and she was sentenced to death by beheading and the wheel. When facing her executioner, Feickens stated that he did not have the power to kill (judge) her because she was holy. He proved otherwise. BDA, 45-46.

²⁶² The first major assault on Anabaptist Münster, 25 May 1534, came after days of cannon fire but failed miserably when drunken soldiers misjudged the time, and prematurely charged at the walls. Besieging forces suffered heavy casualties, according to a letter of Franz von Waldeck. Approximately 200 soldiers were killed in the foray and many of the remaining soldiers became disillusioned and restless. BDA, *Actenstücke*, 244. Münsterites seized the scaling-ladders and brought them inside the city. BDA, 51-52. See also Franz von Waldeck's letter to Philip of Hesse, van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich*, 133. A second attack on 31 August 1534 once again followed days of artillery bombardment, which had compromised the structural integrity of the city's gates. However, because Münsterites had learned of the planned attack and were prepared with heavy stones, hot water, tar and lime, and burning fences, all of which were thrown from the city walls onto their attackers, the assault was an abysmal failure. After three sallies on a number of city gates the besieging army retreated having suffered heavy casualties. Many of the bishop's mercenaries deserted, and the Münsterites revelled in their successful play [*gewonnen spiel*]. The foray had proven a disaster for the forces of "order" outside the city but bolstered confidence in the politics of Anabaptist Münster. BDA, 80.

²⁶³ BDA, 17. See also, van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 55.

Münsterites quickly developed a perspective in which the fate of any given individual was directly linked to the place they rightly or unjustly occupy. When the prince-bishop and his cavalry entered the city prior to the siege, for example, Münsterites claimed that hell-fire hung over the heads of the soldiers, which would have consumed the bishop, his cavalry and his footmen, taking them into the pit of hell instantly had they stayed in the holy city another half hour. The first prophecies concerning the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, like these earliest visions, were all place sensitive, authenticating and authorizing particular leaders while shaping Münsterite identities and self-understandings.²⁶⁴

Münsterites frequently extended the benefit of doubt to Jan van Leiden, which would suggest that the Anabaptist King's oratorical skills were well-developed, his rhetoric convincing, and his leadership skills effectively exercised. Their actions are also indicative of the level of general Münsterite complicity in the production of Anabaptist Münster. Despite the severity of living conditions in the city, and irrespective of the degree to which the actions of Jan van Leiden and those of the other leaders contravened established custom and social mores, and the frequency with which they changed their minds, and/or implemented contradictory courses of action, and regardless of how much the picture he painted for them of their circumstances was in sharp disagreement with the empirical world, Jan van Leiden retained control of Anabaptist Münster, and he did so despite the challenges to his

²⁶⁴ Jakob Hutter's vision of three suns and two rainbows functioned in a similar manner authorizing his leadership and authenticating his message. Hutter stated that great wonders and signs were divine seals on the truth of his message and life. *JH*, 68.

leadership that were launched.²⁶⁵ When predicted and/or promised events failed to materialize, the problem was explained away by re-describing the event as a spiritual reality that did not necessarily manifest itself physically, or at least not yet. When famine and scarcity worsened, despite Jan van Leiden's frequent promises of deliverance and social, moral, and political improvements, current conditions were simply explained away as being the will of God.²⁶⁶ As conditions worsened in the city, Münsterites were often "sustained" through dance, play, song, game, and

²⁶⁵ Two of the more important challenges to Jan van Leiden's authority were initiated by Mollenhecke and then by Knipperdolling. Mollenhecke led a resistance movement against polygamy in Münster, captured Jan van Leiden, Knipperdolling, and a large number of "preachers and prophets" (leaders in Anabaptist Münster), but met with considerable resistance. His attempted coup was brutally squashed and many of those involved executed. *BDA*, 73-77. Knipperdolling challenged Jan van Leiden's authority by replicating the ecstatic behaviour of the Münsterite king and prophets, and by sitting on the throne built for Jan van Leiden. Knipperdolling suggested that he too should be a king, given that he was the one responsible for making Jan van Leiden a king. An argument was put forward suggesting that Münster should have a spiritual king and a worldly king, which may have reflected the sentiments of a disaffected Anabaptist party. *BDA*, 142-50. Earlier, Knipperdolling publicly corrected Jan van Leiden during the king's speech when the people were addressed as "sisters and brothers," with Knipperdolling reminding the King that "brothers" always comes first. *BDA*, 147-149. Knipperdolling's public challenge to the king's authority may in part have been a response to Knipperdolling's new-found knowledge that Jan van Leiden came from humble origins, and that he formerly worked as a poet, orator, wandering tailor, and bar-owner. Conversely, Knipperdolling was "well-born" and from the patriciate but was treated with contempt by Jan van Leiden. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 164. Unlike Mollenhecke, Knipperdolling was not executed for his acts of rebellion and insubordination. He was one of a small number of persons to receive a prison sentence for his "crimes of rebellion," and the only one to be restored to a position of leadership in Anabaptist Münster after demonstrating his insubordination. *BDA*, 145-150. The case of Knipperdolling is surprising when any form of dissension in Anabaptist Münster tended to be treated as a capital crime. In May 1535 Elisabeth Wantscherer (or, Els Gewandscherer), one of Jan van Leiden's "queens" was beheaded, her body kicked and then thrown onto a cart by the King during a public assembly in the marketplace for her insubordination, and for causing strife. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 256. Dorpius states that Wantscherer spoke against the king in the presence of his other wives, with Wantscherer declaring that she did not believe it was God's will that people die of hunger when the king and his retinue had enough wine, beer, meat, and bread. While kicking her lifeless body Jan van Leiden called her a whore who refused to be obedient to him. *FBZT*, 1680. Beheading and firing squads were the most frequently employed methods of dealing with dissenters and rebellious persons. *BDA*, 42. No form of social criticism or political complaint was tolerated in Anabaptist Münster.

²⁶⁶ Jan van Leiden stated that it was all God's will, instructing the people not to fear when the famine became severe. He stated that they must starve in order for others to come after them, without explaining how dead people could be instrumental in creating another generation. *BDA*, 115. When Jan van Leiden predicted the second great deliverance for Easter, he also instructed the common people to strike off his head should his prediction not materialize. When deliverance was not forthcoming, some Münsterites recommended following through with Jan van Leiden's earlier suggestion. *BDA*, 121-124. Jan van Leiden responded to the failed prophecy by being sick for 6 days in order to "imagine something which would satisfy the common people." *FBZT*, 1680.

speeches, with many Münsterites still prepared to starve to death before they would willingly surrender the city.²⁶⁷ Dance, sport, and gaming were generally initiated by the king and his wives, and not only served as entertainment for the “simple masses,” but were said to honour God, and functioned as food substitutes by redirecting the focus of individuals.²⁶⁸ It was a strategy in which potentially rebellious forces were effectively channelled into catharsis and recreation, obviating revolt while reinforcing community solidarity.

Gresbeck recounts how on one occasion during the siege, when the famine was already quite severe, Jan van Leiden permitted the “reconstruction” of the choir in the cathedral so that Münsterites might derive a great deal of joy from the wonder that would be presented.²⁶⁹ The cathedral choir was remade into a stage complete with curtains hung across the nave at the choir entrance. Like earlier prophecies and visions, the drama in the cathedral was labelled a wonder [*wunder*], and was associated with the advent of joy. The production had as its theme the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16: 19-31), and was complete with musical accompaniment. Gresbeck notes that there was a great deal of laughter in the cathedral with the drama producing a tremendous amount of joy, though he notes somewhat cynically, that a good many would have preferred something to eat had

²⁶⁷ See for example, *BDA*, 131-136, and 184. At meal times Münsterite officials would frequently dance and entertain while the general populace went hungry, with many dying of malnutrition.

²⁶⁸ See for example, *BDA*, 135. Encouraging recreation and leisure during the famine was in sharp contrast with Münsterite practice and policy in the early months of the Anabaptist Kingdom. Initially, all pipes, zithers, lutes, lyres and other string instruments, as well as all note books, cube goblets, game boards, and cards [*Flöten, Zithern, Lauten, Leiern und andere Saiteninstrumente, Notenböcher, Würfelbecher, Spielbretter und Karten*] were disallowed, with everything through which a person could become distracted from the task at hand searched out and destroyed. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 91.

²⁶⁹ See, *BDA*, 168. A link between wonder and joy is made frequently in Gresbeck’s treatment of Anabaptist Münster. “Miracle” is not limited to events that occur inside Anabaptist Münster, but a term also used to describe events outside the city.

food been available. At the play's conclusion devils seized and carted the Rich Man away, presumably to hell. The actor who played the part of the Rich Man was the queen's lackey, a Brabant,²⁷⁰ and not a native of Münster. The queen's lackey put on a very convincing performance, according to Gresbeck, such that the actor was publicly hung in the cathedral square for the character he represented and the role he had played.²⁷¹ Gresbeck sardonically notes that the "Rich Man" would gladly have "converted" and/or left the city, had either option been extended to him.²⁷²

Distinctions between empirical reality and the reality presented in Münsterite theatre were not always well understood, strictly enforced, rigidly observed, or carefully articulated.

Gresbeck mentions that Anabaptist Münster employed actors who quite capably deceived "many old women." These old women would dutifully play their part in their own deception and enter the streets shouting: "Welcome in the name of the Lord, the Father is praised" [*West wilkhomen in den namen des Hern, der Vater sy gelovet*] when King Jan van Leiden and his royal court rode about in the streets of Anabaptist Münster.²⁷³ But Gresbeck, like so many others in the city, he claims, possessed a keener vision and a superior understanding of what was transpiring in Münster. This latter group had the ability to see through the chimera being presented to what lay behind the events and people of Anabaptist Münster; they "knew,"

²⁷⁰ The duchy of Brabant emerged in the latter part of the twelfth century, with Brussels, Antwerp and Louvain constituting its major cities. It lies between the Schelde (*Scheldt*) and Dijle rivers and includes parts of the Netherlands and Belgium.

²⁷¹ *BDA*, 168.

²⁷² The theme that the "door" or "gate" of grace was in danger of closing was a prominent theme in Anabaptist Münster. See for example, *BDA*, 23-25, 28-30, and 33.

²⁷³ *BDA*, 94.

Gresbeck says, that the king had 1000 devils.²⁷⁴ Anabaptist Münster proved effective in “blinding the simple common folk who simply did not know better,”²⁷⁵ but Gresbeck and many others knew better than to extend credence to the dramatic action being presented. Despite his claim to see beyond or through the drama, like so many others in Anabaptist Münster, Gresbeck knowingly offered his assistance to the Münsterite regime, becoming complicit in the power it exercised.²⁷⁶ Heinrich Graes, like Gresbeck, offered his assistance to Anabaptist Münster in a leadership capacity for a period of time. Writing to fellow Münsterites after his defection to the camp of Franz Waldeck, prince-bishop of Münster, Graes declares the Anabaptist Kingdom to be a false and poisonous business [*falsch und vergiftet Handel*] that has collapsed [*eingebrocht ist*].²⁷⁷ He offers instruction to his correspondents, claiming that the whole thing was nothing more than a series of reflections in a mirror that have proven to be a piece of cheating [*alles Betrug ist*]. Graes begged Münsterites to “open their eyes” even as he recently had, therein encouraging them to adopt a very different interpretive position vis-à-vis the drama in which they are participating. Open eyes were touted as capable of providing the vision necessary for seeing the Anabaptist Kingdom for what it truly was,²⁷⁸ while conceding that Anabaptist Münster had effectively enveloped not only those inside, but also those outside the city in its

²⁷⁴ BDA, 94.

²⁷⁵ BDA, 92.

²⁷⁶ Gresbeck excuses his complicity by aligning his actions with those inside the city who understood the foolishness of what was being done and said, but remained silent, not daring to say anything against the nonsense being presented [*boferei furhanden hedden*]; he states that such persons feared that any failure to keep quiet would result in their immediate execution. BDA, 94, and 92. Gresbeck’s narrative of events would suggest that Jan van Leiden successfully destabilized Münsterites, and kept them in a very uncertain and disorienting environment. Münsterites were threatened with death and thereafter royally dined, their king was to be king over the entire world, but he resigned, and was then reinstated by a lame goldsmith. The general populace was continually chastised for their naïve compliance, but any overt rebellion and all insubordination were brutally suppressed.

²⁷⁷ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 223.

²⁷⁸ BDA, *Actenstücke Gresbeck*, 296; and, van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 223.

theatrical deception.²⁷⁹ Unlike Gresbeck, (who claimed that many knew the truth), Graes claims he was one of a limited number of individuals who knew the truth about Anabaptist Münster, remaining convinced even after his defection that the power Anabaptist Münster exercised was effectively concealed, and not only effectively exercised.

At times Anabaptist Münster presented a drama within a drama, with Gresbeck describing one such occasion in which “mass” was conducted in the cathedral by a fool named Carl. Half of the Münsterites were invited to attend the “mass” in the morning, and the other half were invited for the afternoon.²⁸⁰ The king, his wives and their retinue of bodyguards, attendants and court officials entered the cathedral just prior to the start of the drama. The stage consisted of a wooden altar, specially constructed for the occasion by the king’s bailiff. Carl, and a few others who were dressed as priests, entertained the audience through their performance of a mass, with Rothmann declaring that the parody was every bit as efficacious as any Catholic mass of the past.²⁸¹ An “offering” was taken following the prayer that was presented for the living and the dead; Münsterites went out and brought back to the cathedral whatever they could find as gifts. They brought the heads of cats, dogs, mice, rats, and the leg-bones of horses,²⁸² all of which were received with enthusiasm by Evert Remenschneider, a burgher of Münster dressed as a priest. Remenschneider

²⁷⁹ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 223.

²⁸⁰ *BDA*, 150-153.

²⁸¹ *BDA*, 153.

²⁸² Many of these same items were listed by Gresbeck as common food for Münsterites when the famine in Münster became severe. Gresbeck states that Münsterites ate rats, mice, dogs, cats, guts, horse-heads, grass, and virtually anything else that was “alive” on land or in the water. Some Münsterites even resorted to softening old ox hides and old leather shoes in water until they could be chewed. While Gresbeck mentions rumours of individuals cannibalizing children he claims to know nothing of the matter, given that he did not personally witness it. Gresbeck, *BDA*, 189.

graciously kissed the hand of each gift-giver, profusely thanking them for their most generous gift. Further laughter and enjoyment were derived from throwing mice and the heads of cats in the cathedral, effectively transforming a former sacred place with significant political ties into a site for the simplest and crudest forms of “common” amusement.²⁸³ Beyond their obvious recreational benefit and cathartic value, these parodies facilitated the rejection of the sacrality traditionally attributed to cathedrals and medieval churches, and enabled the dismissal of the ideological systems with which they were intimately associated.²⁸⁴ It made the substantial redefinition and reassignment of these places possible by removing any lingering opinions regarding their presumed holiness.²⁸⁵ Staging Münsterite theatre and coarse entertainment in the cathedral decisively severed the relation of power established between holiness and a particular political regime, effectively exposing and resisting the exercise of power made possible through their alliance. Anabaptist theatre initiated a process in which these former sacred places and culturally peculiar social spaces were forced to undergo a radical change, becoming targets of the harshest censure.

5.7 The Destruction of Münster’s Churches

Although most sixteenth-century Anabaptists shunned the established church and tended to denigrate it in their conversations, confessions, and writings, acts of iconoclasm and violence against church buildings were relatively sporadic,

²⁸³ Münster’s city hall was also put to non-traditional use. On Pentecost, 25 May 1534, after another attempt to storm the city proved unsuccessful (though it did cause much heavier Anabaptist casualties than an earlier attempt), Anabaptists took all the scaling-ladders into the city and placed them in front of city hall and on its roof. The large pile that was created turned the building and surrounding area into a storage yard. *BDA*, 52.

²⁸⁴ Eamon Duffy, “Bare Ruined Choirs: Remembering Catholicism in Shakespeare’s England,” in Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay, and Richard Wilson, eds., *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 41.

²⁸⁵ Duffy, “Bare Ruined Choirs,” 41.

geographically isolated, and generally limited in their destructive scope.²⁸⁶ On 11 July 1533 Vinzenz Puchl admitted to intentionally breaking a crucifix,²⁸⁷ Hanns Grembsler admitted to thoughtlessly kicking [*unbedachten muett gestosssen*] an image until it broke, which he claimed to have found lying at the side of the road,²⁸⁸ and in 1529 a group of five men tore down a column and vandalized an image of the Virgin Mary by hacking her face.²⁸⁹ A new bench-mark of violence against church buildings and service items was set in Anabaptist Münster, where their wholesale destruction reached an unprecedented level. In the early weeks of Anabaptist Münster, violence against churches included the desecration of Münster's cathedral,²⁹⁰ the burning of St. Maurice, the forcible removal of clergy and service items,²⁹¹ and the wholesale plundering of church interiors.²⁹² In later months most church towers,²⁹³ roofs,²⁹⁴

²⁸⁶ Werner O. Packull has drawn parallels between Michael Gaismair's 1526 "Territorial Order" and Anabaptist iconoclasm arguing that they display "many parallels, particularly its insurgent and anticlerical attitudes." Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 172. Acts of iconoclasm were not simply acts of vandalism or thoughtless destruction. They were direct and definite responses to the church, its ritual program, its political associations, its practices, and the power it exercised. Iconoclasm was a strong reaction to the manner in which the medieval church shaped human relations, with acts of its defilement and desecration redressing perceived injustices and abuses.

²⁸⁷ *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 136.

²⁸⁸ *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 137.

²⁸⁹ Their names were Andre Planer, Walthasar Huter, Cristen Müllner, Caspar Swartz, and Peter Kober. *QZGT, Osterreich*, II, 238.

²⁹⁰ *BDA*, 18. *BDA, Chronik des Schwesterhasuses Marienthal, Genannt Niesinck in Münster*, 431. In his description of the plundering of the cathedral's interior, Gresbeck notes that the consternation Anabaptist actions generated was focused on their desecration of the cathedral through drinking, singing, and sleeping in it as much as it was in response to their willful destruction of its images and service items.

²⁹¹ Gresbeck states that priests and higher clergy did not re-enter the cathedral until after the demise of the Anabaptist Kingdom. *BDA*, 18

²⁹² During 23-25 February 1534, for example, the interiors of the monastery, the cathedral, and the parish churches were destroyed. Jewels [*kleinot*], gold, silver, money, service items and vestments were all removed. Images were broken, altars destroyed, artwork smashed, stained-glass windows shattered, the organ and its pipes rendered unusable, relics trampled, human excrement smeared onto books, and Gresbeck notes that particularly destructive attention was paid to the ruin of church baptismal fonts. Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 69-70.

²⁹³ The towers were the most obvious symbols of the bishops power and the "Pope's tyranny," and therefore, an early target of Knipperdolling's prophecy in April 1534 that "All that is high shall be made low, and all that is low shall be high." *FBZT*, 1674. Some church towers such as St. Lamberts

walls, and all church interiors were destroyed. In the case of St. Jacobus, instructions were given that nothing of the church was to remain standing that was higher than the stature of a man.²⁹⁵

Divine prophecy was credited with informing Anabaptist Münster's "prophets and preachers"²⁹⁶ and was forcibly employed in the Kingdom's infancy to spread news of the imminent destruction of the city's churches and monasteries. The "preachers and prophets" of Anabaptist Münster predicted the imminent collapse of Münster's monastery tower, with the entire monastery predicted to sink into the ground [*sie solden versincken*].²⁹⁷ They also interpreted the anticipated collapse and complete ruin of these church buildings as divine action being taken against these places as a result of the divine wrath they had drawn to themselves.²⁹⁸ A good many monks left the monastery and were rebaptized; they accepted the explanation being offered that God was angry with the monastery, and would be directly responsible for its destruction.²⁹⁹ This prophecy of impending doom was employed as a mechanism for validating and encouraging the Anabaptist program of rebaptism, with many

were left intact and were used as observation decks, their storm bells were employed as an early warning system, and the towers functioned as cannon mounts. *BDA*, 160. St. Lamberts was the only principal church that was more-or-less left untouched.

²⁹⁴ The copper and lead from these roofs were reused in the manufacture of munitions.

²⁹⁵ *BDA*, 187.

²⁹⁶ One of Gresbeck's favourite terms for Anabaptist Münster's leadership.

²⁹⁷ *BDA*, 13.

²⁹⁸ *BDA*, 13-14.

²⁹⁹ *BDA*, 13. Aside from Münsterite interpretations of the impending collapse of the monastery as divine judgment on a failed religious institution, the prophecy may well reflect popular hostilities. Animosity between the weaving industry and Münster's monasteries may well have resulted from what were perceived as the aggressive, or unfair practices of the monasteries in the manufacture of goods. *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, 777. Monasteries and monks enjoyed an ancient privilege involving freedom from tithes unlike their craftsmen counterparts. See Giles Constable, *Monastic Tithes: From Their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 270-306, for his discussion of the "crisis" resulting from the monastic freedom from tithes prior to the thirteenth century. Hsia has also argued that artisans "resented economic competition from the clergy". Hsia, *Religion and Society in Münster*, 54. The exemption of clergy from civic jurisdiction and their working outside the established guild structure introduced potential causes for strife.

Münsterites becoming baptized and eager to witness the monastery's collapse. However, all would-be spectators returned to their homes when they tired of waiting, and neither the church nor the monastery was destroyed.³⁰⁰ The predicted collapse of the tower, monastery, and church were presented as acts of divine judgement, not only on these buildings, but also on the ideological systems with which they were intimately associated, and the social values they represented and propagated.³⁰¹

Bernd Knipperdolling denied advising the destruction of Münster's churches in his confession, but he did admit to assisting in their devastation, arguing that their annihilation was necessary because "God was only to be honoured in the living temple and hearts of people" [*Got allein in dem lebendigen temple und hertzen der menschen geert werden*].³⁰² He stated that the temple God wanted to erect through Anabaptist Münster was to exceed the beauty and glory of Solomon's temple, with Münster's current church buildings an obstacle to realizing such a possibility. The earlier success of Münster's churches, like the prophecy regarding their imminent destruction, and their actual destruction by Anabaptists, were inextricably linked to the ideological systems they embodied. The violence directed against them was a means of attacking the ideological system with which these churches were identified

³⁰⁰ BDA, 14. Much of the literature of the period describes individual responses to Münster as the desire to see a miracle. The longing to see a spectacle is most frequently offered as the reason for coming to the city. In Jan van Leiden's confession he offers a variation on this theme. He states that he came to Münster because he heard that the word of God was being preached there best and most forcibly, with his interest focused on the delivery of the message and not merely its content. BDA, 370, and Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 264.

³⁰¹ Conversely, Münsterites claimed that they enjoyed such a high degree of divine favour that they had no need of churches, remaining confident that the elements would never interfere with the preaching of Anabaptist sermons.

³⁰² BDA, 408-09. Heinrich Dorpius's pamphlet of 1536 contradicts Knipperdolling's testimony. It states that Knipperdolling publicly announced in April 1534, 4-5 days after Easter, that all that is high was to be brought low and that which is low was to be made high. Knipperdolling instructed fellow Münsterites to destroy the monasteries and churches, just as the Father had revealed it to him. FBZT, 1674.

and the socio-political power they exercised. Gresbeck draws his reader's attention to the dramatic irony created through a situation in which the predicted divine destruction of church buildings in Anabaptist Münster did not materialize,³⁰³ but that these same buildings did fall to human initiative and action, without Münsterites realizing at the announcement of the prophecy that they would become personally and directly involved in the destruction of the city's churches.³⁰⁴

During his confession in October 1534, the former Münsterite pastor Dionysius Vinne of Diest referred to the cathedrals and churches in Münster as the temples of Baal [*Baals tempelen*]³⁰⁵ and death-pits [*moirtkulen*].³⁰⁶ Because Münsterites associated medieval church buildings with a specific ideological system and the maintenance of a particular social structure, it stands to reason that these same buildings would have to be destroyed or substantially altered to make room for a competing ideology and a new social structure. Moreover, it is not altogether surprising that the first churches to be attacked in Anabaptist Münster were the cathedral, the former cathedral, and their attendant chapels (with the exception of St.

³⁰³ BDA, 18.

³⁰⁴ BDA, 14.

³⁰⁵ Melchior Hoffmann called pastors and priests of all confessions "godless and the prophets of Baal." Klaus Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffmann: Soziale Unruhen und Apokalyptische Visionen im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), 292.

³⁰⁶ BDA, *Actenstücke*, 274. The interiors of Münster's churches were generally severely damaged, but exteriors were not always destroyed. The stonework and towers often remained standing. When Anabaptists stormed the Marienthal convent on the morning of 25 February 1534 they did considerable damage to the interior, and carried away as much of its ornaments etc., as they possibly could. One of the priests protected the wafers in the monstrance from destruction by hiding them with two nuns, obviating the possibility of the wafers being trampled underfoot as happened in the plundering of the cathedral earlier. Gresbeck, BDA, *Chronik des Schwesterhauses Marienthal, Genannt Niesinck, in Münster*, 431-432. The altars, pulpits, stained glass windows, clothing, and images were typically destroyed during the destruction of Münster's churches, with books desecrated on occasion by smearing feces on them. Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 70.

Jacobus), given that they most clearly represented the bishop of Münster and the interests of the wealthy.³⁰⁷

When Münsterites destroyed the interiors of Münster's churches they typically attacked the monstrance, images, and vessels these places held, assaulting the exclusive hold the Church exercised over salvation and the holy. Those stained-glass windows on which they found an ancestral coat of arms, images of saints, or representations of God the Father or Christ were smashed with sticks and clubs. Depictions of the devil, Jews, and the godless were typically left undamaged.³⁰⁸ Traditional representations of "evil" were allowed to remain relatively intact and often completely untouched, but traditional representations of divinity, the saints, and the pious, whether in the form of pictures, drawings, images or paintings, which functioned as encouragements to veneration were attacked. The explanation tendered was that their destruction obviated the possibility of their being used to influence Münsterite youth in the future.³⁰⁹ The bishop's coat of arms was dramatically ripped off the cathedral wall and trampled in feces.³¹⁰ Many of the large stones from the devastated churches, including their large altar stones, were reused as fortifications in the foundations of the dirt-houses [*erthueser*] constructed in front of the city gates, and others were used to patch gates that had holes shot through them.³¹¹ Some churches were totally and utterly destroyed and/or dismantled, including their exterior

³⁰⁷ BDA, 159.

³⁰⁸ Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 90.

³⁰⁹ Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 91.

³¹⁰ In addition to the destruction of church interiors, all pipes, lutes, zithers, lyres, and other string instruments, as well as all game boards and cards including note books, cube goblet, and cards were destroyed. The explanation provided stated that this was done to make certain that nothing would detract or distract Münsterites from doing "what needed to be done." Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 91.

³¹¹ BDA, 162.

walls.³¹² Gresbeck claims that it was the intention of these Münster Anabaptists to destroy these church buildings entirely, and to deal similarly with the churches outside the city walls when they proved politically and numerically strong enough to be able to do so, even if there was no obvious or immediate need for building materials.

Although Rothmann is credited with beginning the theatre production in Anabaptist Münster labelled “The King of Fools” by Dorpius,³¹³ and though the bishop’s forces ultimately won the “feud” that resulted from the social drama being presented, it was none other than Jan van Leiden who effectively directed the action, and brought the drama to its “conclusion.” Jan van Leiden provided his director’s commentary on, and his interpretation of, the dramatic action in his final interview, just prior to his execution. He claimed at that time that the Kingdom of Münster was a futile picture of death that deteriorated through abuse.³¹⁴ After a number of interviews, his interrogators determined that it had all been a knave’s game, and that even now during his interrogation Jan van Leiden’s apparent confession and “turn-around” remained part of a knave’s game. His repentance was declared to be just another act in the on-going drama.³¹⁵

What Münsterites such as Jan van Leiden claimed was a model of truth regarding the exercise of power was the dramatic presentation of what Bruce Lincoln has aptly termed “paradigmatic truth.”³¹⁶ The destruction of Münster’s churches, and

³¹² *BDA*, 161.

³¹³ *FBZT*, 1682.

³¹⁴ *FBZT*, 1722.

³¹⁵ *FBZT*, 1724-25.

³¹⁶ Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 24.

the willingness of Münsterites to fight to the last person in defence of their holy city, indicate that establishing and maintaining a place these sixteenth-century Anabaptists could call their own, and which they could shape to their liking, was of primary and not secondary importance. For Münsterites, the city was a possession of ultimate value, but like any other commodity, they demonstrated that it could be squandered, abused, won, or lost. Their dramatization of the exercise of power was accomplished through their construction of a particular type of place, which was always intimately and inextricably tied to the meaning and value attached to that place. In Knipperdolling's last recorded reflections he concedes that the redemption Münsterites sought through their construction of a holy city was misplaced. He asserts that deliverance is only available internally or spiritually, declaring the possibility of "external" deliverance from adverse or absurd circumstances entirely impossible.³¹⁷ Although the myths surrounding the election of Münsterites and their holy city identified and mobilized a particular social grouping, acting as a platform for their investigation of an alternative form for society, the godly city was not successful by most standards commonly applied to it. However, as a discursive act the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster constituted a disordered space effective in the dramatization of the exercise of power, the investigation of the mechanisms through which power is exercised, and the presentation of power's casualties. It was an act from which their contemporaries and subsequent generations might learn, and out of which future polities and communities could be "re-constructed," which is exactly what Münsterites said they intended from the very beginning.

³¹⁷ Van Dülmen, *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, 269.

*'Yes,' said I, strictly speaking, the question is not how to get cured, but how to live.*¹

6. Hutterite Community: Holy Order and Divine Place

As noted in the previous chapter, church historians have tended to interpret the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster as an aberration and Münsterites as deranged fanatics, judging most if not all that transpired in the Anabaptist Kingdom a catastrophe.² However, rarely do their investigations of the actions, theologies, moral codes, principles, ideals, and communal aspirations of early sixteenth-century Hutterite-Anabaptists result in similar negative assessments. Not only do scholarly interpretations of sixteenth-century Hutterite action tend to be significantly more favourable, some historians have acknowledged a fully sympathetic attitude in their handling of them.³ These substantial disparities in treatment exist despite strong evidence that Hutterite Anabaptists, like Münsterite Anabaptists, fundamentally rejected the existing social order and desired to sever their ties with it. Both groups directed their primary energies at the exploration and development of a radical social order, (with which they were intimately identified during the sixteenth-century), and

¹ Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*.

² Such an interpretive perspective is gradually changing as historians working on Anabaptist topics increasingly acknowledging that “perspective,” (which I define in terms of operative theoretical assumptions and methodological preferences), “makes a great deal of difference in historical writing.” Willem de Bakker, Michael Driedger, and James Stayer, *Bernhard Rothmann and the Reformation in Münster, 1530-35* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2009), 1.

³ Werner O. Packull, for example, declares himself to be “decidedly on the side of the victims of sixteenth-century oppression”, with his aim in producing *Hutterite Beginnings* an attempt “to provide a sympathetic account of the incredible difficulties encountered and overcome by those valiant women and men seeking the kingdom of God in community.” Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1995), 11. Packull’s “sympathetic” position, vis-à-vis sixteenth-century Hutterite Anabaptists (valiant women and men) is value-based and not uncommon in contemporary Anabaptist studies; it appears to be directly related to his endorsement of certain Anabaptist ideological commitments, their moral code, and their social consciousness, and is not simply a matter of voicing his disapproval of the treatment they received. He expresses, for example, substantial disappointment when sixteenth-century Anabaptist action proves to be “unedifying.” Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 217.

therefore, the creation of a very different sort of community and place.⁴ Hutterite places were not so much an attempt to rearrange society through any means possible, including violent ones, as they were the construction of sites at odds with the systemic violence and relations of domination built into the structures of medieval society.⁵ Hutterite economics and social relations were, as Peter James Klassen has argued, based on “voluntarism” and not coercion, and therefore at “variance with the goals of either the Peasants’ Revolt or the Münster kingdom”.⁶

Like the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, early sixteenth-century Hutterite attempts to establish a *Heiligkeitsgemeinde* [holy community] were devised as a substantial challenge to the existing social order, its inter-related social structures, institutions, practices, places, and ideals, all of which were working to establish, conserve, and reinforce culturally normative ways of behaving and relating. Early sixteenth-century social norms and moral behaviour were, as they always are, determined by a social order that exercised significant power through the places it constructed and controlled. These socio-political places and the order they substantiated were vigorously contested through the alternative social model, and hence places, sixteenth-century Anabaptist groups constructed and promoted. The competing social order established by Hutterites was often identified by them and

⁴ The Moravian Anabaptist community came into existence between the Peasants’ War and the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster. James M. Stayer has argued that Hutterite society was a “transmutation of Michael Gaismair’s Tyrolean *Landesordnung*”. James M. Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), 162.

⁵ Gabrielle Spiegel has argued that violence was “the engine” that drove “the feudal machine.” Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 78. See also, Eleanor Searle, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Searle argues that violence was widespread and ritualized.

⁶ Peter James Klassen, *The Economics of Anabaptism, 1525-1560* (London: Mouton, 1964), 64.

their detractors as centered on the practice of community of goods [*Gütergemeinschaft*].

6.1 Chapter Thesis and the Ideal Place

In this chapter I argue that the Hutterite-Anabaptist practice of community of goods functioned as a central socio-economic organizing principle and essential component in their development of separatist ideal communities; it was worked into a comprehensive communal philosophy and societal model that organized new relations of consumption and production as the realization of a primary good. Sixteenth-century Hutterite communities, like medieval monasteries, and like the Greek *polis* and a range of ancient philosophical schools before them, were designed, constructed, propagated, and maintained as an ideal place for producing ideal human beings.⁷ Sixteenth-century Hutterites tended to assume, as Aristotle had argued much earlier, that a necessary correlation exists between a good man and a good state such that the means through which a man becomes truly good will always also frame a state that is good. Just as Aristotle claimed that the *polis* exists primarily for the purpose of facilitating the “good life” in his *Politics*,⁸ so Hutterites tended to speak of their separatist communities as the God-given opportunity to live in a divinely pleasing manner.⁹

⁷ Daniel F. Caner, ““Not of this World:” The Invention of Monasticism,” in P. Rousseau, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Late Antiquity* (London: Basil Blackwell, 2009), 588. Aristotle argued: “We showed at the commencement of our inquiry that the virtue of the good man is necessarily the same as the virtue of the citizen of the perfect state.” Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Politics*, text of Immanuel Bekker, translated by W.E. Bolland, *Book III, Part VIII* (London: Longmans and Green, 1877).

⁸ Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Politics*, III, 6.1278b17-24; 9.1280b39; and VII, 2.1325a7-10.

⁹ Though it could be argued that medieval monastic and sixteenth-century Hutterite discourses employ some variation of the term “disciple of Christ,” and not “ideal human being,” to describe the human being that is fashioned through their respective ideal places, this variation in language does not signal a substantial philosophical or ontological distinction.

The Rule of St. Benedict presents the monastery as an ideal place for a man who wishes to become “that being created by God in His likeness.”¹⁰ Basil of Caesarea (330-370 CE) explained similarly that “the art of being well-pleasing to God” was made available in the monastery and required that all monastics “exile themselves, as it were, to another world in their habit of mind”.¹¹ Likewise, the Hutterite realization of “being well-pleasing to God,” or the act of becoming “disciples of Christ,” required that each initiate willingly embrace a fundamental physical, and also a complete psychological separation from the dominant order, and cultivate an attachment to the new Hutterite community through the development of “other worldly” attitudes.¹² Hutter explained the matter in a letter to the Anabaptist community in Moravia, claiming that those who belonged to the “true” church had left the world and had become followers of Christ.¹³ The act of turning their backs on the existing culture and social order, and their creation of an alternative space for community, whether monastic or Hutterite set the individual in an awkward social and religious space between church and society, and between community and social kin.¹⁴

Comparisons between Hutterite and monastic attitudes and communal structures are not altogether new and were already being drawn during the sixteenth century.

¹⁰ Réginald Grégoire, Léo Moulin, and Raymond Oursel, translated by Donald Mills, *The Monastic Realm* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 62.

¹¹ Caner, “The Invention of Monasticism,” 592. Although Basil was strongly supportive of monastic contemplation he insisted on measured solitude and was critical of anchoritic life. Basil argued that hermits were self-absorbed and insisted that the mandates of the gospel required life to be lived in community. His cells for ascetics were always located close to cenobitic communities. See, William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 429.

¹² Caner, “The Invention of Monasticism,” 592.

¹³ *JH*, 32.

¹⁴ John van Engen has argued a similar point in his study of the “Modern Devout.” John van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 2.

Sebastian Franck suggested that parallels between the Anabaptist practice of baptism and monasticism were quite evident, with Franck claiming that all monks were in reality “Anabaptists” given the manner in which they understood and privileged their order as “the other baptism.” Franck argued that at minimum monks must be considered “spiritual Anabaptists,” and then asked if they too should then all be beheaded.¹⁵

6.2 Anabaptist Community of Goods in General Practice

The Allstedt preacher, Peasants’ War propagandist, and radical reformer Thomas Müntzer confessed under torture on 27 May 1525 to holding the principle *omnia sunt communia* [all things are common],¹⁶ and is credited by James M. Stayer with introducing such a social code “into the lives of the common laity.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, the implementation of such an ideal was never realized, or even substantially attempted, in either Allstedt or Mühlhausen despite Müntzer’s obvious influence in these German towns. Even when Mühlhausen’s town council was overthrown and an “Eternal Council” elected on 17 March 1525,¹⁸ which would presumably have generated favourable conditions for the adoption of such an initiative, a

¹⁵ Sebastian Franck, *Chronica* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 207, and 208-209.

¹⁶ Robert W. Scribner, edited by Lyndal Roper, *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400-1800)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 197. Müntzer purportedly stated under torture that any noble, duke or lord refusing to comply with such a practice should be hung or beheaded. [*Welcher furst, graff oder herre das nit hette thun wollen und des erstlich erinnert, den solt man dye koppe abschlagen ader hengen.*] Hans-Dieter Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Göppingen: Alfred Kummerle Verlag, 1972), 19.

¹⁷ Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 111.

¹⁸ Michael G. Baylor contends that Müntzer only occupied a “circumscribed position of leadership” and that he was “neither a military commander nor a political leader”. Michael G. Baylor, *Revelation and Revolution: Basic Writings of Thomas Müntzer* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1993), 43.

thoroughgoing community of goods was never implemented.¹⁹ Müntzer may well have been responsible for popularizing the rule of *omnia sunt communia* in the 1520s, but the principle did not originate with him. Both Desiderius Erasmus and Ulrich Zwingli were known to hold to some form of it prior to the onset of the Peasants' War in 1524, with both individuals displaying what Stayer has called a "broadly approving attitude towards community of goods".²⁰ In the aftermath of the Peasants' War, which resulted in the slaughter of a significant number of peasants and the suppression of their socio-political program, sixteenth-century Anabaptists emerged as the only group that continued to hold to some form of the principle *omnia sunt communia* and actively practice "community of goods."²¹ The manner in which the principle was adopted and practically implemented ranged widely from voluntary acts of charity and mutual aid, to the complete abolition of private property and the strict adoption of thoroughgoing "communal consumption" and "communal production."²²

¹⁹ Martin Edward Malia, ed., by Terence Emmons, *History's Locomotives: Revolutions and the Making of the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 80. Stayer has countered (unconvincingly) that Müntzer merely held the principle "by faith alone without the application of even primitive social-science reasoning". Stayer concludes, he "was no utopian." Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community*, 112-13.

²⁰ Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 105. Zwingli's identification of community of goods with the abolition of government in June 1525, and his increasing influence in Zurich resulted in the "acceleration of conservative changes in his outlook", according to Stayer. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 97. Zwingli pressed his identification of community of goods with the abolition of authority into the public domain during a disputation in Zurich's Great Minster in November 1525. *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 121.

²¹ Stayer has argued that the practice of community of goods was "common to all Anabaptist groups. He goes on to argue that after about 1540 "the Swiss Brethren, the Marpeck brotherhood and the Mennonites chose to abandon the objective of realizing Acts 2 and 4, in the course of their self-definition vis-à-vis Münsterites and Hutterites. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 9.

²² Stayer has argued that Plümper interpreted Anabaptist community of goods as "the expression of an "artisan mentality." By reducing Plümper's interpretation of community of goods to a mentality ("the protectionist outlook of small craftsmen") rather than accepting it, as Plümper constructs it, as the adoption and modification of a guild organizational structure, Stayer unjustly dismisses several important insights. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 10. To reduce a guild's *raison d'être* during the sixteenth century to protectionism is unnecessarily reductive, and it is the introduction of a theme not mentioned by Plümper. Plümper has aptly observed that the

In all cases, regardless of the emphasis propagated, the Anabaptist practice of community of goods was an attempt to live together in community in such a way that responsibility for the wellbeing of others was enjoined on all members: no one was to live alone or entirely for one's self. This socio-economic policy became a primary principle of social life, grounding it in the re-distribution of wealth.

The principle *omnia sunt communia* was diversely understood and variously implemented during the sixteenth century, but the rationale provided for the practice among sixteenth-century Anabaptists was generally much more uniform. Anabaptists typically propagated their custom as the expression of Christian charity, and the emulation of early church practice as it is described in Acts 2 and 4. It was a socio-economic practice that precluded a selfish hold on material possessions even if not all Anabaptist groups adopted a strict policy against private property. Despite relative unity in the justification of the practice, and despite evidence that all early sixteenth-century Anabaptists subscribed to some form of community of goods, many sixteenth-century Anabaptists, including some prominent Anabaptist leaders such as Balthasar Hubmaier and Menno Simons, were quick to point out that they did not practice community of goods in the way in which it was being construed by their detractors and the authorities. Balthasar Hubmaier mentioned the matter of community of goods only once in his *Gespräch auf Meister Zwinglis Taufbüchlein* in response to Zwingli's accusation that Anabaptists "agitate the simple with talk about

Anabaptist practice of community of goods began as communal consumption and then developed, in the case of the Hutterites, into communal production. Contra Stayer, he argues that Hutterite organizational structure was not derived from theological principle or scriptural precedent but was adopted from and mirrored guild structure. Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 201-204. Ironically, Stayer has observed that Hutterite communities were a peculiar construction in that they were craftsmen's communities devoid of church clergy, nobility, and merchants. Stayer, *Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 151-52.

community, saying, one must hold all things in common.” Hubmaier responded: “I have ever and always spoken thus of the community of goods: that one person should always look out for the other, so that the hungry are fed, the thirsty given drink, the naked clothed, etc. For we are not lords of our goods, but stewards and distributors. There are certainly none who say that one should take what belongs to the other and make it in common.”²³ In 1552 Menno Simons, like a good number of his contemporary Anabaptists, aggressively sought to distance himself from the practice, vehemently denying charges that he and his followers held their property in common, that they taught and encouraged community of goods, and that Anabaptist practice extended to having their women in common.²⁴

Charges of practicing community of goods were often levelled by the authorities as a blanket condemnation, with the term broadly used to discredit dissident groups. Definitions of the term were not uniform, with the expression open enough to admit a host of connotative meanings in the sixteenth century. In a mandate of 1527, civil authorities in the Swiss cities of Zurich, Bern and St. Gallen charged Anabaptists with claiming that no “true” Christian could pay or receive any form of interest [*zins*], and that everyone had equal right of access to goods and property. The actions of Zurich authorities reflected their awareness that the structure and various components of sixteenth-century society and economics would be seriously undermined if the

²³ H. Wayne Pipkin and John H. Yoder, eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale; Waterloo: Herald Press, 1989), 183.

²⁴ Menno Simon’s objections were clearly an attempt to distance himself, his followers and their practices from events at Münster in 1534 and 1535. Menno Symons, *Opera Omnia Theologica of Alle de Godtgeleerde Werken van Menno Symons* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1989 reprint), 504-07; *CWMS*, “Reply to False Accusations,” 558-61.

practice of community of goods became widely implemented.²⁵ Some sixteenth-century civil and religious authorities identified community of goods strictly with Anabaptists, defining it as a practice in which not only all property, but also wives and virgins were held in common.²⁶ Such was the spurious claim of Johann Cochlaeus in his letter to Erasmus of 8 January 1528. Cochlaeus claimed that the third of a group of “Five Anabaptist Articles” required wives, virgins, and temporal goods to be held in common [*Omnia fore communia, uxores, virgines, bona temporalia*].²⁷ Admittedly, some sixteenth-century Anabaptists did not hold to a strict form of monogamy, and practiced less accepted forms of sexual relations, giving rise to the perception that women were held in common, but there is little evidence to suggest that such sexual practices originated from the *omnia sunt communia* principle. Polygamous Anabaptists typically justified their sexual practices through an appeal to the example of Hebrew bible Patriarchs as precedents,²⁸ with the number of Anabaptists subscribing to non-traditional sexual relations remaining very small.

The vast majority of early sixteenth-century Anabaptists practiced community of goods as a form of mutual aid, which generally began with an individual providing a pledge to share with other Anabaptists from their resources.²⁹ Such was the testimony

²⁵ *QZGT, Ostschweiz*, II, 3-4. The mandate states that all such things and much more are done under the pretence of peace and brotherly love.

²⁶ *QZGT, Baden und Pfalz*, 117. Plümper has argued that some Anabaptists did hold their women in common as Cochlaeus charged, but argues that very few Anabaptists held to such a practice in the sixteenth century, and that such groups were always small, with the vast majority of Anabaptists rejecting such a practice outright. The small groups that did hold their women in common typically justified their actions through the appropriation of scripture as precedent. Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 37.

²⁷ Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 23.

²⁸ Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 37.

²⁹ I cannot accept Stayer’s assertion that Anabaptist attempts directed at “realizing the prescriptions of Acts 2 and 4” show a certain evolution of development in which mutual aid “eventually” gained widespread precedence over “community of goods” when the former was a common practice at early Anabaptist meetings. Stayer has made events at Zurich and Zollikon normative for Anabaptists

of a Franconian Anabaptist, Gerhaus Otin from Uttenreut, who stated that Anabaptists did not pledge themselves [*nichts verpflichtet*] to anything beyond helping the poor according to their ability [*vermögen*], and in keeping with divine will [*gots willen*].³⁰ A commitment to share with those in need was often demonstrated with the initiate contributing something to the communal purse at the time of their becoming Anabaptist.³¹ The testimony of the Anabaptist blacksmith Hans Bassauer on 12 March 1529 in Rothenburg was somewhat typical. He maintained that the decision to undergo Anabaptist baptism was not his own but that God had instructed [*gelert und underwisen*] him to be re-baptized [*den tauf anzunemen*]. Bassauer testified that it was the Word of God that constrained him [*halt inen*] to love God and his neighbour, with love for the later requiring that he assist the poor.³² The Anabaptist practice of community of goods was generally propagated as the exercise of Christian charity directed at relieving distress and poverty, but not necessarily, as in the case of Hutterites, designed to establish economic parity. Donors and beneficiaries of the common fund were generally Anabaptists, with benefits not typically extended to non-Anabaptists or the general populace.

With few exceptions, prior to 1528 the Anabaptist practice of community of goods was generally employed as a thoughtful and strategic provision for the

elsewhere. Stayer, *Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 160. The testimony of Hans Zuber and others concerning their baptism indicates that mutual aid among Anabaptists was an accepted practice at a very early stage of the movement. It did not generally or necessarily emerge as a coercive or aggressive practice everywhere and then devolve over time into a more acceptable and innocuous practice as Stayer has argued for the Swiss Anabaptist movement. See, *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914. Moreover, the attitude of an early Swiss Anabaptist leader Felix Mantz was quite subdued regarding community of goods and did not extend to the point of forcing compliance.

³⁰ *QZGT, Bayern*, II, 92.

³¹ The actions of Hans Zuber are somewhat typical here. He placed 3 creutzer into the Anabaptist communal purse [*gemainen seckel*] after his baptism.³¹ *QZGWT, Herzogtum Württemberg*, 914.

³² *QZGT, Bayern*, V, 170-71.

Anabaptist poor, without any indication that a comprehensive dissolution of private property was desirable.³³ Even in the case of an early 1527 Swiss Anabaptist Congregational Order, which states that no Anabaptist is to have anything of their own but that all goods are to be placed into a common fund from which the poor may be aided, the directive is founded on the principle not of economic equality, but of mutual aid. The aid being propagated was made possible through the abolition of any absolute sense of private property and an individual's right to it.³⁴ The Anabaptist practice of community of goods was typically structured as the development of a common fund that was a means of caring for each other; it was to be used for specific purposes, and was to reflect the values of the new community being created. Jörg Tucher testified in 1526 that all things were to be in common and understood the matter as a simple requirement for each person do their work diligently, and thereby gain the ability to contribute to the communal purse so that the needy might be assisted from it.³⁵ Such an understanding appears to have also been the attitude of Felix Mantz when he wrote Zurich city council on 18 February 1525 and explained that he taught those he baptized about love, unity, and community of all things [*gelert lieby und einigkeit und gemeinschaftt aller dingen*] in keeping with apostolic practice.³⁶ Care for the Anabaptist poor was an integral component in the demonstration of virtue and the manifestation of Anabaptist spirituality. It was set

³³ Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 40.

³⁴ The 1527 Anabaptist congregational order states "Of all the brothers and sisters of this congregation none shall have anything of his own, but rather, as the Christians in the time of the apostles held all in common, and especially stored up a common fund, from which aid can be given to the poor, according as each will have need, and as in the apostles' time permit no brother to be in need." Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, (29), 1955, 162. See also, Delbert L. Gratz, *Bernese Anabaptists and their American Descendants* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1953), 25.

³⁵ Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 27.

³⁶ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 49-50.

over and against what was presented as the more common clamouring for social status and the perpetuation of crudities generally associated with the poor.³⁷ A general Anabaptist willingness to share property did not necessarily erase all social or economic differences, but it did demonstrate the development of a new attitude toward them. Adoption of the practice was an indication that for most sixteenth-century Anabaptists, living in Christian community was socio-centric and not simply theo-centric or egocentric.³⁸

The emphasis of early Anabaptist leaders such as Mantz, when describing and encouraging the practice of community of goods, generally fell on “voluntary stewardship” and “brotherly sharing” as a demonstration of the individual’s willingness to assist the needy. However, the testimony of Heini Frei (nicknamed Gigli) in Zollikon on 8 February 1525 suggests that strong persuasion and even coercion were, at least on some occasions, strategically employed to secure desired compliance.³⁹ Frei testifies that he was nearly persuaded to divest himself of his property [*güttli*], donate the proceeds to the communal purse from which the needy could draw [*von huffen nemen*], and support himself thereafter by his craft [*seines Gewerbes zu begeben*] as a weaver.⁴⁰ Frei’s testimony reveals that Anabaptists in Zollikon were eager to draw the wealthy and “great” families into their community;⁴¹ presumably these persons would be strongly encouraged to sell their property and share the proceeds with the rest of the Anabaptist community. Johannes Keßler

³⁷ Van Engen has argued somewhat similarly that Modern Devout sisters “took pride in their poor, and in their house’s social mix.” Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 127.

³⁸ Klassen, *The Economics of Anabaptism*, 26.

³⁹ See, *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 48, for the record of Frei’s court testimony.

⁴⁰ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 48.

⁴¹ *QZGT, Schweiz*, I, 48.

substantiates the testimony of Frei and claims that in Zollikon Anabaptists were forcibly obligated to practice a strict form of community of goods for a period of time, with Keßler stating that locks [*schlößer*] were broken off doors [*thüren*], chests [*kasten*], and cellars [*keller*]. Zollikon Anabaptists purportedly helped themselves to stores “without discrimination” [*un unterschaid*].⁴² The furrier, Anthoni Roggenacher, claimed less dramatically that in June of 1528 he was “forced” into donating 100 Crowns [*Kronen*] to the Anabaptist communal purse through the pressures exerted by his wife. His donation was apparently solicited for the purpose of relieving economic distress among the Anabaptist poor caused by inordinately high inflation.⁴³

6.3 Heiligkeitsgemeinde and Hutterite Communization of Goods

Hutterite Anabaptist attempts to establish a *Heiligkeitsgemeinde* were temporally coterminous with Protestant reformers who were actively speaking out and acting against monasteries and church orders, some of which had existed for over a thousand years. Like their Protestant counterparts, Hutterite-Anabaptist reformers strongly opposed well-established and deeply entrenched medieval politics of place centered on places such as churches and monasteries. Hutterite understandings of community necessarily required a thorough re-evaluation of the places intimately associated with the exercise of power and the control of sanctity. Hutterite actions were designed to disrupt the power and control over sanctity that these places exercised through their redefinition, relocation, and interiorization. Early Hutterite discourse was focused on

⁴² *QZGT, Schweiz*, II, 601. Johannes Keßler claims that the ability to aggressively enforce the practice of community of goods was made possible when Anabaptists became a majority in Zollikon. He also notes that authorities in Zurich were no more willing to permit such a practice in their territories [*iren gebieten*] than they were prepared to accept it within the city itself.

⁴³ Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 27.

withdrawal from existing churches (defined as separation from the world) and an intensive search for a suitable place to dwell;⁴⁴ it was a discourse on godly community, its development, and its nature, emphasizing commitment to the exploration of how a Christian is to live. Hutterite rhetoric about Christian community and godly dwelling were thoroughly conditioned by a developing moral philosophy and their investigation of corporate responsibilities, and not by speculative metaphysical discussions.⁴⁵ Hutterite Anabaptists proved through their actions and explorations that the creation of a godly community required the construction of a physical place suitable for the development of disciples of Christ, with all such places existing in tension with the “world.”

The comprehensive communization of “temporal goods,” both in their consumption and production, was not invented by sixteenth-century Anabaptists; Hutterite Anabaptists were not the first to attempt to organize voluntary poverty as an essential component of their religious devotion, which then came to define their community.⁴⁶ Self-imposed poverty has a long history in the Christian Church from

⁴⁴ The discourse of separation of “church and state” or “church and the world” is frequently traced back to sixteenth-century Anabaptists. These well-established categories give primacy to place, with “church” and “world” offering competing and antithetical understandings, foundations, and structures for society. They describe two very different places, which operate with very different cosmologies, anthropologies, and sociologies in the literature.

⁴⁵ Such a cultural turn was not peculiar to early sixteenth-century Hutterite Anabaptists. Martin Luther, for example, envisioned a time that would be free of Thomists, Scotists, and Ockhamists. He looked for a period that would grow and embrace “simple children of God.” Martin Luther, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, II (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger Verlag, 1897), 327-30.

⁴⁶ There has been a noticeable reluctance to entertain any sort of serious comparison between medieval Catholic monasteries and Hutterite *Bruderhöfe*. This condition is reflected in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, which states quite bluntly, “Hutterite Bruderhofs [sic] cannot be compared with Catholic monasteries”, without providing any solid evidence for such an uncompromising statement. The modern German plural term *Bruderhöfe* has been used throughout this project rather than the common sixteenth-century term *Bruderhofs*. I have chosen to follow modern usage rather than the sources in this orthography. I remain fully aware that a substitution in signifier retains the possibility of subtlety redescribing the signified. The *Mennonite Encyclopedia* frames monasticism negatively as a “retreat from secular temptation” and Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* positively as a “conviction that only thus does Christian love become a reality.” It concludes that the “holy poverty” of the Franciscan

its New Testament beginnings to the desert fathers, to the mendicant orders, to the preaching career of Peter Waldo, with each of these traditions beginning with an individual's divestiture of her or his goods. In the 1380s, a significant number of women and men settled into households organized as communes and centered on devotion. These settlements were established along the Ijssel River in various market towns in the east-central Netherlands. Community members held voluntarily held their properties in common and worked collectively, preparing finished textiles or other handcrafts for sale in local markets.⁴⁷ By the Reformation period the Modern Devout had become "so widespread as to have lost some of its distinctive edge" as a movement, according to Heiko A. Oberman.⁴⁸ In 1510, when a group of Waldensians was questioned in Paesana they too testified to their communal aspirations, stating that they held an ardent hope that a great Bohemian king would arise and amass a large army capable of devastating the churches and killing the clergy.⁴⁹ These Waldensians confirmed their desire to establish a complete redistribution of clerical wealth and impose what would amount to a "flat tax" on everyone for the maintenance of the state; they wanted to substantially rework the existing social order

movement [...] is foreign to Anabaptism", with "the Hutterite way" striking a "unique compromise between community and family living, thus overcoming the pitfalls of monastic asceticism." *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1955-1990), 660-61. During the sixteenth century, Catholics and Protestant reformers spoke of Anabaptists as "new monks" when referring to the Anabaptist emphasis on holy living. *QZGT, Elsaß*, I, 110-13.

⁴⁷ Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 1. The Modern Devout emerged as a movement in the 1380s and was disbanded by Catholic and Protestant rulers in the 1560s, with the exception of those who lived as canons in Belgium until about the 1760s. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 5.

⁴⁸ Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, translated by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 97. Oberman argues that "the era of the *Devotio Moderna* was over" with the advent of the Reformation, but that they "resurfaced" with its "appeal for genuine piety" in German pietism. Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 98.

⁴⁹ George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* 3rd edition (Kirksville, MO: Edwards Brothers, 2000), 805.

through the introduction of a comprehensive and mandatory community of goods system as a primary condition.⁵⁰

The term *Gütergemeinschaft*, as it was used during the sixteenth century in reference to Hutterite Anabaptists, brings the notion of community into direct association with the distribution, consumption, and production of material goods in such a way that the relation generated becomes the primary identifying characteristic of the social group being formed. Although some form of community of goods was practiced by all sixteenth-century Anabaptists, with Gabriel Ascherham and Philipp Plener pioneering a form of community of goods in Moravia prior to Jakob Hutter's appearance there,⁵¹ and although all Anabaptist groups traced the practice to the principled implementation of Acts 2 and 4 in imitation of the primitive church at Jerusalem, *Gütergemeinschaft* was implemented most thoroughly during the sixteenth century in the Hutterite construction of *Haushaben* [large dwellings],⁵² or *Bruderhöfe*

⁵⁰ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 805.

⁵¹ The Silesian Gabriel Ascherham came to Moravia in 1528 and assumed leadership over Anabaptists who had emigrated to Znaim, Eibenschütz, Brünn, and Rossitz. The Swabian Philipp Blauärmel (or Plener) arrived in Moravia shortly thereafter and joined Ascherham's Anabaptist community. *ÄCHB*, 85-86. W. Wiswedel has argued that Gabriel Ascherham possessed little organizational talent despite his being an "outspoken realist" [*ausgesprochener Realist*] with "extraordinary insight [*außergewöhnlichem Scharfblick*]." W. Wiswedel, "Gabriel Ascherham und die nach ihm benannte Bewegung," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 33 (1936): 4, 260. Wiswedel has also argued that more than 2000 Anabaptists lived together in a single communal setting, with 4000 adult Anabaptists in Moravia in 1531 under his leadership. These Moravian Anabaptists practiced a "loose" form of community of goods. The September 1533 testimony of Paul and Leonhard Rumer of Michelsburg seems to indicate that a strict form of community of goods may have been operative there. Both gave a substantial portion of their inheritance to the Anabaptist communal purse, retaining little. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 157-58. What Paul Rumer did not place into the communal purse in Michelsburg he gave to the Moravian community upon his arrival there, indicating that Hutter must have implemented or developed an awareness of community of goods in the Tirolean Anabaptist community prior to Hutter assuming a leadership role in Moravia. Because authorities would not permit the construction of *Haushaben* in the Tirol, collected monies and goods were used primarily for the support of orphans, widows, and the poor, and secondarily for support of Moravian Anabaptists.

⁵² Johann Loserth has argued that by 1535 approximately 1000 Anabaptists in Auspitz lived in 3 *Haushaben*, which varied significantly in size. However, Loserth admits that very little information is available regarding the earliest Hutterite *Haushaben*. Johann Loserth, "Der Communismus der Huterischen Brüder In Mähren im XVI, und XVII, Jahrhundert," in *Zeitschrift für Social und*

[brotherly places].⁵³ The sixteenth-century Hutterite “commonwealth” established in Moravia through their communization of all goods was structurally peculiar, but not necessarily qualitatively different from those Anabaptist groups that simply claimed to share their goods as needs developed.⁵⁴ What was peculiar to Hutterites was the thoroughgoing nature and comprehensive understanding of *Heiligkeitsgemeinde* they created, which organized the various aspects of this new and entirely “regenerate” Anabaptist society.⁵⁵ In the Hutterite scheme community necessarily entailed a common dwelling, store room, purse, and table. To live well was to live together intimately in community, with Hutterite members sharing all material and spiritual

Wirtschaftsgeschichte, (3), 81. During the leadership of Peter Walpot (1565-78) there may have been as many as 100 Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* in Moravia and Slovakia with a combined population of 20,000-30,000. *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1955-1990), 855.

⁵³ *Bruderhöfe* were large multi-family households, and drew many disparaging comments from Hutterite detractors. Accusations of filth and overcrowding were frequently levelled. Christoph Fischer referred to the *Bruderhof* as a *Taubenkobel* [pigeon coop]. Christoph Andreas Fischer, *Der Hutterischen Widertaufer Taubenkobel* (Ingolstadt: Andream Angermeyr, 1607), title page. The pigeon metaphor was used from an early date by Gabriel Ascherham, who referred to Jacob Hutter as “The Large Pigeon” [*Deß Grossen Taubers*] in his chronicle, undoubtedly a disparaging reference to these large dwellings and the conditions thought prevalent there. A fragment of Ascherham’s chronicle is printed in Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Community of Goods*, 168. During the “Hutterite Golden Years” there may have been as many as 40 dwellings arranged around a square in a single *Bruderhof*, though not all were of the same size or served the same purpose. The ground floors were typically workshops and spaces for community living, including kitchens, dining halls, and schools. Upper levels were generally living quarters though they could also serve as smaller workshops. John A. Hostetler, *Hutterite Society* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1974), 35. A less concentrated community appears to have been common during the early years. For example, in 1538 the Hutterite community was given possession of 2 houses in Schäckowitz, with one situated next to the “big house” [*glegen vnden an das groß hauß*]. A house was also built on donated grassland in Austerlitz, and a house and vineyard at Pausram (11 miles north of Nikolsburg) were donated to the Hutterite community. In fall of 1538 Philipite “brothers” provided houses in Pulgram (village and parish northeast of Nikolsburg). Philipite donations included a bakery, smithy, the “large house” where a school was built, and a new house next to the smithy. *ÄCHB*, 184-85.

⁵⁴ Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 8-9.

⁵⁵ Functionally, Hutterite society was relatively complete with the exception of such things as developing its own currency and military. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 1284-85. This is not to suggest that Hutterite communities were necessarily viable or capable of complete autonomy.

things. Hutterite community was presented rhetorically as deeply opposed to *Eigentum* (private property) and the polar opposite of *Eigennutz* (self-interest).

Their particular understanding of, and practice of, community of goods separated Hutterites from the dominant society, and often from other Anabaptist groups. It was not only a peculiar economic system but established a network of human relations that challenged dominant social constructions and behaviours hitting at the heart of the violence, aggression,⁵⁶ and injustice that so often characterized relations during the medieval period.⁵⁷ Episodes of violence were not occasional or random but structural, systemic, and pervasive during this period of human history.⁵⁸ Violence was a common and often acceptable response to and form of action in conflictive situations when social relations had broken down.⁵⁹ It was a “normal way of pursuing goals within (conflictive) relationships,” according to David Nirenberg.⁶⁰ The endemic nature of violence and aggression in the medieval world made it an integral

⁵⁶ Stayer has cogently and forcibly argued that “non-violence” was not a defining characteristic of sixteenth-century Anabaptists in general. James M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1972). He has further argued that it was not a stance on violence but morality that characterized sixteenth-century Anabaptist thinking and behaviour: “What was typically Anabaptist was not violence or non-violence but rejection of the wickedness of the world, as represented by the established church and government. The Swiss and south German Anabaptists, too, had oscillated between militance and social withdrawal when faced with the commoners’ resistance movement in 1525.” Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 122-23. However, the prohibition against carrying a weapon, engaging in violence, and even the refusal to pay taxes, when such funds were used for waging war, became crucial and non-negotiable practices among sixteenth-century Hutterite Anabaptists who developed a process of reform that went far beyond any “purely religious” matters and sought to address critical economic, political, and social injustices.

⁵⁷ Vito Fumagalli has argued that violence was an important defining characteristic of the Middle Ages, and that this fact “is familiar to us.” Vito Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear: Perceptions of Nature and the City in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 39.

⁵⁸ Not all acts of violence during the Medieval period were directly physical, as David Nirenberg argues, with some forms of violence, with words that were violent in “intent and effect” acting as subtle but nonetheless harmful expressions of violence. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 30-31.

⁵⁹ David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 30.

⁶⁰ Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 30.

component of church, state, and domestic, institutions and relations.⁶¹ Violence, aggression, and various forms of what we would today call injustice were so frequently practiced, and so deeply imbedded within the existing socio-political system, that they were generally accepted as unavoidable. Vito Fumagalli has argued that violence and aggression were often regarded as a “normal” component of medieval human life and interaction.⁶² Churchmen during the medieval period frequently decried the use of violence, but they generally regarded it as entirely justifiable when employed in defence of the “true” church, the furtherance of the gospel, the preservation of the state, and the protection of those deemed “the weak.”⁶³ The Hutterite communization of goods, on the other hand, offered a form of protection to the “weak,” revealed the “true” church, “powerfully” propagated the gospel (according to Hutterite rhetoric), and preserved the state without an appeal to violence, and without any dependence on any structural or systemic aggression, in principle if not always in practice.

6.4 Hutterite Community and Community of Goods in Moravia

Johannes Keßler noted that as a strict socio-economic structure, the Anabaptist practice of community of goods did not endure [*weret es nit lang*] among the Zollikon Anabaptists, just as it did not last long with the early apostles, with the

⁶¹ Richard, W. Kaeuper, ed., *Violence in Medieval Society* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Press, 2000). Contributors to this volume, generally speaking, do not attempt to argue that violence increased or decreased during the medieval period, but rather that violence took a variety of forms during the medieval period, and they argue that it was ubiquitous. David Nirenberg has argued that the late medieval operated on an “economy of violence.” David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 38.

⁶² Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear*, 43.

⁶³ Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear*, 46.

poor in Zollikon once again becoming the responsibility of others.⁶⁴ Keßler's comments, in which the Anabaptist practice is compared with primitive church practice, are in keeping with the way Anabaptists themselves preferred to understand their efforts, but his statements do not conceal his negative assessment of the practice as an unrealistic ideal and/or an impractical socio-economic model. Hans Dieter Plümper has stated somewhat similarly that the Anabaptist practice could not possibly have endured as a socio-economic system, but takes issue with Keßler's assessment of why that is the case. Unlike Keßler, Plümper does not argue that the Anabaptist practice of community of goods was destined to fail due to an inherent weakness or some unsustainable quality, but because the authorities would most certainly have taken unfavourable notice of the practice and would have put an end to it.⁶⁵ Yet, the Hutterite communization of goods has proven to be a sustainable and resilient socio-economic policy for a group of separate communities, enabling Anabaptist Hutterites to engage the practice for more than four centuries despite repeated attempts to violently and systematically suppress it during the sixteenth century. Not only did the Anabaptist practice of community of goods continue during the sixteenth century despite opposition, but Stayer has estimated that by 1538 "there were twice as many communitarian Anabaptist settlements as non-communitarian

⁶⁴ *QZGT, Schweiz*, II, 601. Stayer perpetuates the assessment of Keßler though not for the same reason. Stayer claims that "such views" only "expressed" an "interim ethic" and applied to the "short time before the end of the world." Stayer, *Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 114.

⁶⁵ Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 29. To a limited degree Packull echoes the argument of Plümper. He has argued that "only Moravia provided the opportunity to actualize the Jerusalem model." Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 11.

congregations” and that by the end of the sixteenth century the ratio had grown to four to one in favour of communitarian settlements.⁶⁶

The Hutterite *Geschichtbuech*⁶⁷ draws on a prominent Hebrew bible theme for its thematic structure. The title announces God’s desire to gather a united people [*ein ainigs Volck gesamml*] from the German-speaking lands [*zungen Teütschlandes*] for himself [*Gott ein Völcker gewannet*]. The Germanic people are singled out as the group from within which “divine truth” was to be once again made manifest,⁶⁸ with the *Geschichtbuech* constituting an extensive argument for accepting Hutterites as

⁶⁶ Stayer, *Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 142. Stayer takes issue with Claus-Peter Clasen’s “statistical work,” which Clasen uses to argue that “communitarian economic practices were “adopted by only a small minority of the Anabaptist movement””. Stayer concludes that such a position is “no longer credible.” Stayer, *Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*, 147.

⁶⁷ The full title of the *Geschichtbuech* is rather lengthy with the first part reading: *Geschichtbuech vünd kurtzer Durchgang von Anfang der Welt wie Gott sein Werck inn seinem Volck auff Erden angericht, gehandelt, vünd Triben hat. Demnach: Vnnserer Gemain Gschicht Buech wie die Angfanngen durch Gottes gnad aus den Irrthumen heraus gewatten, Vnd wie Gott ein Völcker gewannet, die Sprewer zerstrayet, dē Waitzten, vünd zungen Teütschlandes ein ainigs Volck gesamml Auch wie Gott imselben sein Werck inn dem Letzten Alter dis welt wider aufgericht vünd angeordnet hat [...]*. The original hand written manuscript was carefully protected and preserved, and in the possession of a Russian Hutterite community that immigrated to North America in 1874. *ÄCHB*, xxvi. Zieglschmid states that the original manuscript is in very good condition given its age, the difficult conditions under which it was preserved, and the trying circumstances under which it travelled. The orthographic “difficulties” [*krause*] of the original manuscript were “corrected” in Rudolf Wolkan’s earlier 1923 edition through a thorough stylistic and orthographic revision by which it was rendered “suitable as a household book” [*Hausbuche*] for contemporary Hutterite communities. Wolkan asserts, somewhat naively, that the process adopted in no way altered the text [*den Text aber in keiner Weise geändert*]. Rudolf Wolkan, *Das Große Geschichtbuch der Hutterischen Brüder* (Macleod, AB: Standoff Colony, Vienna: Carl Fromme), iii. Zieglschmid’s 1943 edition, (*Die Älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder*), does not introduce stylistic or orthographic “improvements,” and claims to present a more literal or “faithful” transcription of the original text [*ein buchstabengetreuer Abdruck nach dem Original*], *ÄCHB*, xix. The Silesian, Kaspar Braitmichel, who was responsible for initiating the writing of the chronicle and for compiling the text until the events of 1542, was elected a “servant of temporal affairs” [*Diener der Notdurft*] in Schäckowitz near Auspitz in 1538, and a “servant of the word” (*Diener des Wortes*) in 1548. He died in Austerlitz in 1573. *ÄCHB*, Ixix. Braitmichel states in his preface that he worked on the text until poor eyesight and other bodily weaknesses [*wegen blödigkeit des gesichts vünd des leibs Schwachheit*] prevented him from proceeding. Hanns Kräl and his scribe Haupprecht Zapf were the second co-editors/compilers and provided the record of events until 1593. Zapf copied Braitmichel’s work such that the handwriting in the manuscript until 1593 is that of Zapf, with Braitmichel’s hand written manuscript no longer extant. After Braitmichel and Zapf, a total of four anonymous chroniclers became responsible for the compilation of the text, which ends rather abruptly in 1665. This Hutterite chronicle is written as a diary of events; it employs a wide range of records, testimonies, archival material, letters, mandates, etc., and presents a thoroughly “Hutterocentric” point of view with little interest shown in events and individuals that did not bear a direct and important relation to Hutterites. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 66.

⁶⁸ *ÄCHB*, 45.

divinely chosen people.⁶⁹ The development of Moravian Anabaptist communities was initiated after the Peasants' War and prior to the advent of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster. The *Geschichtbuech* records in some detail the difficulties confronting Anabaptists in Moravia who sought to establish what they defined as an acceptable, secure, holy community organization [*Heiligkeitsgemeinde*]. It describes the communal movement in Moravia as a divinely initiated immigration and assembly of heterogeneous Anabaptists from various German-speaking regions,⁷⁰ without simply recounting the challenges facing these Anabaptists or reducing them to the hostilities of external forces. Although the early history described in the *Geschichtbuech* details the arduous task of creating a "redeeming place" in which Anabaptists could not only live but thrive, it was only in the later decades of the sixteenth century during the "Golden Age of the Hutterites"⁷¹ that the *Geschichtbuech* can state with unqualified confidence that "they" had come to dwell in the land that had been divinely prepared for them [*verordnet vnd fürgesehen hette*].⁷²

6.5 Disorder, Separation, Order and Purification

The *Geschichtbuech* states that Jacob Widman and Philipp Jäger came to Nikolsburg in 1526 from the territory across the Enns River and joined with an

⁶⁹ *ÄCHB*, 45.

⁷⁰ Anabaptist refugees to Moravia came from all classes though many appear to have been miners in Rattenburg, Kitzbühel, and Schwaz. Hostetler has argued that many of the miners were "foreigners" with their presence "crowding parishes" and disrupting social patterns, making these areas "ripe for Anabaptist missionaries" [*Sendboten*]. Hostetler, *Hutterite Society*, 11. That these Anabaptists were not always well received in the mines is obvious from the comments made by the mining magistrate of Freudsberg. He gave instructions that Anabaptists were to be "buried as cattle" after their execution. *JH*, 28.

⁷¹ Williams has estimated that as many as 30,000 Anabaptists may have lived in Moravia during this period. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 1074. Clasen puts the number much lower, arguing that all such high estimates do not reflect available statistical data. He concludes that it "cannot be called more than a minor episode in the history of the sixteenth-century German society." Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525-1618 Switzerland, Austria, Moravia, South and Central Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 428.

⁷² *ÄCHB*, 431.

Anabaptist group led by Hannß Spittelmair. Widman and Jäger quickly came to disagree with the teaching and leadership of Spittelmair, and found the conduct of Nikolsburg Anabaptists highly objectionable.⁷³ After examining the principles, values, and discipline of the Anabaptist community, and after observing the lifestyle of the Nikolsburg Anabaptists for a period of weeks, Widman and Jäger and their followers decided to withdraw from the Nikolsburg Anabaptists, and chose to begin assembling in various houses, and “started living in community” [*die gemeinschaft angefangen*], according to the *Geschichtbuech*.⁷⁴ The “great disorder” [*grosse vnordnung*] and the many “abuses” [*mißbreüch*] Widman and Jäger observed and found so intolerable among the Nikolsburg Anabaptists consisted of such practices as paying “war taxes,” carrying or approving the use of a sword, and failing to practice “brotherly discipline.”⁷⁵ Collectively these “socio-economic failures” were deemed adequate cause for the withdrawal of the Widman and Jäger group, and their development of a separate Anabaptist community. Disorder in community when it was discovered was always a grave matter in early Moravian Anabaptist history, according to the *Geschichtbuech*, and “true Christian order” is imbued throughout with sacramental value. Anabaptists who exposed the presence of disorder within an Anabaptist community in Moravia are accorded great merit in the *Geschichtbuech*, with cases of disorder frequently reported in the testimonies of visiting Anabaptists. Some Moravian Anabaptist communities sent ambassadors to other Anabaptist communities for the purpose of alerting them to disorder within their community,

⁷³ The *Geschichtbuech* traces the cause of disunity to a disputation held between Hans Hut and Balthasar Hubmaier at the Nikolsburg castle regarding the just use of force (the sword) and paying “war taxes,” with Spittelmair adopting Hubmaier’s non-pacifist position. *ÄCHB*, 52-53.

⁷⁴ *ÄCHB*, 53.

⁷⁵ *ÄCHB*, 52, and 225.

and/or to encourage the punishment of the disorderly as a means of re-establishing communal order.⁷⁶ The process of exposing disorder and the movement toward order are essential components of the Hutterite story, according to the *Geschichtbuech*. They function as vital components in the identification and purification of the “true” Christian church, and operate as a mechanism for the eradication of all those who were “false and unfit” [*valschen und vntüchtigen*].⁷⁷ The determination of who was fit and who was false typically required the passage of time, and followed a pattern of examination and disclosure in which the character of an individual was fully manifest. It was a process through which proper assembly and godly order were established among God’s elect.

Through a process of steady immigration, the number of Anabaptists living in Moravia in early 1528 was constantly growing, with the majority of these new arrivals joining the group led by Widman and Jäger, who appeared determined to

⁷⁶ *ÄCHB*, 225-26. It is clear from the *Geschichtbuech* account of events in Steinbach near Steyr in Upper Austria during 1541 that Hutterites in Schäckowitz understood themselves to occupy a position of authority over other communistic communities irrespective of whether or not these other communities acknowledged Moravian Hutterite authority. The community at Austerlitz sought to exercise authority over the community at Schäckowitz through admonitions, which were structured as attempts to change their social practices.

⁷⁷ *ÄCHB*, 85. This theme is repeated again when the Anabaptist community in Austerlitz divides as a result of Wilhelm Räbel [Reublin] and Jörg Zaunring’s contestation of Jacob Widman’s leadership. The *Geschichtbuech* states that the pious and the impious were separated through a divine separation [*absünderung*] and purification [*leütterung*]. Räbel and Zaunring leave for Auspitz with about 150 others. *ÄCHB*, 95. A further “divinely instigated purification and separation” occurred when Hutter contested Simon Schützing’s leadership, which the *Geschichtbuech* describes as a matter of separating the “weeds [*vnkraut*] from the wheat” [*gueten waitzen*], and the “pious from among the hypocrites” [*frumen vnd den gleichsnern*]. *ÄCHB*, 106. Sebastian Franck noted that certain Anabaptists thought of themselves as the holy and pure ones [*heiligen vnd reynen*], separated from all others. This separateness manifested itself in the practice of community of goods with all private property [*eygenthumb*] held as sinful. Sebastian Franck, *Chronica*, 193. Hostetler has argued rather naively and idealistically that after Jacob Hutter’s execution “there was no further fragmentation, for as a social movement integration had been achieved. The group moved from a diverse to an integrated ideology, from an unintegrated to integrated social structure, and from a heterogeneous to a homogenous membership.” Hostetler, *Hutterite Society*, 26. Hostetler’s statement parallels the point of view established by the *Geschichtbuech* in which Hutter is credited with assembling the people of God, ending disunity, governing the *Gemeinde*, teaching them, and leaving them in a unified state in contradistinction to Gabriel Ascherham who is remembered for causing division. *ÄCHB*, 118-19, and 157-58.

establish distinct Anabaptist communities that remained separate from the Anabaptist community enjoying the favour of Lord Leonhard von Liechtenstein.⁷⁸ By 22 March 1528 Widman and Jäger and their community had fallen out of favour with the Lord of Liechtenstein, who rather suddenly ordered Widman, Jäger, and their companions to depart Nikolsburg and leave his territory [*Seine gründ raumen vnd weck ziehen*].⁷⁹ Approximately 200 distressed Anabaptist adults and their children left Nikolsburg with Jacob Widman. It is to this relatively small, homeless and distraught Anabaptist group, which only constituted a small part of the entire Anabaptist population in Moravia,⁸⁰ that the origins and development of the comprehensive Hutterite system of community of goods is traced by the *Geschichtbuech*.

An emergency, but thoroughgoing, form of community of goods was quickly implemented as a direct result of this forced expulsion from Nikolsburg, and as a direct and calculated response to the desperate circumstances that ensued. Franntz Inntzinger von Leiben,⁸¹ Jacob Männndl,⁸² Thoman Arbeiter, and Vrban Bader apparently spread a cloak on the ground in the Anabaptist camp on the second day after their departure from Nikolsburg, and invited everyone to place their goods [*Sein vermögen*] on it.⁸³ The *Geschichtbuech* describes this early period as a time of extreme duress and uncertainty, and portrays evicted Anabaptists as severely vulnerable, but presents the invitation to divest themselves of their goods as devoid of

⁷⁸ *ÄCHB*, 86.

⁷⁹ *ÄCHB*, 86.

⁸⁰ Stayer, *Peasants' War and Community of Goods*, 142.

⁸¹ The *Geschichtbuech* states that the “servants of daily needs,” Inntzinger, and Männndl, and a good many others became arrogant and behaved in a disorderly fashion, sending food and drink to each other, withholding money from the communal purse, and purchasing goods at the market for themselves. *ÄCHB*, 92-93.

⁸² Jakob Mändel was Leonhard von Liechtenstein’s former treasurer. *ÄCHB*, 87.

⁸³ *ÄCHB*, 87.

coercion, and describes the proceedings as entirely voluntary and free of any form of compulsion [*mit willigem gemüet Vngezwungen*].⁸⁴ The implementation of this comprehensive form of community of goods was undertaken for the provision of that Anabaptist community's needs, and was legitimated ideologically by reference to the teaching of the prophet Isaiah 23, and Acts 2, 4 and 5. This single event marked a decisive transition from community of goods as mutual aid to a full communization of all property.⁸⁵

By 1529 the communization of property had evolved into an unconditional requirement in some Anabaptist communities, with Wolfgang Brandthueber and Hannß Mitermair testifying at their trial that no one was permitted to be the treasurer [*Seckelmaister*] or steward [*haußhalter*] of their own goods.⁸⁶ In 1556 Hannß Schmid explained to a group of Swiss Brethren that the pious must necessarily divest themselves of all personal property, and are not permitted to acquire any personal goods in the future; Schmid deemed the purchase of any material goods for personal benefit entirely inappropriate.⁸⁷ The Moravian Anabaptist abolition of private property and the transition to a comprehensive community of goods transpired over a relatively short period of time, with groups such as the Gabrielites and Philipites, who held out against the stricter Hutterite system, disbanding and/or reuniting with the Hutterites in time. The codification of communal living in 1529 resulted in the development of an Anabaptist Order, which outlined the ideological and

⁸⁴ *ÄCHB*, 87.

⁸⁵ To claim that a particular group had chosen the model of the primitive church was not new; it happened on numerous occasions throughout the medieval period. What is of interest here is how Anabaptists imagined the primitive church and how they intended to implement their interpretation of it. Van Engen has argued that for more than a millennium "religious orders had monopolized claims to the community described in Acts". Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 163.

⁸⁶ *ÄCHB*, 65.

⁸⁷ *ÄCHB*, 364.

philosophical foundation for this separated community, and laid out the details for principled living in community.⁸⁸ The fourth article of this Order states that every brother and sister must be fully surrendered to the community in body and life, with evidence of such surrender demonstrated through the practice of holding all material gifts in common.⁸⁹ To have things in common is to praise God, and therefore, an act of worship and an occasion of grace, whereas to withhold goods from the community and keep them for oneself, or to distribute goods unequally or preferentially, or to buy goods for oneself in the marketplace, was to create “great disorder.”⁹⁰ This early Anabaptist Order established the philosophical and moral basis for communal living, and invested it with sacramental significance.

A sacramental understanding of social order was not peculiar to early Moravian Anabaptists. A strong connection between godly order and the offering of grace is evident in Ferdinand’s May 1537 instructions to Gallus Müller, Sigmund von Thun, and Reinprecht von Pairsperg, who were selected to represent his interests at Cardinal Matthäus’s upcoming synod. Ferdinand is unequivocal and insists that the “horrific disorder” [*greliche Unordnung*] evident in many places (but primarily monasteries and nunneries) requires immediate redress so that it might spare the archbishopric.⁹¹ Ferdinand claims that the current disorder has economic roots and can be traced to the practice of permitting nuns and monks to bring wealth into the monastery, and their ability to inherit estates from worldly relatives. The “proper”

⁸⁸ See, *ÄCHB*, 83-85, for Zieglschmid’s transcription of this early Moravian Anabaptist Order. The *Geschichtsbuech* presents the 1529 Order as an instruction on “how a Christian who stands in the apostolic faith is to live” [*wie ein Christ der im apostolischen glauben Steet, leben soll, geleert, geführt, vnnnd vndereinand bewilligt zu halten*].

⁸⁹ *ÄCHB*, 84.

⁹⁰ *ÄCHB*, 93.

⁹¹ *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 361-62.

distribution of wealth precludes such possibilities, with current permissive conditions reflecting an unhealthy social order, in his thinking. Wealth, according to Ferdinand, cannot be received, retained or inherited by monastics and nuns who have taken an oath of poverty without such actions generating disorder; all such wealth is to be used exclusively for the support of the church and the poor, and is not to be “squandered” by any individuals under any circumstances.⁹² The principled control and distribution of wealth establishes a good Christian social order, in his thinking, with all despisers [*Verächter*] and violators [*Übertreter*] of Christian order subject to imprisonment and punishment.⁹³ The introduction of “economic reform” to monastic orders may well have functioned, as Heiko A. Oberman has argued, to guarantee the preservation of “the religious and moral elite of society”.⁹⁴ Ferdinand insisted that compliance with his order was essential for the maintenance of Christian order. Similarly, Hutterites were adamant that strict observance of their communal order was required, with dire consequences reserved for any violators. Hutterites were enjoined to hold [*darob halten Sollen*] to what they held as the Order of God so that it not be diminished [*geschmelert*], and God’s wrath not become extended over the entire congregation, according to Peter Riedemann.⁹⁵

6.6 Order/Disorder and Place

Sixteenth-century Hutterite understandings of community [*Gmainschafft*], and the social order with which they were linked, were not limited to definitions of spiritual connectedness but were typically understood materially and temporally, with

⁹² *QZGT, Osterreich, III, 361-62.*

⁹³ *QZGT, Osterreich, II, 209.*

⁹⁴ Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 53.

⁹⁵ *ÄCHB, 221.*

any form of disorder in these areas always threatening spiritual disruption of the community.⁹⁶ The *Geschichtsbuech* narrator notes, when speaking of Wilhelm Reublin and the division he initiated in Austerlitz, that disorder is always offensive to God who can not bear to look at it, will not tolerate it, and desires to eradicate it from within his chosen people.⁹⁷ The narrator notes that the divine eradication of disorder in the godly community is on occasion accomplished through the ungodly [*vnsälige*].⁹⁸ On a personal level, the relation between disorder, a person's spiritual well-being, and their interests in private property was laid out unequivocally by Peter Riedemann when he stated that a person's attachment to private property is always inversely proportional to the degree to which they have fellowship with Christ and reflect the image of God.⁹⁹ The willingness to divest oneself entirely of material attachments by entrusting all property into the care of another prepares the individual for godly communal living, and for communing with the divine in Riedemann's thinking.

The fifth article of the 1529 Moravian Anabaptist Order¹⁰⁰ puts a strict stipulation on the allocation of material goods and distribution of human necessities, requiring that the appointed trustee of daily needs [*Diener der Notdurft*] exercise diligence in caring for the needy so that a fair and equitable distribution of communal

⁹⁶ *ÄCHB*, 253.

⁹⁷ *ÄCHB*, 93.

⁹⁸ *ÄCHB*, 93.

⁹⁹ Peter Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, edited and translated by John J. Friesen (Waterloo: Herald Press, 1999), 121.

¹⁰⁰ See, *ÄCHB*, 83-85 for a list of these articles. There are 12 articles in total dealing with a variety of issues attending communal living, ranging from thanking God for one's brothers and sisters when the community assembles (article 1) to clearing tables immediately after the community has eaten (article 8).

property is realized.¹⁰¹ When and where they were permitted to do so, Hutterite communities became organized around a bulk economy, with the procurement of raw materials and necessary foodstuffs, including their redistribution, generally entrusted to *Diener der Notdurft*.¹⁰² Such a social scheme defined and expanded social relatedness by setting responsibility for the provision of an individual's basic human needs on the community generally, and on its appointed trustees specifically. The development and implementation of such a "correct assembly" and "true order" is place specific in the *Geschichtbuech*, for it is only in Moravia as the Anabaptist Promised Land that sixteenth-century Anabaptists were provided with opportunity to realize their aspirations for a distinct, open, but separated community.¹⁰³ The mythologization of Moravia as the Promised Land, and therefore its presentation as a land of abundance rife with opportunity, is centered on its divinely appointed and

¹⁰¹ *ÄCHB*, 84. Wilhelm Reublin's Letter to Pilgram Marpeck accuses wealthy Anabaptist leaders in Moravia of retaining their own houses, eating roasts, fish, birds and drinking good wine while the "simple folk" were sustained on very simple nourishment. The elders ordered nice clothes to be made for them while the poor often went without shoes or shirts. He charged that more than 20 children had died without milk to drink and parents who had donated as much as 50 gulden to the communal chest were forced to watch their children starve. Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 44. Sebastian Franck stated that community of goods was designed to alleviate need and suffering, but admits that he had not investigated to see whether or not distribution was just. However, Franck claims that he had investigated, and did know, that there was a "great deal of deception" being exercised in the Anabaptist community for many did not surrender everything, as "the Anabaptists themselves knew." Sebastian Franck, *Chronica*, 194.

¹⁰² Early Hutterite society divided communal responsibilities between those "confirmed" [*bestätiget wurden*] as "servants of the word," who shared teaching and preaching responsibilities, and those nominated and elected [*erwählt und fürgestellt wurden*] as servants of daily needs [*Diener der Notdurft*]. See for example, *ÄCHB*, 343-44. Despite the spiritualizing rhetoric often surrounding such elections, practical considerations seemed to have been of considerable importance. Hänssel Mauer and Ruepel Hueber were described as two strong "brothers" who carry the provisions and build the huts. When anyone would question the origin of the food or other provisions they typically received the answer "you do not need to know that." *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 152. Helena, described as the daughter of Florian of Ennenberg in the court record, testified similarly that she did not know where the food, flour, cheese, lard, and other foodstuffs came from. But, she did know that when the Anabaptists were to have an assembly the strongest men were sent out and they secured the provisions. They arranged everything, according to Helena, and they did not tell the others where or how they secured the necessary goods. *QZGT, Osterreich*, III, 154.

¹⁰³ Packull has argued that Moravia came to be thought of as the "promised land" by "persecuted Anabaptists" from "Switzerland, the Rhineland, Palatinate, Swabia, Hesse, Franconia, Bavaria, Upper and Lower Austria, the Tyrol, and Silesia" from about 1527. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 54.

sanctioned transformation. Moravia is a “wilderness” undergoing radical transformation through human agency, according to the *Geschichtbuech*. Hutterite activity is actively reversing its degenerated condition to the point where the “wilderness” becomes fully capable of sustaining human life.¹⁰⁴ Hannß Schmid insisted during his 1556 missionizing campaign among Swiss Brethren in Kreuznach and Aachen that Hutterite communities were not simply a matter of “faith” and “order” important as these are, but very much a matter of place. He testified to a group of disaffected Anabaptists that the Moravian wilderness [*wüesten*] was being providentially transformed into a lush farmland and place of refuge in which the lambs were protected from the wolves just as it had been foretold by the Seer in Revelation 12:6.¹⁰⁵ The point of view presented by Schmid summarizes Hutterite action as a matter of redeeming the land. Divine presence and Hutterite action are effectively responsible for taking a wilderness area that is naturally hostile to human existence, and transforming it into a fruitful place conducive to nurturing human life. Moravia was presented as a place of unparalleled opportunity for Anabaptists during the sixteenth century. News of an Anabaptist community being divinely established in Moravia, and not just the severe punishments being meted out to convicted Anabaptists in the Tyrol and other areas, made Moravia an important Anabaptist destination.¹⁰⁶ The *Geschichtbuech* frames the Moravian community as an

¹⁰⁴ Just as Münster became the New Jerusalem for Anabaptists in the Low Countries, Moravia became the “Promised Land” for Anabaptists from Switzerland, Swabia, the Palatinate, the Rhineland, Hesse, Franconia, Upper and Lower Austria, Bavaria, Silesia, and especially the Tyrol. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ *ÄCHB*, 365-66.

¹⁰⁶ The tolerance and level of accommodation extended to Anabaptists by Moravian lords was directly related to the degree to which these Anabaptists were viewed as a potentially profitable addition to their estates and hamlets. Anabaptists were tolerated when Moravian lords were interested in securing persons for the cultivation of their land or providing a craft in their hamlets. *JH*, 14. Williams makes

opportunity to live in a place where people are of one heart and mind, and care for each other.¹⁰⁷

6.7 Heiligkeitsgemeinde, Leadership, and Family

The authority, qualifications, and character of early Hutterite/Anabaptist leaders in Moravia were frequently contested, with many confirmed leaders falling victim to the accusation of being an Ananias.¹⁰⁸ Aspiring leaders, or on occasion Anabaptist leaders aspiring to a greater share of power in the community, would initiate a challenge in which charges were brought against another leader, with the process generally ending in the accused or the accuser being banned. The *Geschichtsbuech* notes that these internal power struggles and acts of avarice with which they were invariably connected made the ordering of community, especially as it related to the communalization of goods, difficult. It was largely through the efforts of Jacob Hutter, who is credited with organizing and governing what may have been as many as 14 Anabaptist groups in Moravia,¹⁰⁹ that a hitherto loosely formed and organizationally challenged, but ideologically consistent, Anabaptist practice of

the same point. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 316. When Anabaptist communities were perceived to have a negative impact on local economies, numerous complaints against Moravian Anabaptists arose, and their position became less secure. Packull, *Hutterite Society*, 74.

¹⁰⁷ *ÄCHB*, 89.

¹⁰⁸ The story of Ananias and his wife Sapphira is found in The Acts of the Apostles 5: 1-11. Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and conspired to misrepresent their donation by withholding a portion of the proceeds from the church. Their deception was discovered and they suffered divine retribution in the form of immediate death. Perhaps the most notable early leader who fell to such a charge was Simon Schützing, a confirmed leader who refused to share leadership with Jacob Hutter and was shortly thereafter found to have hidden a supply of linens, shirts and four Bernese Pounds in a trunk. Schützing then revealed that he had also hidden 40 Gulden in a cavity on the underside of the roof. *ÄCHB*, 111. Shortly before his own excommunication, Schützing disciplined Jörg Fasser of Rattenburg in the Inn Valley for his failure to practice community of goods in an acceptable manner. In Fasser's case, Fasser had brought everything he owned into the communal storeroom and had instructed his wife and children to act similarly. Fasser's wife, without his knowledge, withheld some money belonging to her. It was this event that prompted a wide-scale search of all residences including Schützing's. *ÄCHB*, 02-03.

¹⁰⁹ Hostetler, *Hutterite Society*, 24.

community of goods in Moravia became galvanized into a rigid and comprehensive, but workable, social structure.¹¹⁰ Plümper has effectively argued that Hutter's version of community of goods established a "timely order,"¹¹¹ but it was not, as Ulrich Stadler testified, a simple policy to form, or a straight-forward practice to implement, when everyone had for their entire life lived within a very different sort of system.¹¹²

The Hutterite goal of establishing a holy community [*Heiligkeitsgemeinde*] went beyond implementing community of goods as a comprehensive and equitable system of communal consumption and production. Hutterite *Gemeinschaft* was a place, a social body, and an organizational principle through which individual needs, desires, and aspirations were consistently, constantly, and systematically sublimated to the needs of the larger community. Personal virtue was secured through communal harmony. Children and adults were socialized into a body that worked together, ate together, and worshipped together, developing thereby a communal understanding of

¹¹⁰ *ÄCHB*, 157. Packull has noted that Robert Friedmann has described Hutter's influence on the practice of community of goods in Moravia as a matter of making it a more "principled" social construction. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 95. Friedmann's assessment is certainly much kinder than Gabriel Ascherham's, assessment. Hutter's former friend turned adversary, charged Hutter with reducing the organizational principle of a loving and united community [*diese Liebe und Einigkeit*] to legalistic conformity, by which he [Hutter] divided it [*zertrennt er*]. Gabriel Ascherham, "Fragment of the Lost Chronicle of Gabriel Ascherham", in Stayer, *Peasants' War and Community of Goods*, 168. Ascherham's statement ignores the divisiveness apparent from the time of the earliest Anabaptist presence in Moravia, prior to Hutter's arrival there. Though the Bavarian-born Ascherham and the Swabian Philip Blauärmel (family name Plener) lived together for a short period of time initially, they had a falling out, with each taking their followers and choosing to live separately from the other. *ÄCHB*, 85-86. Moreover, the dispute between Wilhelm Reublin and Jacob Widman, which ended with the expulsion of Reublin and Jörg Zaunring from the community at Austerlitz together with some 150 followers and their departure for Auspitz, suggests anything but pristine unity. Widman depended on his personal, charismatic, and established authority in the dispute, whereas Reublin appealed to the community as the final authority. *ÄCHB*, 94-95. It was such a myth of peace and unity that prompted Jacob Hutter and Simon Schützinger to leave the Tyrol and visit Moravia. The unity Hutter and Schützinger forged with the Anabaptists in Austerlitz proved to be short lived.

¹¹¹ Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern*, 48. Leonard Verduin made a similar point much earlier arguing that the Anabaptist practice of community of goods introduced a "much-needed" economic and social alternative to "the medieval world", which had become "rather callous in the matter of the "haves" and the "have-nots."" Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 238.

¹¹² *OZGT, Schriften I*, 1938, 224.

the world; that is, place and their own relation to it and role in it. The desire of Hutter and his successors to realize *Gemeinschaft* in all areas of communal life resulted in its novel application to the traditional family structure, altering it substantially in the process.¹¹³ Hutter declared that retaining former family relations was unacceptable; “true” *Gemeinschaft* required that these traditional bonds not be held tightly.¹¹⁴ The large residences or *Bruderhöfe*—housing multiple family units while simultaneously functioning as community workspaces, dining halls, and worship centres—have been described as the “victory of the community over the family” by Stayer.¹¹⁵ Traditional family relations, kinship ties, attachments, loyalties, and responsibilities were notably weakened in favour of increased allegiances to the larger Hutterite community. The community and not the family became the primary productive unit and the ultimate frame of reference. This shift in the primary mode of production was coupled to and inaugurated a novel social arrangement in which the education, support, nurture, and protection of the Hutterite child were no longer primarily the duty of the child’s parents, but were made the responsibility of the larger Hutterite collective. The shift in responsibility began at an early stage of the Hutterite child’s life, with Peter

¹¹³ Stayer has argued that it is difficult to determine “how much Jacob Hutter actually had to do with establishing the system of common life among the Hutterites.” He has suggested that Peter Riedemann and Peter Walpot “seem to have had a lot to do with creating a Hutterite system of common life. Their writings institutionalized the charisma of Jacob Hutter.” Stayer, *The Peasants’ War and Community of Goods*, 144. Hans Fischer has attributed considerably more responsibility for the shaping and success of Hutterite communal life to Hutter than Stayer, attributing Hutterite innovations to a man he describes as possessing tremendous organizational and leadership skills, with Hutter an “unquestioningly charismatic personality” [*Muß zweifellos eine geistesmächtige Persönlichkeit gewesen sein*]. Fischer, *Jacob Hutter*, 56. The *Geschichtsbuech* presents an exalted view of Hutter describing his coming in terms that are reminiscent of the appearance of John the Baptist in the gospels. *ACHB*, 89-90.

¹¹⁴ Fischer, *Jacob Hutter*, 31. Marriages to non-Anabaptist spouses or the reluctance to marry were contentious issues for some Anabaptists.

¹¹⁵ Stayer, *The Peasants’ War and Community of Goods*, 145. Stayer has argued that the Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* and the social structure they supported were such that they made the family “as weak as it could be without disappearing entirely.” Stayer, *The Peasants’ War and Community of Goods*, 146.

Riedemann stating that the education of a Hutterite child began immediately after it was weaned, when the child was taken to school by its mother, where it was cared for and educated by other women.¹¹⁶ From infancy the child's frame of reference, including the child's identity, understanding of the world, and all social relations were substantially shaped by non-family members, with the installation of a primary obligation to always "seek that which is eternal," and to constantly reject the pursuit of "that which is temporal,"¹¹⁷ provided as the ideological foundation for the child's worldview.

The *Geschichtbuech* speaks often of Hutterites being strangers and visitors [*gesst vnd fremdling*] on Earth who are seeking a better and heavenly homeland [*bessers vnd himlisches Vaterlandt*].¹¹⁸ It notes on at least one occasion that the adoption of such an ideological perspective proved crucial for the stoic accommodation of Hutterites to each other, to their cramped living quarters, to the limited material resources available to the individual, and to their fluctuating socio-economic circumstances.¹¹⁹ *Glassenheit vnd Gemainschafft* [yieldedness and community] were forcibly advocated and became inextricably interwoven in Hutterite thinking and practice,¹²⁰ as were *aigenthumb* [private property] and *aigennutz vnd gwinn* [personal gain], with the latter always framed as the antithesis of the former.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Peter Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 151. The *Geschichtbuech* likewise states that Hutterite children were raised communally and were entrusted to the care [*vermanung*] and discipline [*zucht*] of "God-fearing sisters" [*Gottforchtigenn Schwestern*] who gave attention to the education, hygiene, and habits of children. *ÄCHB*, 165.

¹¹⁷ Peter Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 152.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, *ÄCHB*, 165.

¹¹⁹ *ÄCHB*, 165.

¹²⁰ See, *ÄCHB*, 285-96, for a defence and explanation of the Hutterite identification of *Gelassenheit* with community of goods.

¹²¹ The *Geschichtbuech* describes how some Philipites preferred personal gain to *Gelassenheit* and community as evident in their return to private property, which resulted in many becoming "lost"

More than simply an expression of piety,¹²² the final demonstration of passivity,¹²³ or some promise held out for the future, the Hutterite practice of *Gelassenheit* and its identification with community were part of a program in which the exercise of power over the nature and shape of community by the dominant society were decisively transgressed through an awareness and identification of its power plays, which substantially diminished their hold on the Anabaptist community.¹²⁴ The attitude that was cultivated produced the required freedom for exploring and establishing an altogether new set of conditions for all social relations. *Gelassenheit* was a peculiar Hutterite/Anabaptist response to the exercise of power, and a system and structure in which the individual, the individual's personal needs, the individual's aspirations, and the individual's identity were always determined by and defined in relation to the larger communal body.

The creation of a desirable and godly Hutterite community was not only dependent on the cultivation of certain attitudes; it remained dependent on the purchase and possession of a suitable place for integrated dwelling,¹²⁵ with a wandering or rootless Christian community deemed a contradiction in terms. Communal living (that is, godly living) could only begin, as the *Geschichtbuech* repeatedly points out, when a group succeeded in purchasing, renting, or leasing property, and only when this new-found property was occupied by multiple

[*verdorben*]. *ÄCHB*, 188. The *Geschichtbuech* frequently equates the practice of community of goods with Christianity in an absolute manner

¹²² Stayer describes the Hutterite identification of *Gemeinschaft* with *Gelassenheit* as the “foundation of Hutterite piety”. Stayer, *Peasants' War and Community of Goods*, 153.

¹²³ Anabaptist understandings and expressions of *Gelassenheit* are frequently interpreted as “self-surrender,” an abdication or denial of the self in which present misery is accepted and traded for future blessedness.

¹²⁴ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutical Project* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 205.

¹²⁵ See for example, *ÄCHB*, 174, and 184-85.

families.¹²⁶ These socially distinct Hutterite communities were not a simple collection of Hutterite families, but rather, each geographically separated Anabaptist community was designed and functioned as a single large family.¹²⁷ In his letters, Hutter reinforced this new familial understanding of community through his frequent employment of the term *Geschwistriget* [siblingness].¹²⁸ To live in Hutterite community was to live in a residence that housed people who were not necessarily related biologically, but with whom a more profound connection was thought to exist. Numerous scriptural examples were promulgated by sixteenth-century Hutterites in defence of communal living, such that the New Testament and Hebrew bible often appeared to be thoroughly peopled with Hutterites.¹²⁹ Because the Hutterite community was a single family functionally, everything intersected, such that anything that was of interest to the individual was necessarily of interest to the community. Conversely, those things deemed superfluous to community were held to be of no interest to the individual.¹³⁰

It was the distinctive application of Hutterite *Gemeinschaft* to the traditional family model that Stayer has credited with making Hutterites “offensive to their contemporary critics.”¹³¹ Their novel familial arrangements, and their efforts to except themselves from societal norms regulating marriage, frequently resulted in

¹²⁶ *ÄCHB*, 257-59.

¹²⁷ Hans Fischer, *Jacob Hutter*, 65.

¹²⁸ Fischer, *Jacob Hutter*, 6, and 8. The terms *Geschwistriget* and *geschwisterheit* are not gendered in the same manner, or to the same extent as the terms *Brüder* [brother] or *Brüderschaft*. The latter terms appear frequently in the *Geschichtbuech*.

¹²⁹ *ÄCHB*, 285-96. New Testament parables were similarly employed as encouraging and mandating community of goods. See for example, *ÄCHB*, 288-89. The apostle Paul, it is also claimed, did not wish for anyone to live alone in a house. *ÄCHB*, 296.

¹³⁰ *JH*, 73.

¹³¹ Stayer, *The Peasants' War and Community of Goods*, 144.

Hutterites being accused of placing themselves outside the social order.¹³² In deference to the pressure exerted by King Ferdinand and Emperor Charles, the Brünn Diet [*Brünner Landtag*] of March 1545 legislated that only 5-7 persons may live in a single dwelling, with Hutterites interpreting the legislation as directed specifically at them. The centrality of the issue is evident in Hutterite assessments, which claimed that this legislation was an attempt to secretly steal their hearts and transform them into slaves [*haimlich das hertz Stelen vnd zu Knechten machen*].¹³³ Hutterite social innovations challenged conventional sixteenth-century family structures and relations, drawing considerable hostility during the sixteenth century, but their innovations also introduced an important shift in relations of attachment within the Hutterite community, transferring loyalties and bonds traditionally reserved for the family to the larger community. It was through the construction and privileging of a newly-established set of social relations and conditions that strict limits were put on self-indulgence and individual pursuits, facilitating the attribution of sacramental power to Hutterite godly order [*gottlicher Ordnung*] and holy community.¹³⁴ Sixteenth-century Hutterites made the confession of a holy Christian church community a material and central article of Hutterite faith and practice; it was not

¹³² Marion Kobelt-Groch, ““Why Did Petronella Leave Her Husband? Reflections on Marital Avoidance Among the Halberstadt Anabaptists,” *MQR*, 62 1988, 38.

¹³³ *ÄCHB*, 317-18.

¹³⁴ *ÄCHB*, 202. Stephen Boyd has argued that Hans Schlaffer, a Moravian Anabaptist leader executed in 1528, held an understanding of community as sacrament prior to the construction of Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* even though he never explicitly referred to it as such. Schlaffer demonstrated what Boyd calls “an implicit or functional sacramental theology which imbued the everyday life of the believing community with sacramental significance.” Stephen Boyd, “Community as Sacrament in the Theology of Hans Schlaffer,” in *Anabaptism Revisited: Essays on Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies in Honor of C. J. Dyck*, edited by Walter Klaassen (Scottsdale; Waterloo: Herald Press, 1992), 56.

only or simply a spiritual matter.¹³⁵ Whoever acknowledges the community of the saved with the mouth but does not practice community of goods was deemed to be a false and not a true member of the “true” Christian church.¹³⁶ Moravia was held to be the Promised Land to which God had led his people, and like the land itself, the community established there was to be holy and entirely separate.

6.8 Hutterite/ Monastic Beginnings

Hutterite Anabaptists, like medieval monastics, emerged from a diverse and experimental background, but quickly developed into a distinct social order and established a peculiar and separate identity. In its earliest stages the Anabaptist movement, like the early monastic movement, was relatively widespread though it did not evince a common identity, organizational structure, group of principles, or set of goals.¹³⁷ These conditions changed when and where the movement became established in a particular place, or became identified with a specific type of place. Though repentance and separation were considered necessary for the sanctification of the individual in both traditions, and though salvation was the ultimate goal of monastics and Hutterites, assurances were always provided to the individual, and salvation was always imagined within the context of the individual’s relation to the larger community. Coenobitic monastics, desert ascetics, and anchorites were all defined by their spatial choices, with all such determinations setting the individual’s relation to the church and larger community.¹³⁸ Monastics and Hutterites often

¹³⁵ The Modern Devout also held that their communities were both temporal and spiritual, within which members shared spiritual and material goods.

¹³⁶ *ÄCHB*, 287-88.

¹³⁷ Caner, “The Invention of Monasticism,” 587.

¹³⁸ Even in the case of anchorites, their relation to the church and/or larger society was defined spatially and not only functionally, with enclosures typically directly attached to churches or city walls, or otherwise connected to community places through passageways or tunnels.

presented themselves and functioned as examples to follow, or as “soldiers of Christ” who engage the forces of darkness and fight valiantly on behalf of the “common people”.¹³⁹ Like monastics during the medieval period, Hutterites were set apart during the sixteenth century not only by their physical withdrawal from the “world,” and their strict adherence to a peculiar code of discipline, but by their commitment to the development of a place deemed eminently suitable for the realization and cultivation of the Christian command to love one another.

6.9 Monasteries and the Bruderhof

Christian monasticism is first and foremost concerned with setting people apart. It is a spatial phenomenon that begins with physical withdrawal from an undesirable place, and the development of an attachment to a preferred, or what is deemed to be a more suitable, alternative place.¹⁴⁰ Many of the earliest Christian monastics were eremitic and anchoritic, defining themselves spatially, as did early coenobitic communities through their separation from the world and its influences, and through their active creation and cultivation of a culturally peculiar place.¹⁴¹ Ascetic Christian practice created new places and altogether new understandings of place; it was an innovation conditioned by the places it created. Flight into the desert and seclusion in

¹³⁹ Thomas F. X. Noble, and Thomas Head, eds., *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), xxvi. The *Rule of Macarius* describes monks as soldiers of Christ (*Milites ergo Christi*). Carmela Vircillo Franklin, Ivan Havener, and J. Alcuin Francis translators, *Early Monastic rules: The Rules of the Fathers and the Regula Orientalis* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982). Jacob Hutter frequently described himself as a soldier of God when introducing himself in his letters. One of Hutter's early biographers also used military descriptors for Hutter, describing him as a Christian hero [*Held*], army commander [*Heerführer*], knight [*Ritter*], and warrior [*Kämpfer*] of truth. Hans Fischer, *Jacob Hutter: Leben, Froemmingkeit, Briefe* (Newton KS: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956), 74. Struggles with the devil and/or the world were frequently described in terms of military-like combat by both monastics and Hutterites. Vito Fumagalli, *Landscapes of Fear*, 51.

¹⁴⁰ Caner, “The Invention of Monasticism,” 595.

¹⁴¹ Réginald Grégoire, et al, *The Monastic Realm*, 11.

a cloister, like the creation of sixteenth-century Hutterite *Haushaben* and *Bruderhöfe* demonstrate a strong anti-cultural prejudice that is spatially centered, regardless of whether or not the separation being effected is framed positively as the creation of a more desirable place, or negatively as withdrawal from an undesirable place. Even where monasteries and monasticism have been identified most positively in terms of their contributions to the larger society,¹⁴² with monastics described as “soldiers of Christ” who are defined primarily by their social roles as intercessors, educators, providers of hospitality, and suppliers of charity,¹⁴³ their isolation from established cultural institutions, their withdrawal from a “tainted” environment, and their rejection of a morally offensive system are all essential components of a dialectical relation in which withdrawal and engagement provide fundamental structure through tension.¹⁴⁴ Late medieval monasticism has been described as “particularly outward-looking” by Martin Heale, with Heale arguing that monastics sought to “demonstrate that they still had something to offer late medieval society” despite the profound separation they sought to effect from it.¹⁴⁵ Like medieval monastics, sixteenth-century Hutterites created culturally unique places that existed in tension with the

¹⁴² Heale has argued that the monastic contribution to late medieval life was considerable, suggesting that a “new consensus is now forming which stresses the value of monastic provision as one of the several important contributions to the welfare of late medieval society.” Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 53. Heale argues that the substantial nature of their contributions was widely recognized, making any contemporary suggestions that monasticism was “becoming irrelevant to the religious life of the country” simply “wide of the mark.” Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 56.

¹⁴³ Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 33.

¹⁴⁴ Heale has broadened the parameters of such an argument considerably, arguing that a “fundamental tension between withdrawal from and engagement with the world” is “inherent” within what he calls all “religious life.” Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 33. Grégoire, et al, have claimed that at no time does the monastic intend to contribute to the “intellectual or artistic edification of the world”, nor are the “values of art and intellect” upheld “explicitly and frankly”. They argue that all contributions are incidental to the primary purposes and values of monasticism. Grégoire, *The Monastic Realm*, 11-13.

¹⁴⁵ Martin Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England, c. 1300-1535* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 6.

“world,” with these peculiar places the development of a place from which the provision of an active spiritual presence in society and the outright rejection of the dominant society were strategically and constantly negotiated.¹⁴⁶

The *Vita* of Martin of Tours, as it is available in a letter of Severus to Desiderius, is an example of a monastic narrative of conflict and triumph centered on place and community.¹⁴⁷ The story Severus weaves outlines a dialectical relation in which the intentional and strategic separation of Martin of Tours from the dominant society facilitates and enables his decisive engagement with some of its primary places, such that the undesirable qualities and structures of the existing society are abrogated and replaced with the acceptable counterparts of a “new” society. Martin of Tours is described by Severus in terms of his “withdrawal” from the larger society, but the dramatic action of the narrative is focused on Martin’s rigorous and principled destruction of ancient pagan shrines and temples, and his subsequent building of Christian churches or monasteries where the now-destroyed pagan shrine or temple once stood.¹⁴⁸ Martin’s clearly established itinerary of contestation, victory, and hence redemption was predicated on the demolition of particular places and the creation of alternative places through which the individual becomes the architect of their own salvation. The example of Martin of Tours is not altogether unique among the *vita* of Christian ascetics. It demonstrates that early Christian asceticism can be interpreted as a commitment to a form of personal discipline that retains, at minimum, an implicit call for the radical restructuring of society through the

¹⁴⁶ See, *ÄCHB*, 308-16, for one instance of the *Geschichtsbuech* providing the Hutterite theological justification for effecting separation from the dominant order.

¹⁴⁷ Noble, and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, 3-29.

¹⁴⁸ Noble, *Soldiers of Christ*, 15-17.

contestation of its primary religious places as an avenue for facilitating the construction and maintenance of a radical new community.

Though Hutterites did not engage in the physical destruction of church property as a necessary precondition for establishing their own communities, their construction of *Bruderhöfe* attempted to affect a profound separation between their own communities and the dominant society through the effective utilization of material and abstract space.¹⁴⁹ The separation both traditions sought was the keystone defining everything else. Distinctions between abstract and material space were not clearly defined in sixteenth-century Hutterite history, with the one interwoven with and informing the other in many instances. In 1535 the Anabaptist community in Auspitz, for example, unanimously decided that the best way to avoid the “world” and secure the profound separation being sought would be to cease working, trading, eating, drinking, and interacting with “outsiders,” unless a particularly important and godly reason for doing so could be found [*on besondere wichtige grosse vnd göttliche vrsach*].¹⁵⁰ Their decision clarified the sort of profound separation Auspitz Anabaptists desired, and it provided the perception of substantially effecting a material separation, even though the resolution did little to enable Auspitz Anabaptists to move beyond an abstract separation. In no way was the Anabaptist community in Auspitz positioned to function, or even survive, as an autonomous social, political, and economic unit. The communication of their intentions to the

¹⁴⁹ Intangible, abstract space can, in some instances and under the right conditions, establish as effective a boundary as physical walls. Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth Century English Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 245- 252. Auspitz Anabaptists were presumably suitably convinced that they could survive, perhaps even thrive, as an economically and socially closed community. *ÄCHB*, 143-46.

¹⁵⁰ *ÄCHB*, 145-46.

Abess at Brünn, on whose land they lived and whose request for a loan Auspitz Anabaptists had denied a short time earlier, was not well received and resulted in the forcible expulsion of all Anabaptists from Auspitz.¹⁵¹ Philipite Anabaptists determined that they would effect their physical separation from Hutterite Anabaptists through a similar strategy, imagining a space between the groups, which would be demonstrated and reinforced through their refusal to greet or otherwise wish anyone well from Hutter's group when they met on the street.¹⁵²

6.10 Separation, Purification, Voluntarism

For early sixteenth-century Hutterites it was the decision to separate, leave, and establish a godly community elsewhere that revealed the "true" character, priorities, and intentions of all involved,¹⁵³ with spatial separations frequently functioning in the *Geschichtbuech* as a revelation of Hutterite divine election, and the production of new spatial opportunities for them.¹⁵⁴ The early Hutterite story is thematically structured as a process of election, separation, and purification, with their purgation from the "world" and competing false brethren an essential component of a process in which the "true disciples" of Christ and the "true" church become manifest. The *Geschichtbuech* describes the tripartite division of the Moravian Anabaptist community in 1533 as the product of Satan's initiative [*anregen des Sathans*], but unabashedly maintains that the distress and hostility [*grossen Jamer vnd gegenStoß*] created were part of a process through which God's chosen people were revealed, even though those primarily responsible for generating the distress are held fully

¹⁵¹ *ÄCHB*, 146.

¹⁵² *ÄCHB*, 139-40.

¹⁵³ *ÄCHB*, 363.

¹⁵⁴ *ÄCHB*, 164-65; 172; 184-85, and 257-59.

culpable.¹⁵⁵ Although there are some instances recorded in the *Geschichtbuech* in which the narrative focuses on important individuals and/or groups who became united with the “separate godly community” being established in Moravia, such as the incorporation of Jacob Hutter and Simon Schützinger into the Anabaptist group at Austerlitz,¹⁵⁶ times of division and separation most clearly defined early Hutterite history, and most indelibly marked this sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement. Despite the pervasive rhetoric of unity in the *Geschichtbuech*, this Hutterite chronicle presents a significant number of instances in which disunity and strife not unity marked Moravian Anabaptist relations. Regional and/or ethnic differences were of considerable significance among Anabaptists in Moravia, with Silesian Anabaptists living with Gabriel Ascherham in Rossitz, Swabian Anabaptists with Philipp Plener in Austerlitz, and Tyrolean Anabaptists with Simon Schützinger in Auspitz. Moreover, when Jörg Scherer came to Auspitz with his group of followers and became “united” with Hutter’s group, complaints about the food being served, the presence of gold and silk trim on head coverings, and the delicate nature of the thread being spun soon arose. Failure to settle these disputes amicably resulted in the excommunication of Scherer and his followers.¹⁵⁷ Generally speaking, it was through an ongoing process of separation as refinement that a “proper” social order was established. It was through the conflict that emerged between Wilhelm Reublin and Jacob Widman and their subsequent separation from each other, for example, that the

¹⁵⁵ *ÄCHB*, 119. The *Geschichtbuech* claims to provide a short but truthful account of this early conflict through which God’s chosen were revealed and affirmed. This theme provides structure to much of the history that the *Geschichtbuech* provides.

¹⁵⁶ See, *ÄCHB*, 89-90, for a record of events surrounding the arrival and inclusion of Hutter and Schützinger into the Austerlitz community.

¹⁵⁷ *ÄCHB*, 140.

Moravian Anabaptist community was alerted to “disorder” within the community,¹⁵⁸ and it was through the expulsion of Jacob Widman and Philip Jäger from Nikolsburg, and their willingness to seek a new but undisclosed territory, that a more thoroughgoing community of goods was firmly established.¹⁵⁹ Even in the case of the dramatic expulsion of Anabaptists from Auspitz, which was an involuntary separation and caused considerable suffering,¹⁶⁰ and inadvertently resulted in the capture and execution of Hutter,¹⁶¹ the *Geschichtbuech* describes these events as consistent with the myth of Hutterite election, purification, and divine protection [*wie Gott den seinigen beisteht und hilft*].¹⁶² It concludes that it was in the face of severe persecution that the number of divinely ordained dwelling places for the elect became multiplied, and the suitability of these places and the social system with which they were intertwined for making disciples of Christ verified.¹⁶³ On the occasion of his letter to the Moravian *Landeshauptmann* (provincial head of government/ state

¹⁵⁸ *ÄCHB*, 92-95.

¹⁵⁹ *ÄCHB*, 86-87. Though Widman is applauded for his willingness to leave the territories of Leonhard von Liechtenstein rather than compromise his pacifist principles, he is subsequently censured by the *Geschichtbuech* for his toleration of “disorder” and heavy-handed administration, which resulted in Wilhelm Reublin and Jörg Zaunring leaving Austerlitz for Auspitz with their followers who then become the elect. *ÄCHB*, 92-95.

¹⁶⁰ *ÄCHB*, 146-47. Hutter places the blame for their expulsion on Ferdinand who he describes as a tyrant, enemy of righteousness and truth, and the prince of darkness. See, *JH*, 26-31, for a transcription of Hutter’s letter to the *Landeshauptmann* of Moravia. Hutter maintains that pressure from Ferdinand forced the expulsion of Anabaptists from Moravia, with local Moravian lords unable to withhold compliance with the king’s command. Suffering, in relation to the Moravian Hutterite community, is not the result of choosing an ascetic lifestyle but comes as the result of choosing to live in godly community. *JH*, 42.

¹⁶¹ See, *ÄCHB*, 157-58, for the *Geschichtbuech*’s record of Hutter’s capture and arrest in Clausen, and execution in Innsbruck.

¹⁶² *ÄCHB*, 377-79.

¹⁶³ *ÄCHB*, 164-65. Stayer has cogently and effectively argued that despite the rhetoric of the *Geschichtbuech* and Anabaptist apologists it was primarily during times of limited “persecution” that Hutterite/Anabaptist communities prospered, and “brutalities could be sublimated into the literature and piety of martyrdom.” Stayer, *Peasants’ War and Community of Goods*, 158. It was during the relatively tolerant years (1565-1592) of the “Golden Years” of Hutterite history that missionary activity was most ardent and Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* flourished. Clasen has counted 161 Hutterite missions from Moravia to South and Central Germany, Austria, and Switzerland between 1530 and 1618. Claus-Peter Clasen, “The Anabaptists in South and Central Germany, Switzerland and Austria: A Statistical Study,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 52 (1978): 10.

captain) Hutter asserted that territorial lords did not have the right to forbid Anabaptists from entering their lands given that the earth and all it contains belong to God.¹⁶⁴ Hutter's statement challenged traditional understandings of state authority and privilege, justifying the Hutterite acquisition of property and communal development wherever they saw fit.

Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* and monastic communities were propagated as entirely voluntary enterprises, with access to their respective communities open to all in theory, provided the applicant met the enlistment criteria. Each initiate must be prepared, if accepted into the community, to willingly submit to certain mystical practices, the established leadership and fellow initiates, and must promise to support the community as required.¹⁶⁵ The community would in turn support and encourage the practice of spiritual life, offering to the initiate a place carefully designed and fully suitable for the realization of unparalleled growth and maturity in divine favour.¹⁶⁶ The monastic "art of being well-pleasing to God," and Hutterite understandings of Christian discipleship, were predicated on the individual's voluntary separation from the larger society, and their willing induction into an alternative community with which they would henceforth be identified. It involved the initiate's unreserved attachment to a particular place and their wholehearted participation in the practices with which the place was associated. Basil of Caesarea (CE 330-79) described monasticism as voluntary exile, which required the renunciation of all former preoccupations and attachments, and the development of an altogether new "habit of mind" in which old habits were abandoned and new ones

¹⁶⁴ *JH*, 29.

¹⁶⁵ Grégoire, et al, *The Monastic Realm*, 11.

¹⁶⁶ Grégoire, et al, *The Monastic Realm*, 11.

cultivated.¹⁶⁷ Though voluntary, such a commitment was propagated as requiring complete and unreserved devotion to the “ways of God.”¹⁶⁸ Similarly, the Moravian Anabaptist Order of 1529 stipulated that every Anabaptist “brother and sister” must “surrender” [*ergeben*] their body and life [*leib vnnnd leben*] fully and unconditionally to the Anabaptist community.¹⁶⁹ As a condition of acceptance, such a requirement provided necessary structure for the fledgling community, and was heralded by the *Geschichtbuech* as an essential component of proper order for assembly [*rechter versammlung vnd Ordnung*] in the Anabaptist promised land of Moravia.¹⁷⁰ Monastic and Hutterite practice outlined a very specific, thorough, and absolute form of Christian commitment through their physical separation from the larger society, the norms it represented, and the values it cultivated.¹⁷¹ In more than a few instances Hutterite and monastic separation appear to have been engaged, not only positively as a necessary precondition for the pursuit of holiness, but negatively as a means of precluding personal proclivities toward evil, and a method for obviating the effects of an inherently sinful world.¹⁷² Monastic and Hutterite spatial understandings and practices were not value-neutral but heavily invested, empowering their physical and ideological separation from one type of place and their unreserved attachment to another kind of place. Hutterites and monastics typically identified themselves as

¹⁶⁷ Caner, *Invention of Monasticism*, 592.

¹⁶⁸ Caner, *Invention of Monasticism*, 591.

¹⁶⁹ *ÄCHB*, 83-84.

¹⁷⁰ *ÄCHB*, 85.

¹⁷¹ Grégoire, et al, *The Monastic Realm*, 173.

¹⁷² Heale has argued that negative reasons for separation were of special relevance to female monasticism, with women secluded more often than not because they were considered “inherently sinful and unable to preserve their own chastity.” Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 34-35.

members of a voluntary community,¹⁷³ with their spatial practices and the myths with which they were intertwined demonstrating the accuracy of Michel Foucault's argument, exposing the propagation of voluntary participation in institutional regimes as suspect. For as Foucault argues, all institutions (and I would add communities) require the creation of a culturally particular place through which they establish and maintain a program of segregating, excluding, and normalizing.¹⁷⁴

6.11 Differences, Similarities, and Perfection

It can be argued in objection that sixteenth-century Hutterite order did not typically resemble, or closely replicate, monastic penitential practices. However, it should be remembered that the latter always constituted the means and not the desired end of monastic life.¹⁷⁵ When defined as spatially peculiar counter-cultural social models, sixteenth-century Hutterite order and medieval monastic discipline demonstrate significant points of contact; they reflect a strong interest in the shape, structure and values of the dominant society in relation to the places through which community is created and maintained. Eremitic and coenobitic monasticism, like the early sixteenth-century Hutterite tradition, were at odds with their social context,

¹⁷³ Sixteenth-century authorities did not always accept such a self-understanding with respect to Anabaptists. They tended to think of Anabaptists as "simple folk" who were deceived and/or misled, with Anabaptist leaders held primarily responsible for Anabaptist related "evils."

¹⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). Foucault's study of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon is one prominent example. Cassidy-Welch has argued that Foucault effectively demonstrated that individuals always consent to a "normalizing regime," becoming the "products of the discipline that the regime seeks to exert." Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces*, 130-31. By their very nature, institutions are places that shape docile subjects who become accepted members of the community being constructed. Foucault argued that not only prisons but all recent hierarchical structures such as schools, hospitals, factories, and the army have been decisively constructed to resemble Bentham's Panopticon.

¹⁷⁵ Grégoire, et al, have argued that silence, solitude, work, the liturgy, and mystical practices were all important for the framework they provided and were imbued with consecratory value. However, they were always relegated to a position of means and did not become ends. Grégoire, et al, *The Monastic Realm*, 230.

which was deemed fundamentally unsuitable for the cultivation of the godly life through which the regeneration, transformation, or salvation of the individual or larger culture and society would occur.¹⁷⁶ The suggestion that monastics or Hutterites held little interest in the transformation of culture and society appears wide of the mark given the importance both traditions placed on education, the provision of social services, the equitable distribution of material goods, and the examples of godly life in community they provided for the general populace.¹⁷⁷ St. Benedict's prefatorial reference to monasticism as the provision of a *scola* "for the Lord's service" retains a military and an academic meaning,¹⁷⁸ both of which have important social implications. The term describes an elite regiment or *corps*, and is employed not only to organize the monastic community, but also to provide its identity and the reason for its existence. The social model sixteenth-century Hutterite tradition provided might be described in quite similar terms.

Hutterites, like monastics, held a strong interest in the development of a separated community that would function as an eminently suitable place for the practice of God's command to love each other and thereby realize one of their primary concerns. The philosophical justification for communal living provided by Basil of Caesarea in his *Rules* is founded on his anthropology, with Basil of Caesarea stating that because humans are sociable animals and not "solitary and fierce," they must necessarily by their very nature associate with and love one another.¹⁷⁹ In a letter to his "Philipite

¹⁷⁶ Grégoire, et al, *The Monastic Realm*, 173.

¹⁷⁷ Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 221.

¹⁷⁸ C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasteries: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Longman, 1989), 31.

¹⁷⁹ Elizabeth A. Clark, "Asceticism, Class, and Gender," in Virginia Burrus, ed., *A People's History of Christianity: Late Ancient Christianity*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 40.

brothers” living in Upper Austria, Peter Riedemann similarly emphasized the importance of living in godly community but framed the matter of communal living negatively, claiming that leaving the Hutterite community was an unnatural betrayal and desertion of oneself that held dire consequences; it was described by Riedemann as an operation through which the individual becomes separated from their first love and suffers the loss of all divine gifts.¹⁸⁰ Perfection, according to the *Geschichtbuech*¹⁸¹ and monastic tradition,¹⁸² consists of divesting oneself of all material possessions and claims of ownership as a necessary precondition through which entry into a godly community and participation in its program are made possible. Such communities were always conceived spatially and materially despite the spiritualizing rhetoric that was attached to them and propagated through them. Although the *Geschichtbuech* speaks of Hutterites as strangers and visitors [*Gäst un Frembling*] who are seeking a homeland [*Vaterland*], and though they speak of it as a better and heavenly place [*bessers und himlisches*] they are not speaking of a spiritual or post-life residence. From the context it is clear that their concern is centered on securing a better earthly dwelling. The writer records that the pious diligently thanked God that he had provided a place [*Ort und Platz*] for assembly and the education of their children.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ *ÄCHB*, 180.

¹⁸¹ *ÄCHB*, 228-229.

¹⁸² *The Rule of the Four Fathers* equates conversion with divestiture of an individual’s goods, and the first step toward the eradication of obstacles to the holy life. Carmela Viricillo Franklin, Ivan Havener, J. Alcuin Francis, translators, *Early Monastic Rules: The Rules of the Fathers and the Regula Orientalis* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 21-23.

¹⁸³ *ÄCHB*, 165.

Though dissimilar in several obvious ways,¹⁸⁴ such as their respective commitments to celibacy or marriage, Hutterite and monastic traditions evince profound similarities in their organizational goals, ideological structure, communal self-understanding and spatial purposes. Both traditions insisted, for example, that satisfaction of the scriptural directive to live as disciples of Christ is only possible within a particular type of community and communal structure, and deemed the peculiar places they had created fully satisfactory given such purposes. The suitability of its members or potential members was a key issue in both the monastic and Hutterite traditions, with both developing a strict process of evaluation prior to initiation. Hutterites tended to claim that the objectives of Acts 2 and 4 and 1Corinthians 12: 12-27, in which the disparate members of a single body cooperate fully for harmonious sanctified living through the sublimation of individual interests to communal goals, are only realized within a particular type of collective. It was through a process of imbuing a particular social structure with (pen-)ultimate value and then imagining their respective social practices to be soteriologically significant that the creation of a particular type of place became crucial in both the Hutterite and

¹⁸⁴ One of the most obvious areas in which monasticism differed from Hutterite communities was its celibacy requirement. William E. Phipps has argued provocatively that misogyny and not scriptural precedent is responsible for creating priestly celibacy, with Aquinas borrowing his understanding of a female as a “defective male” from Aristotle, and not the bible. Phipps argues that Aquinas “accepted the philosopher’s view that nature always wants to produce a male, so a woman is a man gone wrong.” William E. Phipps, *Clerical Celibacy: The Heritage* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 141. Issues of celibacy were important and not peripheral to the Reformation in Germany, with many reformers writing on the subject, endorsing the practice of marriage for clerics and laity alike against what Phipps has called “the lengthy medieval crusade against marriage for those in sacred vocations.” Phipps, *Clerical Celibacy*, 152. Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt was the first Protestant reformer to write against clerical celibacy, arguing in 1521 that such a practice was absent in the early church and was invented by church officials for the purpose of lining church coffers and maintaining strong controls over clergy. Karlstadt’s argument in support of marriage and against clerical celibacy is more an argument from history focused on church economics than a theological argument from scripture. Stephen E. Buckwalter, *Die Priesterehe in Flugschriften der Fruhen Reformation, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), 84ff.

monastic traditions. All such places, whether monastic or Hutterite, were designed and constructed to develop specific ideals and reinforce the myth with which these ideals were associated.

6.12 Labour, Riches and Perfection

Sixteenth-century Hutterites, like early Christian monastics, shunned the acquisition of riches, strictly avoiding any form of honours, even those offered by the church.¹⁸⁵ Riches and honour were closely linked in both traditions, and their avoidance similarly justified through the identification of a “simple lifestyle” with the imitation of what was thought to be a virtuous form of life practiced by the early Christians in Jerusalem, who, in keeping with the precedent of Acts 2, 4, and 5, “shared their possessions.” The *Geschichtsbuech* is critical of Philipites who “preferred” private property [*Eigentum*] and personal gain [*ihren Nutz und Gewinn*] to *Gelassenheit* and community, with the latter contingent on the sublimation of all self-interest and identified with the pursuit of godliness.¹⁸⁶ Early monastic rules, like sixteenth-century Hutterite social practices, were designed to promote economic equality within the monastery and *Bruderhof* respectively through the imposition and maintenance of an economic structure that encouraged a social levelling effect.¹⁸⁷ Equality was to be the basis of communal relations, not dependence or hierarchy. According to Jerome’s Latin translation of the *Rules of Saint Pachomius* all monks were to receive the same food including equal amounts of special treats, and they were to have no possessions aside from those they all shared in keeping with “what is

¹⁸⁵ Heale has argued that medieval monastics “had a horror of riches; they avoided honours, even in the church.” Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 221.

¹⁸⁶ *ÄCHB*, 188.

¹⁸⁷ Clark, “Asceticism, Class, and Gender,” 31.

prescribed for all together by the law of the monastery.”¹⁸⁸ Hutterites insisted similarly that all must eat the same food at the same table, and any found deviating from that communal principle were to be charged with introducing disorder.¹⁸⁹ The law of community displaced the law of domination, establishing the community in both traditions as the legitimate authority in all things related to it, and not any form of local civil rule. Both traditions were an attempt to construct a community of “brotherliness” as the very best form of Christian community.

The requirement to work with one’s hands was an important feature of Hutterite society and Christian monasticism. This practice was described by Elizabeth A. Clark in terms of popular cultural perceptions as “a marker of lowly social status”, whether it was “an economic necessity, to support themselves or their communities, or as a sign of their deep humility.”¹⁹⁰ Humility had a monastic orientation,¹⁹¹ and held an edifying function. Its cultural associations were accepted appropriated, and exploited by Hutterites, with its established religious and ethical value attached to their own labours.¹⁹² Though both traditions were often criticized for engaging in “unfair” competition with local craftsman, guilds, and artisan societies, monastic communities and Hutterite societies were not strictly organized for profit but were designed to

¹⁸⁸ *Rules of Saint Pachomius*, rules 35, 38, 39, and 81. Clark, “Asceticism, Class, and Gender,” 39-40.

¹⁸⁹ Peter Riedemann claimed that he bore responsibility for instructing others to clothe themselves modestly and that Hutterites would not “make clothing that serves pride, ostentation, or vanity”. Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann’s Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 138.

¹⁹⁰ Clark, “Asceticism, Class, and Gender,” 32.

¹⁹¹ Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 162.

¹⁹² Heale’s description of late medieval monasticism is remarkably suitable for describing sixteenth-century Hutterite communal living. He writes: “They laboured with their hands, in order not only to be a burden to no man, but to give to others in need; they occupied mountaintops, they made their nests in marshy places, and they live in sandy wastes and deserts.” Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, 221. Modern Devout convents were organizationally similar to monasteries and Hutterite communes in that all elected a single person who provided primary leadership and ruled over the community. Community leadership could come in the form of a prelacy (founded on office and duty) as it did in convents and monasteries, or in the form of “love” as claimed in Hutterite societies and the Modern Devout. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 185.

realize Acts 2 and 4 simply and practically. The fulfillment of scriptural passages such as Deuteronomy 15:4, where ancient Israelites are told “There shall be no poor among you,” were associated with the Hutterite requirement to work and Hutterite communal practices; the Hutterite appropriation of certain scriptural passages and identification of those passages with their own communities created the ideological foundation and social parameters for what has proven over time to be a viable and sustainable separate community.¹⁹³

Manual labour, unlike speculative trade and the resale of goods, encouraged humility and honesty according to Hutterite sources.¹⁹⁴ Peter Riedemann stated that “our people” are not permitted to engage in any form of merchandizing or trade, which were closely associated with the creation of various economic ills.¹⁹⁵ Hutterites were required to work with their hands “at honest work,” so that they would “have something to give to the one in need.”¹⁹⁶ To simply resell merchandise for profit, or engage in the trade of goods one had not created, was considered dishonest and socially irresponsible as it artificially inflated the cost of living;¹⁹⁷ it was to live off the work of others rather than the fruits of one’s own labours, and was synonymous

¹⁹³ *ÄCHB*, 286. The claim is made in the third of the Five Articles, which the *Geschichtsbuech* claims are the cause of the great hostility between the Hutterites and the world. *ÄCHB*, 269.

¹⁹⁴ Master Geert Grote (1340-84) expressed a similar opinion, stating: “*labor est sanctus—heylich is vanden handen te leven*” [work is sacred—it holy to live from the work of one’s hands]. As quoted in Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 191.

¹⁹⁵ Commercial trade, like the collection of interest or pensions, was frequently understood as a form of evil by Anabaptists. See, Johann Loserth, “Der Communismus der Huterischen Brüder in Mähren im XVI, und XVII, Jahrhundert,” in *Zeitschrift für Social und Wirthschaftsgeschichte* 3, 79. Likely alluding to Sirach 26: 29 and Sirach 27:2, Peter Riedemann asserted that trading and merchandizing were “a sinful business”; that it was virtually “impossible for a merchant or tradesman to keep free from sin.” Riedemann argued that unless value is added to the purchase of raw goods, transforming them through the investment of labour, the poor are necessarily relegated to an unequal and dependent relation as “slaves to the rich.” Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann’s Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 149.

¹⁹⁶ Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann’s Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 149.

¹⁹⁷ On some occasions the prohibition against trade and merchandizing were justified through an appeal to the scriptures. Zechariah 14:21 proclaims that “no more traders” will be permitted “in the House of the Lord of Hosts”, when Jerusalem has been divinely delivered from all its oppressors.

with taking food out the mouths of the poor.¹⁹⁸ The *Geschichtbuech* proudly states that no one in the *Bruderhof* was idle. This comment extends beyond economic realities to a moral valuation.¹⁹⁹

The Hutterite layperson had become the old monk,²⁰⁰ making the communal piety of the cloister available to the laity. Work was intimately associated with an understanding of community that was still being developed, and was an important means of ridding the individual of contrary passions and inclinations, even though Hutterites did not typically demonstrate what might be called the monastic “overbearing obsession” with worldly habits of mind. Work dominated the daily schedule in both monastic and Hutterite traditions. It raised the social value of labour through its identification with redemptive qualities, and became an essential component in the development of separatist Hutterite communities.

Although early Hutterite history claims that the pious had no place they could call their own [*der Fromme nur keinen Platz hätt*], and were, therefore, forced to dig holes and tunnels,²⁰¹ a stable and godly Hutterite community became material proof of Hutterite truth and the object of faith. Many who never saw the Hutterite community with their own eyes surrendered their lives for it, according to the rhetoric of the *Geschichtbuech*.²⁰² The history it purports to tell is offered as undeniable proof that God has always led the pious to the place that pleased him, and which he had prepared for them to dwell [*An das ort da es Im gefallen hat oder das er Inen*

¹⁹⁸ Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 149.

¹⁹⁹ Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, 149.

²⁰⁰ Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 231.

²⁰¹ *ÄCHB*, 329. The *Geschichtbuech* states that Hutterites became actors in a theatre of mockery and derision [*Schawspil Spot vnd hon*]. *ÄCHB*, 331.

²⁰² *ÄCHB*, 238. Presumably the *Geschichtbuech* is referring to early Anabaptist martyrs, who are interpreted as working toward the satisfaction of “God’s desire to set apart a united people,” with the Hutterite commune set as the fulfillment of God’s plan. *ÄCHB*, 45.

fürgesehen zu wohnen], with “proper” dwelling and godly order always divinely orchestrated.²⁰³ To live together in godly community was a great thing [*ein groß ding es ist wenn die fromē beÿ einander Sein können*] in Hutterite rhetoric,²⁰⁴ and was always contingent on securing a suitable place for producing ideal human beings.

²⁰³ *ÄCHB*, 365.

²⁰⁴ *ÄCHB*, 339. John van Engen has advanced a similar argument for Modern Devout sisters, stating that they followed a strict routine that began at four in the morning with prayers, after which they took “up their labours”. Work was interrupted periodically by set prayers, mass, and meal times, and ended at six or seven. John van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 135.

Conclusion

Concluding Summary

Maintaining a “condition of general orthodoxy, uniformity, and collective loyalty” is what mattered most to sixteenth-century civil authorities when it came to the matter of “religion,” according to Gerald Strauss,¹ and these virtues were generally understood by them as the practice of compliant behaviour.² In 1554 Elector Johann Friedrich lamented that by all available indications very “little improvement” had been made since 1535. The Elector admitted that few parishioners demonstrated even a rudimentary knowledge of Christian faith, and concluded that a “fresh start must be made.”³ The goal that Elector Johann Friedrich’s comments establish and the sort of compliance generally sought by sixteenth-century civil authorities aligned an interrelated collection of social norms and ritual practices with political responsibility, and was consistently framed as a commitment to engage in “proper conduct” [*Verhaltensmaßregeln*]. Civic order (*bürgerlicher policei*) was consistently privileged over religious faith (*innerlichen glauben*) in the court records although the latter provided the ideological foundation for the exercise of power, and therefore, was always closely tied to the order being propagated.⁴

Verhaltensmaßregeln established an executable and quantifiable standard whereby compliance and deviance could be measured and enforced as required, with individuals rewarded or punished by judiciary in direct relation and proportion to the

¹ Gerald Strauss, “The Reformation and Its Public in an Age of Orthodoxy,” in R. Po-chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 203-204.

² Strauss, “The Reformation and Its Public in an Age of Orthodoxy,” 203-204.

³ Gerald Strauss, *Luther’s House of Learning* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1978), 270. Strauss notes that conditions were not this bleak in all areas, but stresses that “the majority of parishes reported conditions similar to the ones just noted.”

⁴ *QZGT, Elsaß*, III, 142.

behavioural standard that had been set. The conformity being sought enabled the perpetuation of the existing socio-political order, which remained dependent on a process of successful enculturation. Medieval churches were the primary vehicles, the culturally and temporally-specific places, for defining and structuring *Verhaltensmaßregeln*. They exercised unparalleled cultural power during the medieval and early modern periods. They were crucial mechanisms in a self-perpetuating system through which the social body was continuously created and conditioned, establishing medieval churches as primary instruments for shaping desirable human subjects. They determined individual and collective identities and set all social relations, generating social norms. It was through the power that culturally established sacred places such as medieval churches exercised during the sixteenth century that the desired social conformity resulting in “socio-political stability” was secured.

Sixteenth-century reformers assumed, or otherwise argued, that a substantial cultural decline had occurred, and that this situation required immediate redressing. The reinstatement of a purer and better Christendom required that a more desirable church and society, or place, be created. Martin Luther and Thomas Müntzer insisted that Christendom (society) had degenerated to an unacceptable level, and staged arguments for socio-political regeneration, with a strong focus on the “reform” of the church. For Luther and Müntzer, reformation that did not result in a decisive and substantial spatial improvement was no reformation. The system of shared values and “degenerated worldview” reformers propagated were adopted by sixteenth-century Anabaptists, who emerged as a direct and decisive response to the assumed

degeneration of culturally important sacred places. Anabaptists acted against the places through which medieval society perpetuated itself, resisting these places when the society being generated did not meet with their approval, and did not satisfy their desires. The Anabaptist rejection of church related cultural practices such as paedobaptism, which functioned as the ideological foundation of medieval society, and the Anabaptist refusal to comply with social expectations such as church attendance were directed at those sites most clearly identified with medieval society, and therefore, with the undesirable nature and conditions of sixteenth-century society. Medieval churches became the focal points of Anabaptist resistance, establishing these places as primary sites of socio-political conflict, when the relations they established, the social order they created, and the values they propagated were rejected.

As tools of enculturation, in which the Foucauldian triad of power, knowledge and right were strategically employed for the creation of a particular type of subject, medieval churches established a specific type of reality.⁵ The articulation of reality provided by medieval churches was intimately bound up with their architecture and established these places as mechanisms of power,⁶ communicating authority, establishing social difference, effectively expressing and maintaining particular institutional interests.⁷ The well-documented Anabaptist rejection of the established sixteenth-century church, their development of a peculiar ritual practice, their frequently-voiced desire to reinstate a form of primitive church worship, structure and

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), 194-228.

⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 205.

⁷ Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth Century English Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 9.

practice, and their experiments with alternative forms for community are clear and strong indicators that Anabaptists were socially conscious, and that their primary concerns were place-centered. From the perspective of sixteenth-century civil authorities, Anabaptist resistance was generally understood in place-specific terms, as the refusal to accept and submit to the authority and program of the established church. The repatriation of sixteenth-century Anabaptists who had been exiled and subsequently recanted or otherwise found favour with the authorities was frequently conditional on the promise of convicted Anabaptists to once again attend church services, and on their pledge to shun all clandestine Anabaptist gatherings. It is clear from the court records that the “persecution” (prosecution and punishment) that sixteenth-century Anabaptists faced was not simply the product of their heterodox views but resulted directly from what Claus-Peter Clasen has argued were the “basic principles of sixteenth-century political philosophy.”⁸ Clasen has observed that without a territory or city that sixteenth-century Anabaptists could claim as their own, existing political philosophy and social practice simply precluded Anabaptists from the consideration or implementation of their societal ideals.⁹

Despite these very real philosophical limitations and the severe political restrictions and consequences they faced, sixteenth-century Anabaptists initiated the construction of two radically disparate communities. The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster in Westphalia and the Hutterite *Bruderhöfe* in Moravia were attempts to explore and realize alternative forms and structures for society. Both communities were manufactured as calculated responses to Anabaptist assessments regarding the

⁸ Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525-1618* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1972), 358.

⁹ Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History*, 358-359.

“integrity of their dwelling,” with Anabaptists developing an acute understanding of the relation of communal salvation to the integrity and quality of their dwelling. Their construction of the Anabaptist kingdom provided opportunities for imagining freedom from the dominant discourses of power through their development and utilization of the plenitude of “aesthetic space” that retains the ability to transcend coercion and dominance.¹⁰ Anabaptist Münster was constructed as a theatre, and was designed to concretize selected biblical mandates. Münsterite theatre proved to be an effective medium for the exploration and exposure of community weaknesses, and called authorities, leaders, and cultural systems to task.¹¹ It parodied certain prominent features of sixteenth-century society and investigated the literal implementation or application of certain biblical principles. It was a method of exploring community, expressions of power, and their interrelation for the purpose of developing understanding, developing a foundation from which society might be reformed. Anabaptist efforts to sincerely implement, and at other times parody, biblical mandates, principles, and precedents resulted in their actions running in parallel, and at other times cross-cutting each other. Münsterite theatre was a didactic medium containing strong elements of play that effectively reduced the audience’s “reality” to recognizable, comprehensible and organisable units, establishing order.

Like the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, early sixteenth-century Hutterite attempts to establish a *Heiligkeitsgemeinde* [holy community] were devised as a substantial challenge to the existing social order, its inter-related social structures,

¹⁰ Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion, and Resistance* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 217.

¹¹ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 11.

institutions, practices, places, and ideals. The Hutterite-Anabaptist practice of community of goods functioned as a central socio-economic organizing principle and essential component in their development of separatist ideal communities; it was worked into a comprehensive communal philosophy and societal model that organized new relations of consumption and production as the realization of a primary good. Sixteenth-century Hutterite communities, like medieval monasteries, and like the Greek *polis* and a range of ancient philosophical schools before them, were designed, constructed, propagated, and maintained as an ideal place for producing ideal human beings.¹²

In the Hutterite scheme community necessarily entailed a common dwelling, store room, purse, and table. To live well was to live together intimately in community, with Hutterite members sharing all material and spiritual things. Hutterite community was presented rhetorically as deeply opposed to *Eigentum* (private property) and the polar opposite of *Eigennutz* (self-interest). To have things in common is to praise God, and therefore, an act of worship and an occasion of grace, whereas to withhold goods from the community and keep them for oneself, or to distribute goods unequally or preferentially, or to buy goods for oneself in the marketplace, was to create “great disorder.”¹³ An early Anabaptist Order established in Moravia provided the philosophical and moral basis for communal living, and invested it with sacramental significance.

“Correct assembly” and “true order” were place specific in the *Geschichtbuech*, for it was only in Moravia as the Anabaptist Promised Land that

¹² Daniel F. Caner, ““Not of this World:” The Invention of Monasticism,” in P. Rousseau, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Late Antiquity* (London: Basil Blackwell, 2009), 588.

¹³ *ÄCHB*, 93.

sixteenth-century Hutterite-Anabaptists were provided with opportunity to realize their aspirations for a distinct, open, but separated community. Their mythologization of Moravia as the Promised Land, and therefore its presentation as a land of abundance rife with opportunity, was strictly centered on its divinely appointed and sanctioned transformation. Moravia was propagated as a “wilderness” undergoing radical transformation through human agency, which reversed its degenerated condition to the point of becoming fully capable of sustaining human life. The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster and the Hutterite Bruderhof were established as divinely appointed places for realizing divinely inspired communal goals.

Concluding Statements

Anabaptist ritualization offered freedom from the totalizing cosmology medieval Catholicism presented through their strict control of sacred places. I have argued that Anabaptists emerged at a very specific period of European history, and that their appearance was to be expected when Anabaptists are constructed as a decisive and direct response to medieval sacred places, the power these places exercised, the relations they forged, and the values they established. Their emergence in the sixteenth century as resistance to the exercise of cultural power coincided with, and was the product of, a growing sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of society at a time when the cosmogonic myths propagated by the established church, the relations it set, and the places it established were deemed deficient, declining, and even tyrannical. Anabaptist ritualization was an attempt to escape and revise long-established medieval politics of place by contesting the values and relations these places fixed. Anabaptist ritualization proved to be a primary component, and an

essential first step, in the construction of competing communal places, and the manufacture of an alternative social order in which its systems, structures and function were conceived as comparatively egalitarian, and therefore, substantially less oppressive.¹⁴ It was through their refusal to attend church that Anabaptists expressed their displeasure with the existing society and resisted further enculturation.

The adamant sixteenth-century Anabaptist refusal to adopt and conform to the locative map that medieval Catholicism presented required that another map of the cosmos be constructed that was profoundly other and entirely separate from the pattern of the primary cosmogonic myth. The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster and the Hutterite Bruderhof were designed by Anabaptists as models, examples, or new possibilities for society, and were founded on and legitimated through the introduction of a competing mythology. Despite the self-descriptive rhetoric with which these innovative communities came to be associated, neither construction successfully or fully transitioned from. Although both Anabaptist communities developed radical alternative social orders that presented profound challenges to dominant attitudes and their cherished attachments to particular places, including the limits such places established, in the final analysis both Anabaptist constructions succumbed to their own privileging and mythologizing of a particular place. Anabaptist Münster and the Hutterite Bruderhof were propagated as godly communities, with myths of divine election, guidance, preparation, provision and protection exclusively attached to them. Community and individual identities,

¹⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 138.

including all social relations, continued to be shaped by myths of divine favour that were attached to the places the community developed.

Areas for Further Research

At the beginning of this dissertation I noted that increased theoretical and methodological sophistication have complicated textual analysis, and therefore historical studies, through their introduction of a host of representational challenges, destabilizing what was once considered solid epistemological ground. These relatively recent developments also function positively; encouraging hitherto unexplored ways of imagining and thinking about the past. Moreover, topics, themes, and areas of investigation long-assumed “closed” to further exploration, or otherwise satisfactorily researched, can, and must, be re-opened and subjected to altogether new forms of description and explanation.

New questions for research are made available through the investigation of the rhetorics of visibility medieval Christendom encouraged and Anabaptists rejected. Traditional narratives, primary cultural assumptions, definitions of community and accepted epistemological standards were constructed on a material, visible culture, which came to be decisively challenged when Anabaptists collapsed the distinction between representations and fetishes, rejecting medieval church visual practices and the explanations it provided. By the sixteenth century, images, stained glass, altarpieces, frescoes, wood carvings and bas-reliefs were in widespread use, materializing scriptural principles, biblical characters, saints, and martyrs. The visibility of the sacraments and the visible church gave way, in the Anabaptist scheme, to preaching and the invisible church, which functioned as substitute

conduits of grace. Anabaptist spirituality and salvation came to be associated with words and not images, with the immediacy of the divine and spiritual gifts situated in words, and not associated with material representations. Anabaptists often fielded an epistemological argument, charging that material visual culture left open the possibility, even the likelihood, of deception in a way that strict adherence to the Book did not. Anabaptist preferences for the Word introduced a pliable authority, substituting the material, fixed, and immovable for the ethereal, versatile, and malleable.

The epistemological challenges Anabaptists introduced confronted traditional ways of knowing, hence living, and introduced new ways of knowing, and therefore new ways of living. The mechanisms by which epistemological innovations generate an alternative ethic in which the relation of the individual to the community and the identity of the community itself become altered are potential areas for fruitful investigation. Anabaptists did not unilaterally reopen and contest definitions of “community,” but they were instrumental in generating, describing, and explaining situations of tension. Their definitions of community tended toward the strict creation and differentiation of members and non-members, with the definition adopted fixing all identities, establishing stereotypes, restricting further change. Subscribing to an ideology of inclusion but in practice structuring an exclusive separatist community created tension within the Anabaptist community, and unresolved tension between the Anabaptist community and the larger society.

Whether by choice or need, many Anabaptists did not hold to a geographically determined, place-based conception of community. Further

investigation into the possibility of developing an understanding of community in which common interests and not geography reinforces the belief that certain people belong together remains to be done. Definitions of community always establish the right to exclude others on the basis of ideological differences, moral difference, and other perceived deviations from a given community standard. Whether an understanding of community that is “place-less” or interest centered can be successfully adopted on a large scale and endure for generations is of considerable significance for social identity construction and political stability.

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